

Somali Parental Involvement in Education: Case Studies of Two Urban Public Schools
in the United States of America

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my grandmother Kaha Hidig Farah for being a model of a perceptive community matriarch who strongly believed in the importance of sowing seeds of communal goodwill by sharing good ideas and material wealth to one's best ability. She believed this was necessary to ensure cross-generational closeness even in posterity.

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Abstract

Parental involvement in the education of their children is recognized as a critical issue in education in many countries. The purpose of these case studies is to determine the views of Somali parents and teachers regarding effective parental involvement in the education of Somali-American school children. In addition, two Somali-speaking administrators were interviewed about their personal approach to promoting successful school-family partnerships at their respective schools.

Epstein's *Overlapping Spheres of Influence Framework* (2002) provides the conceptual grounding and starting point to answer this study's guiding question, which is: "*What are the factors that shape how school personnel and Somali families view effective parental involvement in the education of Somali children?*" Further sub-questions seek to determine the range of opportunities and barriers that the study respondents consider as they reconcile the schools' formal expectations with their own personal expectations and experience.

Data collection was driven by case study methodology. Furthermore, the data were triangulated from: (1) face-to-face interviews in English and Somali with 26 respondents (fourteen Somali parents, ten teachers and two school administrators); (2) document analysis, and (3) observation of the interactions of the school administrative staff with parents as well as attendance of a Parent Night event.

In this study, three factors that shape how parents and school personnel view effective Somali parental involvement in the education of Somali-American children have emerged. Those factors constitute: *active conversations*; *positive attitude*; and *student motivation*. The former two factors facilitate the third—that is, *active conversations* and *positive attitude* promote the *student motivation* necessary to excel in education and behave appropriately at school. To elaborate, *active conversations* are verbal dialogues that favor flexibility and problem solving on the part of parents and teachers as they interact to help students take responsibility for their own learning and behavior. However, such conversations are perceived to be driven by preexisting credibility and trust between students, parents, and school personnel that foster reinforcement of the instructional, pedagogical and behavioral goals across the school-home settings.

Furthermore, from an organizational perspective, Somali parents, at the two schools under study, engage in a range of activities that map onto four of Epstein's six types of parental

involvement (i.e., *Parenting, Communicating, Learning at Home, and Collaborating with the Community*). In addition, from the perspective of teachers, Somali family participation and presence in the school life of their children falls along a *continuum of four levels of parental involvement behaviors*: (a) “Invisibility”(failure to participate in school-based activities), (b) “Shallow Involvement” (attend only parent-teacher conferences),(c) “Adequate Involvement” (attend parent-teacher conferences and also maintain contact with school personnel), and (d) “Deep Involvement” (parental involvement that is both school-based and home-based activities that are augmented with parental endorsement of the school and staunch advocacy on behalf of the school).

Finally, compared to teachers, Somali parents believe that their children are learning well when they bring home their schoolwork, and when teachers and other school personnel offer school-based solutions that address barriers blocking effective parental support for students. This parental belief is strongest in relation to homework and discipline, without which student interest in school and attentiveness in class are weaker.

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Chapter One: Introduction

We have a lot of sleeping parents. Or they say, “we’re coming”, and then you call, and they are in the shower. Or they’ve gone to their Granny’s or something that’s so important that they couldn’t come to the conference.

(Wilkerson & Lee, 2010, p. 151)

Overview

For decades, theorists and researchers in the social sciences endeavor to understand whether, how and to what extent families participate in the educative enterprise of their children. Stakeholders in this debate include families and their children, educators, school administrators and other school staff, school district leaders, policy makers (at city, state and national levels), academia as well as community members (including businesses and non-profit organizations). As such, parental involvement in education is a concept that continues to be contested theoretically, empirically, and politically in terms of quantity, quality and context (Eccles & Harold, 1993, 1996; Pomerantz, Moorman & Litwak, 2007; Weiss et al, 2009).

Societies in many countries expect schools to promote parental involvement in education as one of the key strategies that are deemed necessary for improving positive student outcomes and school-home relations (Goodall & Harris, 2008; Smit, Driessen, Sluiter & Slegers, 2007; Lee & Shute, 2010). This expectation is premised on two educational policy goals of current school reforms that aim to: (1) increase parental co-teaching of school children to address persistent achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students; and (2) promote the idea that families have a right to participate in the governance and decision-making process in schools (Becker & Epstein, 1982; Bakker & Gierveld, 2007; Boethel, 2003; Brien & Stelmach, 2009; Hill & Tyson, 2009).

However, some families are perceived to be very passive in their participation in the school life of their children. Many of these passive families, who are called “invisible” families in the parental involvement literature, tend to come from diverse socio-demographic backgrounds. These background risks include low-income status, parental limited education; and non-traditional family structure such as single-parent households, large families that may include extended families, and children reared by related or even un-related caregivers, etc. In addition,

many of those families come from multi-ethnic, racial or cultural and linguistic groups (Bakker & Denessen, 2007; Jeynes, 2003; Smit & Driessen, 2005; Weiss et al, 2009).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of these qualitative case studies is to determine the views of Somali parents and teachers regarding effective parental involvement in the education of Somali–American school children. In addition, two Somali-speaking administrators (principals) were interviewed about their personal approach to promoting successful school-family partnerships at their two respective schools as separate and bounded contexts.

The goal of this research is two-fold: (a) seek multiple perspectives on the determinants of effective parental involvement in the education of Somali-American children; and (b) fill current gaps in prior research on the mechanisms that Somali families and teachers of Somali school children use (or wish they could use) to support student learning within the organizational structures of two public school types (i.e., a charter school and a non -charter school).

Problem Statement of the Study

Somali families are reportedly invisible in schools in the Western world, and as such they present a challenge to educators and policy makers (Demi, Mclean and Lewis, 2007; Nderu, 2005; Roy & Roxas, 2011, Smit & Driessen, 2005). Relatively little is known about how Somali families (parents) and schools (teachers) concur or differ in what they consider to be effective parental involvement in the education of Somali children. More specifically, it is still a matter of debate what such actors consider to be important and feasible strategies for supporting positive academic and social outcomes for Somali students. This is due to the paucity of conceptual and practical knowledge regarding interventions and strategies that work for Somali children and their families (Koch, 2007; Kruizenga, 2010; Nderu, 2005; Roy & Roxas, 2011).

Moreover, according to Guerin & Guerin (2007), it is essential to understand the changing nature of communities over time, including the patterns of involvement of Somali parents in the education of their children in the West. Such understanding is needed to capture variations in the range of perspectives on how families, schools and communities should deal with the complexities of school-home-community interactions that support student learning through a process of relationship-building and commitment (Degni, 2006; Fangen, 2006; Olgac, 2001). This is particularly significant in international education as Somalis are considered to be one of

the most marginalized immigrant groups in the Western world (Schaid & Grossman, 2007; Shandy & Fennelly, 2006; Voyer, 2009; Zimmermann & Zeller, 2011).

In general, the reported invisibility of some families in schools is aggravated by limited opportunities to build mutual trust between families and schools. But recognizing that some families are invisible in schools is just a start. Understanding the nuances of invisibility is important because successful school-family collaboration is necessary for school children to avoid school failure and social maladjustment (Crozier & Davis, 2007; Domina, 2005; Trumbull et al, 2003). Perceived absences of parents from schools are due to differences in attitudes, habits, and a lack of knowledge about how educators and parents can build collaborative relationships for the benefit of school children (Epstein & Becker, 1982; Good, 1999; Mahamed, 2010; Smit & Driessen, 2005).

In a nutshell, the problem of parental invisibility weakens school-family partnerships. Therefore, it is acknowledged as a continuing source of concern in policy, practice and research that schools, families, communities and policy makers need to address to promote positive student outcomes and collaborative school-family connections (Boethel, 2003; Christenson, 2004; Domina, 2005; Smit, Driessen, Sluiter & Slegers, 2007).

Study Rationale

Educating students of poor, ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds brings to the fore the need to craft educational policy and practices which address the unique needs of students who come from immigrant backgrounds. For instance, net migration to OECD countries, including the United States, has tripled since 1960 (OECD, 2010). This newer globalized migration streams increasingly include families who are characterized as immigrants from countries that share few of the socio-historic scripts for educational and socioeconomic stratification that is common to many Western societies (Bigelow, 2010; OECD, 2010; Smit & Driessen, 2005, Reitz, Zhang & Hawkins, 2011).

In addition, newer immigrant groups, including Somalis, are less likely to have been included in the analyses of large data sets that evaluate parental involvement programs and patterns in the United States, if broken down either by race and/or immigrant status (e.g. Epstein & Becker, 1982; Kohl et al., 2000; Turney & Kao, 2009). Compared to other immigrant and ethnic groups, relatively little is known about how Somali families' perceptions of school systems evolve as a result of longer periods of residence in the West. Furthermore, there is even sparser

information about how Somali parental involvement in the education of their children manifests under various school types (i.e., public schools, alternative schools, private schools, charter schools, etc).

Therefore, this study contributes to the existing scholarly research knowledge base on the experience of immigrant families in schools, and the experience of schools with them. As such this work is intended to help administrators and teachers understand the nuances of parental involvement in education as they design family engagement programs and strategies for families from various socioeconomic, ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Barnyak & McNelly, 2009; Driessen & Smit, 2007; Epstein, 1987; Garcia, 2004). Moreover, the inclusion of various school configurations (a charter school and a non-charter school) illuminates parent-teacher interactions within various organizational settings.

Significance of the Study

A growing body of scholarly literature examines the cognitive, contextual, and structural flex points that promote school-home commitment to support student learning in many fields of social inquiry, particularly in the disciplines of education, sociology, and psychology (Kao & Rutherford, 2007; Reitz, Zhang & Hawkins, 2011; Weiss et al 2009). Compared to other sub-groups (such as African-Americans, Asians, Latinos, Arabs, and even other non-Somali African-born immigrants), effective strategies that bring schools and Somali families together in productive partnerships to foster positive academic and social adjustment of Somali school children remain largely unexplored.

Much of the existing research on parental involvement in education tends to emphasize home-school activities that are designed to close the academic achievement gap between student groups. However, many culturally and linguistically diverse groups are also interested in a more open communication styles to resolve differences of opinion. Therefore, they prefer more personalized relationships with teachers and other school personnel (Lopez et al, 2001; Mapp, 2003). This aspect of parental involvement in education is considered to be one of the key factors that increase mutual trust between school personnel and parents, which foster positive school-home relationships (Adams & Christenson, 2000). However, it is not yet clear how Somali parents and teachers approach one another to communicate effectively about mutually agreed upon supports for student learning as they endeavor to promote academic success and positive

behavior among Somali-descent school children in the West (Guerin & Guerin, 2007; Koch, 2007; Reitsma, 2001; Roy & Roxas, 2011).

No doubt, the extant literature on Somali families provides valuable initial insights about the involvement of Somali families in the education of their children. For instance, Somali parents are reported to display high regard for the education of their children; yet they are described to be mostly invisible in schools (Guerin & Guerin, 2007; Nderu, 2005). In addition, in the instances when Somali parents are reported to be present in schools, they are portrayed to be involved in a wrong way or are reported to be very dissatisfied with the curricular and pedagogical approaches in use in some schools, which they often view as conduits to special education tracking for their children (Good 1999; Mahamed, 2010; Smit & Driessen, 2005). Reportedly, teachers, on their part, express grave concerns about the academic performance and social adjustment of Somali children (Demi, Mclean and Lewis, 2007; Reitsma, 2001, Roy & Roxas, 2011).

Somali families with children of middle-school age are of interest to the researcher for the following reasons:

(1) Families with children in the middle-school-age range have already experienced school process factors that affect learning as they saw their children transition from one educational stage to another (i.e. from pre-kindergarten to primary school, from primary to middle school); and (2) it is possible that there is a wider window of opportunity for educational interventions for struggling students at this developmental stage than it is for Somali students in higher grades.

Research Questions

The overarching research question that guides this work is “*What are the factors that shape how school personnel and Somali families view effective parental involvement in the education of Somali children?*”

The research sub-questions that are addressed in the case studies are:

1. What do Somali parents and teachers (Somali and non-Somali) view as *parental involvement* in the education of Somali children?
2. How and to what extent do Somali parents and teachers differ or concur in their views of *parental involvement* in the education of Somali children?

3. What do teachers view as opportunities for *parental involvement* in the education of Somali children?
4. What do teachers see as barriers to *parental involvement* in the education of Somali children?
5. What do Somali parents consider as opportunities for *parental involvement* in the education of their children?
6. What do Somali parents view as barriers to *parental involvement* in the education of their children?

Conceptual Framework

Epstein's Overlapping Spheres of Influence Framework provides the conceptual grounding for these qualitative case studies. This framework has been empirically validated to be useful for analyzing how schools and families implement effective partnerships (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Lewis, Kim & Bey, 2011, Nderu, 2005). The data sources were primarily from semi-structured interviews of parents and school personnel (teachers and administrators) and were augmented by document analysis, observation of one Parent Night event, and watching the administrative staff answer phones or respond to school staff and parent walk-ins.

Study Context

As the size of the first- and second-generation migration of families from Somali background grows across the Western world including the United States (whether directly from Africa or via relocating from elsewhere), their potential for social adaptation and school success may have long-term implications for the educational and social integration policies of their new homelands (Basford, Hick & Bigelow, 2007; Bigelow, 2010; Voyer, 2009; Zimmerman & Zetter, 2011). The sites of the case studies are two schools located in two metropolitan cities in a Midwestern state in the United States of America which have an open-enrollment system. One of the two schools is a charter school authorized by a community-based organization while the other is a non-charter school associated with a large urban, public school district. These schools are led by two Somali-speaking administrators.

Assumptions

These qualitative case studies are premised on the following two assumptions:

1. Family and school partnership is important for the success of all students, and is even more critical for the positive adjustment of Somali immigrant families in their new homelands in the Western world.
2. Teachers and parents want to find more ways to build bridges of mutual understanding so they can engage with one another in productive interactions that support student learning and positive development.

Conclusion

Educators, school administrators, families, policy makers, and researchers struggle to discern the nature of the contextual nuances in the school-family processes at various levels (in the classroom, at home, at school, and in other community contexts). Interest in this area stems from an acknowledgement that there is heterogeneity in perspectives around the issue of parental engagement in education as it relates to supports that schools and families provide to enhance school efforts to promote student academic and social success. In emergent research on Somali families' participation in the education of their children, sound explanations of effective school strategies that were supported in multiple contexts to see if they could work for schools (teachers) and Somali families (parents) have not yet been offered (Koch, 2007, Guerin & Guerin, 2007). Thus, it is not clear if Somali families and teachers in different types of schools (charter and non-charter, for example) exhibit the pattern of invisibility and separation between schools and families as described in the extant parental involvement literature. This suggests that there is a gap in the literature that needs to be filled so as to contribute to better understanding of the nuances of school-home partnerships (or lack of) for various subgroups in various school types to influence student outcomes.

Definitions of Study Terms

Academic Socialization: Parental beliefs that manifest themselves in: (a) parental autonomy support, which fosters student self-regulation in academic learning; (b) the provision of structure at home to support the pedagogical and instructional goals of teachers; and (c) family involvement in related educational behavior across home, school and community settings.

Home-based Involvement: Home process factors that support student learning. It includes the following constructs: parental expectations; structural suitability of the home environment for learning; affective character of the home environment; parental discipline

approach; and parental involvement which is broadly defined to include activities that allow parents to participate in educational processes at school and at home. All these factors are scales for the conceptualization of home-based involvement, and are based on the work of Christenson, Roundy & Gorney (1992). In that regard, these constructs offer a useful way to conceptualize family aspirations and actions.

Invisibility: Failure of parents to participate in school-based activities. Such parents are considered to be very passive in their participation in the school life of their children in the parental involvement literature (Boethel, 2003; Guerin & Guerin, 2007; Lopez, 2001; Nderu, 2005; Smit & Driessen, 2005).

Parental involvement/Family Engagement: These terms are used interchangeably in this study because parental involvement is the term used in official policy mandates although “family engagement” is also offered in the academic literature to indicate a strength-based partnership between schools and families to facilitate academic and developmental progress of school children (Christenson, 2004; Calabrese-Barton et al, 2004; Goodall & Harris, 2008). In this regard, teachers and families are assumed to draw on the curricular and pedagogical goals of schools as well as on their own multiple experiences and resources to reconcile school expectations and their own expectations in response to student needs.

Partnership: School-family relationship which is construed to be a process in which those who are involved willingly provide mutual support, and are attuned to mutual contributions to the common goal of supporting student academic attainment and developmental targets (Epstein et al, 2002; Smit, Driessen, Sluiter & Slegers, 2007).

Parental Involvement: Home-based as well as school-based engagement of families in the education of their children as identified in the literature to be equally important (Christenson, Roundy & Gorney, 1992; Epstein, 1995; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Shutes et al, 2010).

School-based Involvement: Process factors that are based on Epstein’s Six Types of Parental Involvement (Epstein, 1995, Epstein et al, 2001, 2002) that guide the work of many formal parental involvement programs in the United States. They include: parenting across child development stages to support children as students; communicating effectively in school-home and home-school situations; volunteering at school and supporting school events; educating families in ways that help students with homework and other curriculum-related activities; sharing in school decision-making with families; collaborating with the school community to

harness community resources and services that strengthen school programs and support families with the objective of improving student learning and development.

Student Learning: For the purpose of this study, student learning is defined as learning that takes place across multiple contexts (e.g. home-school-community). Such learning may use various formats including face-to-face, on-line, and through books or workshops, or accessing supplementary learning opportunities such as using group or individualized tutoring (Weiss et al 2009). Student learning also includes any other learning opportunity that is identified by the study's participants.

Title I Schools: Title I, Part A (Title I) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended (ESEA) provides financial assistance to local educational agencies (LEAs). Schools in which children from low-income families make up at least 40 percent of enrollment are eligible to use Title I funds for school-wide programs that serve all children in the school. LEAs also must use Title I funds to provide academic enrichment services to eligible children enrolled in private schools

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation is presented in five chapters. Chapter One (above) includes a quote and an overview to orient the reader to the topic, purpose of the study, a statement of the problem, the study rationale, the significance of the study, a guiding research question and a list of research sub-questions, the study conceptual grounding, the study context, the study assumptions, and chapter conclusion along with a list of definitions of the key terms used in this dissertation. Chapter Two includes a review of the strands of the scholarly literature that are relevant to parental involvement in education, in general, from the perspectives of educators, sociologists, psychologists, and other social scientists. The focus of the literature review is intended to be a scan of the current understanding of the concept of parental involvement and engagement in the education of their children as it relates to school-family partnerships that aim to support student academic and non-academic outcomes. As such, parental involvement and engagement in education is presumed to be a topic of inquiry that is germane to educational policy and practice inquiry. Chapter Three includes a description of the methodology, rationale, methods and procedures used for data collection. Chapter Four is where the data elements are categorized by using Epstein's conceptual framework of Overlapping Spheres of Influence as a starting point for analysis in terms of the types of parental involvement reported within the two groups in each

school and across the two participating schools. In Chapter Five, discussion of the research findings is situated in the existing parental involvement literature. In addition, in this chapter study delimitation and limitations as well as the implications of this work for educators and parents are presented along with recommendations for future research. The chapter ends with conclusions related to the study key findings.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Overview: A Critical Issue in Education

The primary thrust of ongoing discourse about effective parental involvement in education is framed within a need to resolve claims (and counter-claims) about what parental involvement means from divergent perspectives of multiple stakeholders. Quite often, specific socio-economic and socio-cultural status variables are perceived to interact negatively with family child-rearing philosophies that are at odds with the parenting, communicating, teaching and even student learning approaches preferred by schools (Chao, 2000; Lareau, 2002).

According to research done in the Netherlands, parental involvement in education as policy and practice falls on a continuum of parental involvement in education (i.e. *active* versus *inactive*). In that typology the most active parents are *partner parents* who are very engaged in school formal decision-making as well as informal support for schools educating their children. Likewise, *participant parents* are active but they are mostly engaged in informal support for schools. In contrast, *delegator parents* and *invisible parents* are both considered passive in their involvement in the education of their children. However, what separates them is the level of trust these passive parents endow on their schools (Vogel, 2002, as cited in Driessen, Smit & Slegers, 2005, p. 511). In this typology, an invisible parent group is least likely to participate in schools. Therefore, they are perceived by professionals to be deficient (Bakker & Denessen, 2007; Crozier & Davis, 2007; Goodall & Harris, 2008; Nderu, 2005).

Furthermore, school-family interactions may be complicated by notions of self-efficacy at the individual level (e.g. students, teachers, parents, principals, etc.), and at the institutional level—i.e. school-home-community contexts (Grolnick et al, 1997; Grolnick & Pomerantz, 2009; Weiss et al, 2009). These interactions depend on the circumstances of families and schools under review (Denessen, Driessen, Smit & Slegers, 2001). For instance, families who are not physically present in schools are often portrayed in the parental involvement literature to be inadequately integrated into the social networks and information channels of the school community (Coleman, 1988, Hill & Taylor, 2004). As these networks and channels are deemed to be beneficial for accessing resources that support children educationally and socially, such

parents are considered to be of interest for educational policy and practice (Dauber & Epstein, 1991; Lee & Bowman, 2006; McNeal, 1999).

Other scholars explain parental invisibility in schools to be the result of unfavorable conditions that exist in the schools themselves, which tend to overwhelm or constrain some parents. These conditions include: (1) unfamiliar school instructional demands; (2) complex school organizational structures, (3) overwhelming school educative work flow processes that direct parents to seek the attention of a multitude of school professionals; and/or (4) parents' own negative personal experiences with schools. For instance, experiences of unwelcoming or inadequately trained school staff or unhelpful administration or even parents' own prior academic challenges as students when they were younger (Casper, 2003; Christenson, 2004; Griffith, 1996 1998; Horvat, Weininger & Lareau, 2003; Stewart 2008). All of these school-related factors may also contribute to potentially weak school-family relations due to their effect on the psychological salience of parental involvement in education for parents, students, and teachers (Green et al, 2007; Grolnick & Pomerantz, 2009; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997).

Nevertheless, there is a growing recognition that it is necessary to more seriously consider the influence of family process factors, i.e. what families actually do, as opposed to the aforementioned at-risk family status variables, in terms of the levels of family support that is beneficial for student learning across the home-school-community contexts. Some theorists and researchers contend that family process factors tend to be the most subtle components of parental involvement in the education of their children (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997; Jeynes, 2005, 2010; Siu-Chu & Willms, 1996). They argue these subtle components are strongly associated with improvement in students' school performance and behavior (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Jeynes, 2010; Shutes et al, 2010). These subtle aspects of parental involvement in education include: (a) maintaining high parental expectations; (b) communicating with children about school; and (c) practicing an authoritative parenting style.

Thus, family process factors are crucial for facilitating pathways to future educational and social success of children as evidenced in several meta-analyses of studies in multiple disciplines (Christenson, Rounds & Gorney, 1992; Fan & Chen, 2001; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Jeynes, 2005, 2010). This view enhances traditional analyses which tend to focus more on organizational and/or instructional school processes, rather than on home processes, in order to evaluate school effectiveness in educating children from poor, ethnic, and linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds.

Finally, due to the conceptual, social and political tensions inherent in how parental involvement in education influences student outcomes, and impacts home-school relations, specific statutory provisions in many countries strongly urge schools to provide a process for families to exercise their right to be full partners in the education of their own children (Brien & Stelmach, 2009; Denessen, Driessen, Smit & Slegers, 2001; OECD, 2010). For example, the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, which reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, in the United States, and the *Minnesota Statute MS 124D.89* present regulatory guidance and statutory requirements that also include implementation suggestions. Such suggestions cover elements such as when and how schools may implement organizational strategies that facilitate the establishment of a shared responsibility for the academic success of students to attain the goals of effective learning and teaching for Title I schools.

These legal provisions emphasize the idea that there is an added responsibility for schools to *intentionally* promote effective parental involvement strategies. This starts with meaningful and timely communication with families to inform them about how to support their children's education regardless of family income level, parental educational level, ethnic or cultural or linguistic backgrounds (Christenson, 2004; Denessen, Bakker & Gierveld, 2007; Epstein et al, 2001; Weiss et al, 2009). This is noteworthy, legally and practically, because schools (teachers) and families (parents) are held to a societal standard of high expectations for the academic excellence of school-age children regardless of their socioeconomic and sociocultural backgrounds.

From a historical perspective, the findings of the "Coleman Report" (Coleman et al., 1966) suggested that family variables supersede school factors in terms of explaining the achievement gap that exists between student subgroups. White students are used as a performance standard in the United States given their majority group status. Subsequent to the publication of this seminal report, the impact of family and school variables on students' academic and non-academic outcomes has been considered an important research and policy question. According to Borman & Rachuba (2001), most analyses of the sources and consequences of differentials in the obstacles to educational opportunity for various student groups in the United States have been the result of this ground-breaking policy and research work. Consequently, one may argue that the concept of harnessing parental influence in education, to improve school effectiveness and to monitor student academic progress across the contexts of home and school, gained traction as an

educational and as a developmental strategy worldwide (Deslandes, 2001; Epstein, 1986, 1987; Harris & Goodall, 2008; Lewis, Kim & Bey, 2011; Woolcock & Narayan, 2000).

Furthermore, Borman & Rachuba (2001) posit that the four most important school variables discerned in effective schools are: (i) maximizing learning time, (ii) monitoring student progress, (iii) having strong principal leadership, and (iv) maintaining school-wide goals. Teachers are considered to be responsible for the implementation and sustainability of instructional time and monitoring of student progress. In order to extend the learning time and the monitoring of student progress, teachers and families need to cooperate to enhance student academic motivation for an acceptable academic performance, and educational persistence for school children as far as possible.

However, to answer questions about school collaboration with families to advance student learning across the contexts of school-home, one must also ask about family and school perceptions regarding responsibilities, roles, rules, risks and resources. This suggests that the impact of class, culture, race, and language diversity do matter.

Presence of Somali-born Population in the United States of America

From 1980 to 2009, the African-born population in the United States grew from just under 200,000 to 1.5 million, approximately (McCabe, 2011). African-born immigrants make up a small (3.9 percent) but growing share of the country's 38.5 million immigrants. The leading countries of origin of African refugee arrivals during that time were from Somalia (59,840, or 40.0 percent), Liberia (23,948, or 16.0 percent), Sudan (18,869, or 12.6 percent), Ethiopia (11,400, or 7.6 percent), Burundi (9,869, or 6.6 percent), the Democratic Republic of Congo (7,900, or 5.3 percent), Eritrea 6,493, or 4.3 percent), and Sierra Leone (6,280, or 4.2 percent). Also, during that period, African nationals accounted for 21.2 percent (58,232) of the 274,848 total immigrants who were granted an asylum immigration status in the United States. The leading countries of origin for African nationals granted asylum were Ethiopia (17.1 percent of total African asylum grants), Cameroon (10.5 percent), and Egypt (8.5 percent).

As a group, African-born immigrants are less likely to be assessed as “Limited English Proficient” (LEP) in comparison to the other foreign-born populations in the U.S. This is based on the assessment that 70 percent of African-born immigrants speak only English or speak English very well as a second language. However, this statistic obscures the fact that proficiency varies by African immigrants’ country of origin. For example, in 2009, those from Cape Verde

were most likely to be categorized as LEP (60.9 percent), followed by those from Somalia (56.8 percent), Senegal (52.4 percent), Eritrea (51.5 percent), Guinea (47.9 percent), and Sudan (46.6 percent). The highest rates of English proficiency reported for African immigrants were for those from South Africa (96.9 percent), Zimbabwe (93.6 percent), Liberia (92.0 percent), Nigeria (87.0 percent), Uganda (86.2 percent), and Sierra Leone (81.6 percent.).

The African migration flow takes several legal forms: (a) family-reunification preference admissions; (b) refugee and asylum admissions; and (c) diversity lottery and employment, etc. In fact, in its feature publication, *African Immigration in the U.S.*, the Migration Policy Institute stated that, during the period of 2001-2010, African-born immigrants accounted for 28.4 percent (149,755) of the total refugee arrivals. During that period, refugee arrivals from Somalia alone accounted for 11.3 percent of all refugee arrivals in the United States.

Given the need to investigate the general scope of the extant literature that explains the family and school process factors underpinning parental involvement in education in general, the remainder of this literature review is organized as follows: parental involvement in education as a multidimensional concept; the theoretical frameworks and empirical studies relevant to school and family process factors that influence student academic and non-academic outcomes; salient features of parental involvement in the education of children of Somali immigrant families in North America and Western Europe; the research question that flows from this literature review which guides this study, and the conclusions and summary of the presumptions of the researcher prior to the fieldwork.

Parental Involvement in Education as a Multidimensional Concept

According to Peter Noack (2004), parents influence their children's education through various mechanisms including: (i) transmission of cognitive competencies; (ii) increased opportunities; and (iii) transmission of parental beliefs and attitudes concerning their assumptions with respect to the value and utility of education. Using these three distinct mechanisms may result in differences in orientations as well as divergences in views about what family influence means.

Likewise, Smit, Driessen, Sluiter & Slegers (2007) substantiate the idea that there is no current consensus on the parameters of family support for/influence on the education of their children, particularly with regard to relations between parents and schools. These researchers attribute this lack of consensus to the fact that there are conflicting primary objectives that are

sought by various stakeholders, namely: (1) a school's pedagogical objective to continue student learning from school to home; (2) a preparatory objective for parents and students to improve their knowledge to fit certain standards desired by schools both in subject matter content and other desired skills; (3) an organizational objective of schools to reach their own organizational improvement goals to be effective; (4) a socio-political objective of the wider society, regarding its democratic ideals, which aim to promote school-parent power sharing in school governance and decision-making (Smit, Driessen, Sluiter & Slegers, 2007, p. 46).

In general, the concept of parental involvement in schools is conceptualized and operationalized as composed of two or three distinct elements and their sub-components that link context process variables to background/status factors, which together impact the academic performance, psycho-social adjustment, and life trajectory of children. Theorists and researchers across the disciplines of psychology, education, and sociology endeavor to delineate this construct along several domains that encompass (a) attitudinal aspects, (b) behavioral aspects, and (c) child-rearing approaches (including parenting styles).

This is done due to the recognition that all of these aspects contribute to the factors that help (or hinder depending on who is talking) children educationally, socially and emotionally (Chao, 2000; Coleman, 1988; Epstein, 1987, 1995; Fan & Williams, 2010; Lareau, 2002; Grolnick & Pomerantz, 2009; Stewart, 2008; Lee & Shute; 2010). For example, some scholars endorse a two-pronged approach to parental involvement from the perspectives of school-based and home-based behavioral processes to foster student learning and improve institutional relationships (e.g. Eccles & Harold, 1996; Epstein, 1987, 1995; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Hill & Taylor, 2009).

In contrast, others argue that the attitudinal aspects of role construction, regarding the psychological source of parental motivation, must be considered as well (i.e. what a parent feels is important, useful, and permissible on behalf of their children). This latter group of scholars attempts to integrate parental behavior with notions of self-efficacy and differential role construction that underpin parental desire to motivate their children to do well educationally; and to eventually influence their children to become successful in self-regulation (e.g. Fan & Williams, 2010; Grolnick, 2009; Grolnick, Benjet, Kurowski, & Apostoleris, 1997; Hong & Ho, 2005; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997).

A third strand of scholarship attempts to explain parental involvement in education by assessing how social network structures, in family-school contexts, affect relational interactions

and access to resources which are assumed to ultimately influence the educational and inter- and intra-generational outcomes of children (Hill & Taylor, 2004; Hill & Craft 2003; McNeal, 1999; Lareau & Horvatt, 1999; Pomerantez et al, 2007; Turney & Kao, 2009). For instance, deficits in cultural capital or social capital in families are deemed to (separately or severally) attenuate opportunities to equal education and economic success (Bourdieu, 1987; Coleman, 1988; Morgan & Sorensen, 1999; Portes, 1998, 2000).

The foregoing discussion suggests that there is a need to better understand the mechanisms of specific forms of parental involvement that successfully link schools and families, regardless of their socioeconomic and sociocultural backgrounds. One area that was found to be promising in this direction of research is a type of child socialization called *academic socialization* which typically spans the following three dimensions of child rearing and parenting: (1) parental autonomy support, which fosters student self-regulation in academic learning; (2) provision of structure at home to support the pedagogical and instructional goals of teachers ; and (3) parental involvement in related educational behavior across home, school and community settings (Grolnick, 2009; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Horvat, Weininger & Lareau, 2003). This construct is deemed to transcend social class and socioeconomic status deprivations as it is amenable to adult manipulation of the environment around children.

Furthermore, as the analysis of the home processes that support academic success increased, researchers discerned a certain form of interaction and communication between caregivers and their children, i.e. academic socialization. This specific form of interaction is conceptualized and operationalized as the variety of parental beliefs and behaviors that directly indicate to the child the interest of the adults in the child's school life, in a way the child can comprehend and directly respond to verbally and behaviorally. As such, academic socialization indicates the adult(s) are communicating the importance or value of education to the child, and help the child link schoolwork to students' interests or goals (Taylor, Clayton & Rowley, 2004).

According to Hill & Tyson, (2009), limiting the conceptualization of parental involvement in schools to three aspects (*attitudinal, behavioral, and academic socialization*) provides researchers a strategy to parsimoniously examine the parental involvement construct, in its many facets, from the perspective of many stakeholders. These perspectives include those of students and their families, educators and other school personnel, communities, policy makers, and members of academia. Furthermore, Jordan, Orozco & Averett (2001) argue that it is important to better understand probable conflicting perceptions among these various stakeholders

around roles assigned to or assumed by each of them. The target of this call for clarification of roles that connect schools to families and communities is not intended to establish definitional consistency. Rather, it aims for a common language so that researchers and practitioners can more effectively implement and measure the impact of these connections on the collaborative work that schools and families must engage in.

To sum up this section, aspects of family home life and parental involvement in the school life of school children manifest themselves as attitudes, behaviors, and child socialization, which are all emblematic of how parental and school personnel world views may coincide (or diverge) in terms of the expectations and values which schools espouse (Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Weiss et al, 2009). In addition, these worldviews are indicative of what families understand as necessary and feasible to successfully launch their children educationally and socially (Grolnick, 2009; Hoover-Dempsey et al, 2005; Lareau, 2002).

Theoretical Frameworks

In order to analyze parental involvement in education, several theorists and researchers utilize a variety of theoretical frameworks which are derived from multiple conceptual lenses and schools of thought. The three strands of scholarship on the nature of partnerships across the two contexts of home-school, as presented in this literature review, are: Epstein's *Overlapping Spheres of Influence Framework* (Epstein et al, 2001, 2002); *Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler Model* (1995, 1997), and the *social capital* and *cultural capital* theories from the perspective of several scholars as described below.

Epstein's Overlapping Spheres of Influence

The theoretical frameworks modeled on ecological theories focus on a notion of interdependence that promotes shared responsibility between schools and family environments to help children optimize their cognitive and social development potential (e.g. Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1986; Epstein, 1987, 1995). One way to do this is through concerted engagement in specific activities at school and at home to support student learning experiences across the K-12 grades, in a manner that is appropriate to the developmental maturity of the child, and in collaborative partnerships with schools and other stakeholders in the school community (Christenson, 2004; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Lewis, Kim & Bey, 2011). One of the most prominent and influential scholarly contributions to partnership theory in

education is Joyce Epstein's conceptual framework, which is called "Overlapping Spheres of Influence" (Epstein 1986, 1987, and 1995, Epstein et al, 2001, 2002).

Epstein and her colleagues argue that the philosophies governing school-family relations need to be revisited in order to answer the question of: *Who is responsible for the academic and social success of students?* For example, some teachers may have strong philosophical preferences for the separation of home and school as two distinct institutions that hold separate goals, roles, and responsibilities. In other words, the teacher wishes to be considered a professional who should be left alone to execute his/her teaching responsibility in order to meet school expectations of teaching effectiveness. Such a perspective leaves no room for interference from families. The underlying assumption in that situation is that these two institutions make independent decisions and *do not share responsibility* for the success of the student—academically or socially. Epstein (1986) asserts that this perspective emphasizes the inherent incompatibility, competition, and conflict between families and schools and, therefore, supports the separation of the two institutions. In contrast, other teachers may have a desire to encourage families to support teacher instructional and pedagogical goals at home. These teachers request families to assist their children in home-work assignment areas, such as literacy and numeracy, to foster home-school continuity for students. Epstein confirms that this perspective emphasizes the coordination, cooperation, and complementarity of schools and families in education. Therefore, such collaborative-oriented teachers encourage frequent and open communication between the two institutions. The assumption underlying this perspective is that schools and families *do share responsibilities* for the success of students, academically and socially. In this situation, teachers and parents are more likely to enjoy a relationship that links them in an environment in which they share common goals, mutual trust, and respect (Adams & Christenson, 2000; Mapp, 2003).

Epstein also affirms that these disparate teacher perspectives were also evident in earlier studies that she and her colleagues conducted in several school settings in the United States (Epstein & Dauber, 1982). They found that teacher orientations are related to pedagogical decisions that may have an impact on the quality and quantity of teacher-parent interactions. Such interactions impact the ambience of the school climate, particularly for those families who already face barriers due to cultural differences which separate them from teachers (Trumbull et al, 2003). For example, such barriers may arise from differences in education, language, culture, class, race, gender, or even barriers stemming from prior negative parental experiences with schools. Furthermore, the discourse on disparity in teacher perspectives about collaboration with

families is obfuscated with nuances of normative ideals in society. These ideals fall along a continuum of assumptions about the actions of good teachers, parents, students, school administrators, caring communities, and responsive policy-makers (Smit, Driessen, Sluiter & Slegers, 2007).

In a nutshell, Epstein's primary theoretical contribution is her conceptualization of parental involvement in education as an effective social organization tool for schools (Catsambis & Garland, 1997). By framing the issue of family-school-community connection as a partnership construct, Epstein formalized the call for the school and home systems not to only share the responsibility of educating children but also to strive to pull in (together or separately) the resources of the community to support student learning and positive socialization. Thus, this theoretical and analytical view accepts that there are distinct roles for family and teachers to play in building together a nurturing academic and developmental environment around children. In that sense, both systems (i.e. school and home) do have a collective responsibility to provide students the academic and material resources they need to avoid poor school performance or even aborted educational careers by dropping out of school altogether.

Epstein's Overlapping Spheres of Influence Framework depicts a holistic model of school-family-community partnership as three overlapping circles (or spheres) that represent family, school, and community contexts with the child placed at the center. Four "Forces" (A, B, C, and D) act as levers to adjust the degree of alignment (or misalignment) of the spheres of influence (i.e. either pull them apart or push them together). This means that the spheres move in response to the demands of interactions between and within the three spheres of influence in a specific situation. The degree of overlap also indicates what is shared (e.g. goals, responsibilities, etc.). The four "Forces" are: Force A, which includes the child's age and grade, as well as the time in which the action took place; Force B, which includes the experiences, philosophies and practices of the family; and Forces C and D, which depict those of the school and community, respectively. The spheres are more likely to overlap during a child's pre-school and primary school years; but are less likely to do so as the child gets older and thus becomes more self-reliant.

Furthermore, this model has external and internal structures. The external structure influences the degree of overlap of the spheres. For instance, if a school establishes favorable parental involvement policies, or if parents decide to respond to school-sanctioned activities in greater numbers, there will be greater overlap between the spheres of family and school.

Conversely, families from certain backgrounds may fail to (or choose not to) respond to the parental/parental involvement efforts of the school for any number of reasons—in which case, the overlap will either remain unchanged or will decrease, depending on the number of families involved (Deslandes, 2001; Garcia, 2004).

In addition, the internal structure identifies the lines of communication and establishes when, where, and how social interactions converge or diverge across the boundaries of the contexts (Epstein and Sanders, 1996 as cited in Garcia, 2004). The general assumption underlying this framework is that the “*more overlap there is among the spheres of influence, the greater the likelihood that the student will achieve academic success in U.S. schools*” (Boethel, 2003, p. 15). The internal structure also outlines the institutional and individual lines of communication. Epstein began with five types of involvement that she and her fellow researchers subsequently increased to six. These six types of involvement activities, which are based on the relationships between family, school, and community contexts, include:

- (1) *Type 1: Parenting* - schools assist all families to establish the type of home environment that supports children as students, in age-wise appropriate ways, at each grade level. Schools are encouraged to offer families adult skill-building training programs, which may include workshops on child development or adult education as well as home visits, etc.;
- (2) *Type 2: Communicating* – schools are responsible for designing effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communication to share pertinent information about school programs and child progress with families. This effort is intended to foster transparent and a 2-way communication between schools and families regarding academic progress of children in a format that families can comprehend;
- (3) *Type 3: Volunteering* – schools recruit and organize parents to help teachers, administrators, students, and other parents by being physically present at school facilities and events;
- (4) *Type 4: Learning at home* – schools provide information and ideas to families to help their children at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities. Parents monitor their children’s progress and talk to them about their school day as well as about their aspirations and help students plan for their educational future;

- (5) *Type 5: Decision-making* – Schools include parents in school governance and welcome parental input in policy development related to issues that affect children at a specific school, including their own children; and
- (6) *Type 6: Collaborating with the community*—schools identify and integrate resources and services from the community in order to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development.

From the foregoing, it is clear that behavioral aspects of the home-school partnership, as explicated in Epstein’s Overlapping Spheres of Influence Framework, include elements that schools and families do together, and some which they do separately. Additionally, there is a notion that the degree of overlap between these spheres is appropriate for the developmental stage of the child. However, the philosophy, expectations, experiences, and practices of teachers are critical because they guide the stability of the two spheres (school-home) by impacting the school experiences of parents which, in turn, may influence parental motivation to be even more committed to the partnership, if opportunities for such a partnership exist in the first place (Epstein, 1987). Thus, this framework’s typology affords schools the flexibility to design dynamic programs for parental involvement, depending on the context and interactions between parents and schools, with the school system taking the lead. In short, this non-hierarchical framework of family-school-community partnership aims to foster *a shared responsibility* for student academic outcomes by defining six specific parental involvement types. These parental involvement domains allow schools to implement school-initiated parental involvement programs which are thought to instigate (accentuate) family practices that are assumed to help students in overcoming socio-demographic risks (status variables). Furthermore, these specific parental involvement types facilitate for all the three contexts (school-home-community spheres) to be aligned for the common purpose of meeting their age-appropriate academic and developmental targets.

Swap (1993) extended the conceptual coherence of Epstein’s partnership theory. Swap’s work supported and expanded Epstein and her colleagues’ idea that families and schools interface through specific actions which schools intentionally employ (Christenson, 2004). For instance, Swap (1993) explicated that schools can use one of four approaches to either promote close collaboration or avoid full partnership with families. These approaches (or models of partnership) shape the scope and depth of relationships between families and schools. The first approach, i.e.,

the *traditional protective model*, allows schools to require families to delegate the full responsibility of educating their children to schools. This model protects professionals from family intrusion. In this world view, there are few or no opportunities for partnerships between schools and families. In return for this independent authority, however, schools accept the responsibility and concomitant accountability for the students' educational outcomes.

The second approach, i.e., the *school-to-home transmission model*, allows schools to seek parental assistance in order to uphold the objectives of schools without engaging families in decision-making and governance. Thus, schools give a clear guidance to families with respect to the required expectations, values, and practices that support students' academic and social success across school and home settings. This supports the organizational goals of the school but without fully sharing power with families.

The third approach, i.e., the *curriculum enrichment model*, allows schools to expand the breadth of their curricular repertoire by incorporating contributions from families to students' learning process. The primary drawback of this model, however, is its exponential complexity as the diversity of students and the number of cultures represented in schools increase. This is mainly due to the challenges of attaining a consensus on which curricular adaptations merit application—a challenge which also makes its implementation difficult.

Finally, the fourth approach, i.e., the *partnership model*, idealizes collaboration between families and educators, and allows these two institutions to share a *common agenda* to foster academic achievement for children. This is accomplished through a common mission between the home-school contexts, with input and resources from the school community, and the society at large.

In sum, Epstein's pioneering work in partnership-friendly theory, policy, and practice endeavors to improve student performance by standardizing school-home links through a concrete agenda of what to do without specifying a hierarchy (i.e. types of parental involvement). Additionally, her work popularizes the notion of a joint responsibility for school children. It also firmly establishes the importance of collaborative roles for families and schools in subsequent scholarly efforts. In this world view of school-home relations, the argument is that the synergy of the two ecological systems closest to the child must join forces to win the battle against unequal educational opportunities for children in societies like those in the United States. Other theorists and researchers agree that it is worthwhile to have school-family partnership to promote positive student outcomes as an educational and social policy targets. However, they caution that at the

individual level, there are psychological antecedents which interact with structural and relational aspects peculiar to specific contexts that may presage collaboration between schools and families.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler Model

Drawing on Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory of self-efficacy, Hoover-Dempsey and her colleagues propose that the self-efficacy beliefs of teachers and parents are instrumental in parental involvement in the education of students (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler 1995, 1997). These researchers developed a model called *The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model*, which offers four distinct psychological constructs to predict parent involvement in the education of children. Those constructs are: (a) parents' role construction, (b) self-efficacy, (c) parental perceptions of teacher's invitations to collaborate, and (d) parental perceptions about their child's invitation to help them academically. Thus, this model clarifies the source of parental motivation to participate in the education of their children in the first place. The model raises two fundamental questions, namely: (1) *Why do parents become involved in their children's education?* (2) *How does parental involvement affect the academic outcomes of children?*

In contrast to Epstein's six types of parental involvement typology which delineates parental involvement activities that support children as students, *The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler Model* portrays parental motivation, to engage in the educative tasks of their children's learning, as a sequence of psychological and behavioral dimensions which are also sensitive to signals from others around them. For instance, (a) parents decide that they have a role which they should or can play (i.e. the role construction aspect of the model); (b) parents get convinced that they are able to undertake what the role requires (i.e. the self-efficacy aspect of the model), and (c) parents take into consideration what they perceive as invitations to participate in the educative tasks that support their children to excel academically across the contexts of home-school (the response aspect of the model).

According to this theoretical model, the origins of self-efficacy beliefs stem from four general sources that denote how parents make decisions about ways to participate in the parental involvement programs of schools: (1) *direct experience* of successful interactions with schools, (2) *vicarious experience* through others who were successful in dealing with schools; (3) *verbal persuasion* by others to participate in school processes; and (4) parental *emotional arousal*, which is indicative of parents who are emotionally invested in, and are specifically concerned about the education of their own children; and, thus, are more likely to participate in school events. Such

emotional arousal includes even those parents who attribute the academic success of their children to their own self-efficacy (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1995, 1997).

Furthermore, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler assert that family status variables (such as parental education, income, and marital status) do not explain the following: (a) parental specific decisions to become involved; (b) forms that such involvement is likely to take; and (c) the effects of parental involvement on student success academically and socially (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1995). Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's theoretical contribution is requisite in the fact that their model explains in detail the manner in which parental involvement influences children's developmental and educational outcomes through direct and indirect mechanisms. These mechanisms (as explicit levers) include encouraging, modeling, reinforcement, and direct instruction (primarily through assisting with homework assignments). In addition, Hoover-Dempsey et al (1987) found that teacher self-efficacy was also significantly related to other teacher reports of parents' involvement in conferences, volunteering, and home tutoring, in addition to being significantly related to teacher own perceptions of parental support of student learning.

This basic research in developmental psychology by Hoover-Dempsey and her colleagues (as well as others in the psychology field who investigate the impact of parental support on student self-regulation) suggests that there is a relationship between parental efficacy and teacher efficacy, which, in turn, impacts students' sense of self-regulation (Barnyak & McNelly, 2009; Grolnick, 2009; Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler and Brissie, 1987). In essence, *The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler Model* (with its expanded versions) shows that parental motivation is a critical component in the education of children which can be predicted, both in terms of its context-specific and its psychological specifics. That in turn indicates how those features of the model shape parental decisions to participate (or not to participate) in the educative tasks of their own children at school and at home (Green et al. 2007).

In testing the model, Green et al (2007) were interested in examining the capacity of the *Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler Model* constructs to predict parents' self-reported involvement in education-related activities at school or at home. More specifically, these researchers wanted to investigate how the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler Parental Involvement Model (1995, 1997 as revised in 2005) predicts the types and levels of the three major sources of parental motivation for involvement during the elementary and middle school years. They looked at various aspects of the model, which include role construction, personal self-efficacy for involvement, general

invitations from the schools, specific invitations from the teacher and child, and parent self-perceived time and energy available to participate. In this study, Green et al (2007) used a sample of 853 parents with children from 1st through 6th grade who were enrolled in an ethnically-diverse, metropolitan, public school system in the United States.

Green et al (2007) recruited parents at two separate time points (labeled Sample 1, and Sample 2) at different schools through questionnaire packets sent home with, and returned by, children from the participating schools. Participants at the two time points were independent. Only one parent was asked to fill out the questionnaire per child (if the family had more than one child), and was asked to fill out a questionnaire only for the oldest child at the school. In testing the model, the researchers found that the predictive power of specific model constructs differed for elementary and middle school children's parents. Results of this study suggest that the model significantly predict both home-based ($R^2=.39$) and school-based involvement ($R^2=.488$). According to *The Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler Model*, the first source of parental motivation stems from beliefs, which include role construction and parental self-efficacy for helping children to succeed in school. The second source is how parents perceive invitations of involvement, including general invitations from the school, school climate, and the specific requests made by teachers and children regarding specific actions (e.g. teachers requesting help for the child with a certain assignment, or a child begging his or her parent(s) to come to a particular event). The third source of motivation is the personal life-context variables that promote or detract from parental engagement in educative tasks (e.g. lack of transportation or childcare, rigid employment schedules, etc).

The cross-sectional data of this study revealed that the three constructs of the model predict significant portions of variance in parents' home-based and school-based involvement in education (even when controlling for socioeconomic status variable). Significant predictive variables for school-based involvement were role construction, perceptions of available time and energy, and specific child invitations. Contrary to the researchers' expectations, however, socioeconomic status was not a significant predictor of either home-based or school-based involvement. These results suggest that general school invitations may influence parental involvement, but only through specific teacher invitations.

In summary, *The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler Model*, in both its original theoretical conceptualization and further adaptations, illustrates how parental role construction, regarding parental behaviors at home and at school, originates and develops. It should be noted that the two

theoretical models described above, namely Epstein's *Overlapping Spheres of Influence Framework* and *The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler Model*, have one element in common—they are both based on the socio-constructivism tradition. Therefore, they both take into consideration the value of experience, and persuasion among dyads and triads in social relationships (e.g. parent-child, child-parent, parent-teacher, teacher-parent, parent-child-teacher and so forth). Furthermore, they both offer plausible theoretical arguments and insights about why and how the child (as a student) should be at the center of collaborative interactive systems across school-home contexts. This underscores a notion of interdependence—with teachers as careful curricular guides, and families as invested academic socialization cheerleaders. One may argue then that this interdependence is indicative of a growing recognition that differentials in material and non-material supports that are available to children, to thrive educationally and socially, can only be overcome through school-based interventions that succeed only if supported by families who buy into the value of being engaged in the formal education of their own children.

In Epstein's framework, its unit of analysis primarily covers the combined efforts of schools and families that engage in observable and actionable strategies (i.e. engaging in six types of parental involvement in education). These strategies are intended to build effective partnerships that foster academic excellence in children to prepare them for adult life, through the acquisition of educational certificates and skills. In contrast, the unit of analysis for *The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler Model* stems from beliefs and attitudes of parents at the individual level. As such, parental decisions to engage in tasks related to the cognitive and socio-emotional development of their children at school and at home are tied to their initial beliefs, namely their role construction and self-efficacy. Thus, parental beliefs impact parental decisions to respond to invitations (direct or indirect) from their children and from teachers. Therefore, these initial decisions to participate take into consideration parental recognition of how receptive their children and the teachers of their children are to their own overtures for collaboration, and vice versa. This model takes into account personal life contextual variables that may undermine school-family partnerships. However, a weakness inherent in the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler Model is its relative inadequate attention to community-related factors that undermine the success of school-family partnerships.

Theories from sociology, such as social capital and cultural capital, add substance to the insights of the two theoretical models from the disciplines of education and psychology, as

presented above. These theories enrich the analysis of the dimensions of parental involvement in education as follows.

Social and Cultural Capital Theories

The third theoretical lens used in the extant literature in family participation in schools focuses on factors that influence parental involvement in education as grounded in social and capital theories. These theories problematize the construct of parental involvement in education as a mismatch between home-school contexts. Researchers who adopt the lens of these sociological theories attribute this mismatch to differentials that include language use, time and energy allocation to educative tasks as well as access to information and resources in the community. These elements are assumed, together or separately, to impact the inter-generational and intra-generational power-sharing habits, attitudes and skills that exist in a particular community or society (Bourdieu, 1987; Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1993, 1995; Woolcock, 1998, 2001). Nevertheless, there is an ongoing lively debate in the field of sociology about how to approach the complexity of sound formulations of what social capital and cultural capital exactly are. For instance, some scholars who evaluated the theoretical merits of the work of the earlier social and cultural capital theorists did not find support for the traditional theoretical arguments about the sources and consequences of educational opportunity or educational inequality to be complete.

In addition, several sociologists argue that Bourdieu's and Coleman's prior theoretical conclusions did not account for all the differential effects of social closure in schools as it relates to the educational access, retention and attainment among ethnic minority and immigrant youth (Kao, 2004; Morgan and Sorensen, 1999; Portes, 1998). Furthermore, Woolcock (1998) argues that social capital is best understood as a sociological and relational variable (as opposed to a political/psychological variable), which is centered on "networks within, between, and beyond communities", while simultaneously taking into consideration the public institutional environment in which these networks are embedded (p. 11). Despite this ongoing debate about the adequacy of the foundational concepts of social and cultural capital theories, social capital and cultural capital theories have become two of the most popular conceptual frameworks in the fields of education and international development.

However, there is a wide acceptance that social and cultural capital theories still suffer from definitional and conceptual fragmentation that makes it challenging to define. For example,

social capital is broadly defined in frameworks adopted by the OECD countries to denote “*networks together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate co-operation within or among groups*” (Cote & Healy, 2001, p. 41). Social capital is also defined in terms of its function, which emphasizes that “*it is not a single entity but a variety of different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors—whether persons or corporate actors—within the structure.*” (Coleman, 1988, p. 98). Even more confusing, unlike other forms of capital (physical and human, for example), social capital “*inheres in the structure of relations between actors and among actors. It is not lodged either in the actors or in physical implements of the production*” (Coleman, 1988, p. 98).

Social capital has been further elucidated as “*the sum of resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition*” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 119 as cited in Adler & Kwon, 2002, p. 20). It should be noted that the work of the French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, is largely written in the author’s native French language. The greater part of intellectual material available and pertaining to his work in the English-speaking world is, therefore, primarily accessible via translation and interpretations that are offered by other sociologists and scholars across multiple disciplines.

A fourth interpretation of social capital is offered by Portes & Sensenbrenner (1993), who present the theoretical concept of social capital as “*those expectations within a collectivity that affect the economic goals and goal seeking habits of its members*” (p. 1323). In contrast to the interpretations described above, Putnam (1995) emphasizes social capital to be evident in the “*features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit.*” (p. 67).

All of these definitions offer nuances regarding the substance and nature of the social structures and networks that afford actors certain privileges. Such nuances include: (1) the type of links that bind individuals and collectivities (i.e. internally, externally, or both); (2) access to sources of social capital; and (3) manifestations of social and cultural capital, as an advantage or disadvantage that accrues to individuals or groups, based on the benefits or constraints of their membership in social structure and network (Adler & Kwon, 2002).

Bourdieu (1986) and later, Wacquant (1989), theorize about the value of social and cultural capital. They are credited with presenting the most theoretically coherent explanation of

social and cultural capital concepts (Portes, 1998; Lareau & Weininger, 2003). The most important theoretical argument of Bourdieu's cultural capital theory is that "*schools play a crucial and growing role in the transmission of advantage across generations*" (Lareau & Weininger, 2003 p.567). Lareau & Weininger (2003), nevertheless, contend that the current dominant interpretation of Bourdieu's work in English is too narrow, and thereby tends to be rendered incomplete. This could be due to erroneous partitioning of the two assumptions that represent the core of Bourdieu's conceptualization of cultural capital, namely, "*in terms of prestigious 'highbrow' aesthetic pursuits and attitudes, and an insistence that it should be conceptually and causally distinguished from the effects of ability*" (p. 575).

Therefore, this erroneous interpretation, in turn, leads to an assumption evident in most cultural capital scholarship in the United States, which explains parental involvement in schools as indicative of parental membership in a high-status class (i.e. middle- or upper-income); and then presumes that attainment of credentials is vital to the retention of such membership. In disclaiming this "*high-brow*" element, Lareau and Weininger (2003) argue that Bourdieu proposed that any given competence serves as a form of cultural capital if it facilitates appropriation of the cultural heritage of a society in unequal proportions, "*thereby engendering the possibility of exclusive advantage*" (p. 580). Thus, they suggest that, in reality, Bourdieu was attempting to "*differentiate the effects of factors linked to status from those linked to a pure technical competence*" (p. 575). In this vein, Bourdieu proposed that credentials, through education, comprise two dimensions—a technical dimension and a status dimension—which certify two forms of competence on the part of the holder: (a) certificates and degrees, which guarantee or signal a technical capacity; and (b) social competence, which enhances the social dignity of the holder (and, in turn, exacerbates class/status stratifications). Thus, they argue that these two forms of cultural capital should not be divided into two elements, as has been the case in the English-speaking literature on cultural capital theory (Lareau and Weininger, 2003, p. 581).

One apparent weakness of Bourdieu's interpretation of cultural capital, nevertheless, is its pessimistic worldview, which seems to suggest that there is little room for economic and social mobility among the poor and the low-bred masses. This depends on the wealth of opportunities (or lack thereof) to facilitate access to institutional resources due to group membership by birth and upbringing. This weakness is reflected in such statements such as "*Dominants always tend to impose the skills they have mastered as necessary and legitimate and to include in their definition of excellence the practices at which they excel.*" (Lareau and Weininger, 2003, p. 582). Another

weakness mentioned in the literature is that it is difficult to quantify and measure cultural capital (Lamont & Lareau, 1988).

Other sociologists offer human agency and diligence as remedies to counteract the social ill effects of the exclusionary tendencies of those with superior education, wealth, or power (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1993, 1995; Portes, 1998). Initiating this more optimistic movement, American sociologist, Robert Coleman championed the notion of social capital as a mechanism to transmit the effect of family human capital from parents to children. This has proven to be the most popular idea among later analysts testing or using the concept of social capital in education.

In Coleman's view, access to social capital allows individuals to secure benefits through relationships and the communication that exist within social structures and networks in schools (Coleman, 1988). Furthermore, he indicated that social capital existing in the relations among individuals takes three major forms: (1) obligations, expectations, and trustworthiness of social structures; (2) information channels; and (3) social norms that serve as effective mechanism for rewards and sanctions. He argued that all of those three forms of social capital are present in parent-child interactions. Additionally, he explicated that obligations can be parsimoniously conceived of as credit slips that people hold (which can be called in if necessary) through information channels concerned with delivering and receiving information. These channels provide an important basis for social action through their use of social relations. Therefore, group social norms provide the criteria for standards to reward or sanction individual actions.

Coleman's major theoretical contribution is his affirmation that social capital affects student learning through two specific concepts called *social closure at school* and *social control through intergenerational closure* (Coleman, 1987, 1988). Social closure refers to the source of social capital in schools—as a result of social networks—that generates relationships in the school community where everyone knows one another as friends, neighbors, etc. In contrast, intergenerational closure operates through social networks of parents of children, at the same school, who are also connected through neighborhood residence, after-school social activities, and membership in the same councils at the schools where their children attend—or it even operates through the attendance of the same churches or social clubs outside the school. This intergenerational closure is generated by dense relational network and thereby creates norm-enforcing social networks that promote student achievement (Coleman, 1988). The difference between the two is that social closure is school-based (i.e. community of the school) whereas intergenerational closure includes a community that begins with parental membership in a school

community, and continues with memberships in other contexts (i.e. multiple opportunities to associate and watch out for each other's kids).

Coleman further clarified that family social capital—including parental human capital—is accessible to students only through the physical presence of parents to interact with children and through other adults, including extended family. However, this physical presence must be coupled with attention that focuses on the child. He lamented that the “*absence of adults may be described as a structural deficiency in family social capital*” (Coleman, 1988, p. S111); whereby parental human capital is employed exclusively at work or elsewhere outside of the home. Coleman considered social capital of the family to be “*the relations between children and their parents and, when families include other members, it includes relationships with them as well*” (Coleman, 1988, p. S110). This means that modern family structures (such as single-parent families, families that have one or both parents employed outside of the home, and nuclear families with limited access to extended family members) are viewed to be structurally deficient from this perspective. The effects of deficient family social capital, within the family structure and daily life interactions, are presumed to include differences in terms of “*different educational outcomes*” (Coleman, 1988, p.S111). In this claim, Coleman puts negative educational outcomes (i.e. dropping out of school) at the doorstep of parental choices about the time and attention that they bestow on their children—which if deficient would be detrimental to youth and future generations in society (1988, 1991).

Another socio-educational argument that Coleman raised was the connection of structuring boundaries and educational outcomes. He was convinced that achievement norms and teaching practices, bolstered by firm religious orientation, provide students in Catholic schools with superior academic advantage, compared to their counterparts in public schools. He believed these norms come to the fore primarily through school social capital as generated by social closure between students and the intergenerational closure among parents. However, Coleman's views were subsequently challenged by the work of Morgan and Sorensen (1999), which drew on the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS: 88) on a nationally representative sample of students. What made this challenge all the more interesting is that these researchers were using the same data set that Coleman used to analyze and reach his conclusions on the interaction of family social capital and school type on student academic success through two specific constructs—namely, social closure and intergenerational social closure.

In a nutshell, Morgan & Sorensen (1991) reached a conclusion different from Coleman's. For instance, they presented their findings of a negative effect of parental social closure on children's performance in mathematics, within the public school sector, as evidence to support their alternative hypothesis which argued that horizon-expanding schools as the setting in which parents engage in social network structures that they access through individuals and groups outside of their immediate social network in resource-poor schools. In this counter-claim, they found that horizon-expanding schools benefit student learning through exposure to alternatives to the bleak local conditions in many urban schools. The testing of the utility of constructs of social closure and intergenerational closure in various contexts and different population subgroups continued in subsequent studies.

Drawing on the NELS:88 data, Kao & Rutherford (2007) also examined the extent to which children who come from diverse backgrounds and children of immigrant families are disadvantaged in terms of their access to social capital, as compared to their native-born and White counterparts, respectively, and to distinguish ethnically diverse groups by generational status (Kao & Rutherford, 2007). They used two measures of social capital which served as their concept operationalization. These measures are: (1) intergenerational closure and (2) parents' school involvement. They found that their results supported the notion that the two types of social capital that they examined have positive influence on educational outcomes (e.g. GPA, composite mathematics, and reading test scores), but that they differentially affect students, based on race and immigration status.

As the aforementioned studies illustrate, the literature investigating intergenerational closure remains inconclusive. However, alternative explanations have not yet been empirically supported, either due to tendencies among researchers to make "*tautological*" claims or due to conceptual confusion (Portes, 1998, p. 5). Researchers who weighed into the merits of social capital on social policy matters examined different levels of social organization. For instance, Putnam (1993), another American theorist, proposes a different conceptualization of social capital. His definition involves the varying "*features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit*" (p. 67). In contrast to Bourdieu's and Coleman's analysis of how social and cultural capital impact individuals and subgroups in close proximity, Putnam's focus is on national and sub-national regions. He contends that in an environment where trust and reciprocity are common, social cohesion tends to be relatively high. From this perspective, the level of social capital in a

community or society can be discerned through the density of membership in voluntary associations, the extent of interpersonal trust between individuals, and group perceptions of the existence of mutual benefits that foster communal collaboration (Putnam, 1993, 1995). As such, Putnam offers a useful approach to distinguish two particular concepts of social capital—i.e. *bonding* and *bridging*. Those aspects of social capital promote civic participation and personal wellbeing.

Bonding social capital refers to strong ties among groups that have a sense of common identity and are typically culturally or ethnically homogenous. Such groups include family members and close friends whom one depends on in order to “*get by*” (Woolcock, 2001, p.10). In contrast to bonding social capital, bridging social capital refers to a horizontal expansion of social networks beyond one’s immediate circle of family and friends to more heterogeneous lateral networks. These networks allow individuals to have more cross-cutting links to business associates, acquaintances, friends from different ethnic groups, and friends of friends, so as to “*get ahead*” and have access to resources and information outside of their own immediate network of relatives (Woolcock, 2001, p. 10).

Woolcock expanded prior conceptualizations of social capital by adding a vertical dimension to the concept to formalize the connection of groups and individuals to those in positions of higher power. This perspective on social capital posits that those in positions of less power take part in decision-making and policy or may gain access to information and resources from development initiatives of the World Bank (Grootaert & Bastelaer, 2001). According to Grootaert & Bastelaer (2001), Putnam’s ideas about social capital regarding conditions that facilitate wider civic engagement (i.e. bridging) and accessing formal and informal resources (i.e. linking) to overcome barriers are supported in practice.

According to Grootaert & Bastelaer (2001) social capital can be operationalized along three dimensions (i.e. scope, form, and channels). The first dimension takes into consideration the scope of social capital (i.e. unit of observation at the micro, meso, and macro levels). The second dimension involves the cognitive and structural manifestations of social capital forms. This dimension defines how the actors in a network collaborate as well as their perceptions of that collaboration. Structural social capital addresses the structural elements that facilitate information-sharing process that link established roles, social networks and other social structures which are based on rules, procedures and precedents. In contrast, cognitive social capital refers to shared norms, values, trust, attitudes, and beliefs. The third and final dimension

of social capital encompasses the channels of social capital, which refer to any form of capital as an asset or class of assets that produce a stream of benefits.

Due to its plasticity, there is still much debate over the various forms in which social capital manifests itself (i.e. what it is versus what it is not). However, most of the current understanding of social capital depicts it as being characteristic of group behaviors and attitudes which exist in social relationships that are instrumental to power-sharing and access to formal and informal resources in a society (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1995; Woolcock, 1998; Kao, 2004; Portes, 1998, 2000).

In the field of education, theories of social capital, cultural, and human capital provide useful tools for analyzing relationships, roles, responsibilities, power-sharing, and access to resources. For instance, schools are presented in the literature to be more congruent with middle-class values and forms of communication. This is explained in the parental involvement literature to be due to teachers who tend to share compatible levels of human capital with parents from middle and higher socioeconomic backgrounds. From this perspective, teachers are considered likely to find it challenging to work with families who come from disparate social milieus such as poor and/or illiterate or less-educated families, as well as with those coming from single-parent households and/or cultural and racially diverse backgrounds (Bakker, Denessen & Brus-Lavin, 2007; Epstein & Becker, 1982; Kohl et al, 2000; Lareau & Horvat, 1999). Consequently, families with greater social and cultural capital tend to be more involved at school. These families are also more likely to have supportive social networks with other parents in schools that their children attend (Coleman, 1988; Hill & Taylor, 2004; Lareau, 2002).

It was along that notion that Lareau and her colleagues expanded the cultural and social capital theory. Through a longitudinal ethnographic field work that offers a new understanding of the impact of familial background on the school performance of students, Lareau and her colleagues were able to frame the concepts of cultural and social theory (Lareau, 2002; Lareau and Weininger, 2003). They came up with the idea of what can be termed as *separate spheres* of life (in contrast to Epstein's *overlapping spheres of influence*)—due to specific parenting approaches that appear to be class-based (Lareau, 2002; Lareau & Horvat, 1999)

According to Woolcock and Narayan (2000), a notable feature of the discourse surrounding social capital is its relational and synergistic value. Therefore, social capital can be a strategic tool in permitting social groups to have richer forms of associational relations through trust to overcome traditional divides among scholars, practitioners, policymakers, and community

groups. As described above, social capital and cultural capital are presented as various forms of actual and potential resources that accrue to an individual or group through networks of social connections that exist between people using their shared values and norms to engage in specific desirable behaviors that are perpetuated through systems of rewards and sanctions within specific boundaries.

In general, a growing body of meta-analysis review evidence supports the idea that students perform better, academically and socially, when families are engaged in the education of their children (Christenson, Rounds & Gorney, 1992; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jeynes, 2003, 2005, 2010; Lee & Shute, 2010). This signifies that for comprehensive engagement of families from diverse backgrounds to take place, it is imperative to facilitate for such families ample opportunities “*to construct their relationships with the school with more comfort and trust*” (Lareau & Horvat, 1999, p. 44). As process factors (at school and at home) are relevant for the topic of parental involvement in the education of their children and for building collaborative connections between schools and families, the next section of this literature review presents some relevant examples of the empirical evidence of process factors.

Empirical Evidence: Parental Involvement Process Factors

Several researchers delineated specific process variables that characterize parental involvement in the education of their children (Lee & Shute, 2010; Christenson, Rounds & Gorney, 1992; and Fan & Williams, 2010). For example, Lee and Shute (2010) identified twelve (12) variables that demonstrate direct empirical links to academic achievement for students in K-12 school systems. The results of their comprehensive review of 150 studies across the fields of education, sociology, and cognitive psychology suggest that personal and social-contextual factors, independently of each other and collectively, “influence academic achievement” (p. 4). These researchers isolated four aspects of parental involvement that are relevant to the academic performance of students in Grades K-12:

- (a) Parental high, yet reasonable, expectations and aspirations for their children;
- (b) Parent participation in school events (e.g. PTA meetings, field trips, fundraising; volunteer work, or community service, etc.);

- (c) Parental supervision and monitoring of their children's homework while enforcing home rules that the child understands and can comply with; and
- (d) Parental school-related discussions with their children.

These two researchers were able to create an integrated framework which they called the Personal and Social Contextual Factors framework (PSCF). This framework depicts the endogenous and exogenous aspects of the personal and environmental socio-contextual factors deemed to influence student academic performance (Lee & Shute, 2010). In this framework, *personal factors* were defined to be within student characteristics involving psychological, cognitive, and behavioral variables (i.e. student engagement and learning strategies), whereas *socio-contextual factors* were defined to involve variables that are considered to originate from outside of the student. Such variables can be related to school climate, which is comprised of school academic focus, teacher variables, and principal's leadership. These variables can also be related to social-familial influences such as parental involvement and peer influence variables.

Lee and Shute's (2010) findings support the salient influences that were identified in a much earlier review by Christenson, Roundy & Gorney in 1992. In their extensive literature review that spanned 160 studies, Christenson, Roundy & Gorney (1992) delineate five family and home environmental factors that are considered to have an impact on student achievement, which are additionally amenable to educational interventions. These five factors are:

- (1) Parental expectations, which are defined as future aspirations or as parents' current expectations of their children's performance in school; and parental attributions to explain their children's performance in school (e.g. ability as opposed to effort);
- (2) Structural suitability of the home environment for learning, and how supportive that environment is –with respect to fostering student learning and intellectual pursuits. Examples include: providing homework space and time, child's verbal interaction with adults and siblings, presence of books and appropriate play materials at the home, adult modeling of reading, and rules regarding television viewing, etc.;
- (3) Home-affective environment, which is defined as the emotional environment at home as it pertains to the child-parent relationship, and as characterized by

parental acceptance, nurturance, encouragement, and emotional responsiveness to the child's needs to foster school performance and adjustment;

- (4) Discipline, which is defined as the parenting style orientation which parents most use to control their child's behavior (i.e. authoritative versus authoritarian parenting style);
- (5) Parental involvement, which is broadly defined to include activities that allow parents to participate in the educational process of their children both at school and at home.

A third study conducted by Fan & William (2010) investigated how various process dimensions of parental involvement in education that were identified in earlier studies predict students' own motivation. The aspects of motivation which these researchers examined among 10th grade students were: (1) student engagement, (2) student self-efficacy, and (3) student intrinsic motivation to do well in two subjects (English and math). Their overall finding was that the various dimensions of parental involvement that they examined were differentially linked to students' engagement in academic activities, their sense of self-efficacy, and their intrinsic motivation to do well in math and English subject matter at school. The effects of parental involvement dimensions on the students' academic self-efficacy, engagement, and intrinsic motivation were measured by eight parental involvement variables; namely, (1) parental aspirations for student's post-secondary education; (2) parents' participation in school functions; (3) family rules reflecting parental home supervision; (4) parental advising; (5) parental participation in extracurricular activities with their children; (6) parent-school communication; (7) school-initiated contact; and (8) parent-initiated contact.

Fan & Williams (2010) conducted a series of five multiple regression analyses on each of their imputed data set to explore the effects of the different dimensions of parental involvement on students' academic self-efficacy, engagement, and intrinsic motivation in the subjects of math and English, while simultaneously controlling for student socioeconomic status and gender. They found that parental involvement in extracurricular activities had a positive influence on student math self-efficacy, but, interestingly enough, not on English. They also found that parental rules regarding television watching positively affected students' academic motivation (possibly as a result of being used as a reward/punishment strategy by parents). However, rules concerning maintaining a certain GPA had a negative correlation with intrinsic motivation in English (most

likely because improvement in a subject matter necessitates further parental instruction—as opposed to withholding approval, etc.—for the child to gain skills and confidence in the subject matter).

Additionally, they found that parents who offered advice to their children at home help their children to improve their self-efficacy to do well in the subjects they investigated, i.e. math and English. These researchers indicated that they were intentional about their statistical procedures to correct several problems with the data set; namely, participant non-responses. This allowed them to adjust unequal probabilities of selection of students and make inferences to the specific (or even general) population being studied—such as an estimation of the total number of 10th graders in the USA who attended Catholic, private or public schools. Using the MI Markov Chain Monte Carlo approach, through the SAS 9.2 procedure of PROC MI, they were able to handle the missing cases in their sample. Three sets of imputed data were generated from the large national data set, and the researchers indicated that each of their analytic samples included a weighted sample size of 15,325 adolescents and parents selected for the study. The demographic representation in the sample was as follows: 50.2% were female and 49.8% were male, 57.0% were White students, 14.5% were Hispanic students, 13.2% were African-American students, 9.6% were Asian students and 0.9% was American Indian students.

The study rated four parent variables on a 4-point scale: (a) parent participation in extracurricular activities with children; (b) parent-school communication concerning school problems; (c) school-initiated contact with parents; and (d) parent-initiated contact with school. Parents reported the highest averages for participation in extracurricular activities with their children ($M=3.08$, $SD=0.56$), indicating that they were more likely, on average, to be ‘*sometimes*’ involved in these activities. All the other three parental variables of this study that were related to school-home communication exhibited low averages (ranging from $M= 1.30$ to 1.36) which indicates that the school-home communication between schools and families in this sample did not often take place. In contrast, parents who often advised their children had a higher average ($M=2.28$).

On average, parents expressed their aspiration for their children to attend a four-year college as a minimum level of education in the future ($M=5.32$). However, parental aspiration for the post-secondary school education of their children showed the greatest variance ($SD=1.29$) among all the parent involvement variables. In terms of family rules, the majority of the parents in that study reported preferences for specific types of rules (93% reported family rules for

homework; 89% reported family rules for doing household chores; 82% reported family rules for maintaining grades; and 64% reported family rules for watching television).

The strength of the Fan & William (2010) study is its research design, which enabled the researchers to detangle the differential effects of various types of parental involvement which are manifest as family rules. They were also able to distinguish between different aspects of parent-school communication. Such aspects, which include communication concerning students' poor performance and behavioral problems, did have strong negative associations with student motivational outcomes (student engagement, student self-efficacy, and student intrinsic motivation regarding English and math subjects).

A weakness of the study, however, was that it did not include a breakdown by race or by school type in its analyses; although the data set they used to examine the effect of differentials of parental involvement on student motivational outcomes did include that information. Overall, in that study there are two findings that are negative and puzzling. These findings pertain to two parental strategies outside of the class-time; namely, the negative effect of high parental involvement on student extracurricular activities as well as the negative impact of parental enforcement of rules in the home for their children to maintain desirable GPAs. This negative impact was particularly discernible for students' intrinsic motivation for mastery goals in the English literature. Fan & William (2010) argue that over-involved parents in school-based activities (e.g. in extracurricular activities programmed by schools) may somehow inhibit students' intrinsic motivation as it is possible that adolescents prefer to spend more time away from their parents. However, one may counter-argue that in addition to the one offered by the researchers, it is plausible that assignments related to English, as an academic subject for 10th graders, require students' ability to create their own subjective interpretation of an assignment, which get graded by teachers who also have their own subjective preferences about what would be an acceptable interpretation of the content. This is opposed to assignments involving memorizing formulaic steps that can more easily be supported by peers and parents because there is less subjectivity in what would be the right answer to a math problem.

Additionally, a more serious shortcoming of this study is that the researchers left an important aspect of parental involvement in the school-home life of children unanalyzed. For example, they did not analyze how familial attachment may affect school-based extracurricular activity of parents by taking race and gender into consideration—if one assumes that familial attachment patterns may not be standard across all demographic groups and possibly by gender.

Finally, one may argue that demanding high grades from students, in general, without providing additional learning opportunities for them across the school-home contexts is quite likely to be counter-productive. For example, in an English classics assignment, demanding high grades is unlikely to help a child who already suffers from literacy issues or has no prior cultural affinity to the topic of the assignment. Thus, parental demands for high grades without meaningful support may, in some situations, be damaging relationship-wise or performance-wise (in a child-parent dyad). That is subject grade for a particular student will not change unless a parent takes over such an assignment, on behalf of the struggling student, or seeks help from others to support the child to complete the assignment successfully and turn it in for grading. This, of course, may or may not support an effective realization and internalization of the instructional goals of the assignment.

Other researchers in social sciences endeavor to use complex study designs that were devised to capture moderating effects of process variables in the family-school contexts. For example, Grolnick, Benjet, Kurowski & Apostoleris (1997) combined a multi-level model of parental context with a multi-dimensional conceptualization of parent involvement to examine factors influencing parents' engagement in education. Three sets of factors were identified as predictors of what influences parents' involvement in schools: (1) at individual levels, parent and child characteristics; (2) at a contextual level, family issues; and (3) at the institutional level, attitudes and practices of teachers. The types of parental involvement that were indicated in this model to have an influence on student outcomes, served as an expansion of factors acknowledged earlier in the literature as being significant for parental support of their children (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

In their study, Grolnick et al (1997) used a diverse sample of 209 mothers and their 3rd-5th grade children (111 girls and 89 boys in total) as well as 28 teachers in four urban schools. The demographic information provided about the study includes participants' demographic information (ethnicity; socio-economic status; parental education, and family structure such as single and two-parent households, etc.). These researchers utilized a multi-rater, and a multi-level study design. They gathered their data through individual interviews and questionnaires completed by parents, children, and teachers. In addition, their study design included the rating of types and frequencies of involvement; perceptions of involvement through scale-measuring moderator variables; and family configurations and social supports. They found that the strongest

effects of individual characteristics were apparent in parents' provision of exposure to cognitively stimulating activities for their children.

In their model, Grolnick et al (1997) model describe three types of parental involvement in schools, namely, (1) behavioral involvement, (2) cognitive-intellectual involvement, and (3) personal involvement. Behavioral involvement refers to parents' activities at school, such as parent-teacher conferences, participation in other school planned events, supporting their children at home with homework, and conversing with their children about the child's educational experiences at school. In addition, cognitive-intellectual involvement refers to providing cognitively stimulating experiences for children outside of the school- time, such as adults reading to (or with) them, or taking them to museums, etc. Finally personal involvement is defined as the interest in—and the ability of—the mother to keep up with her child's activities at school.

This model assumes an ecological lens and proposes a hierarchical model with three levels of factors (individual, contextual, and institutional), which together may predict parental involvement in education. At the individual level, the researchers examined the child and parent characteristics that might influence involvement. At the contextual level, the model acknowledges circumstantial family factors that govern the granular details of the family settings which impact parental involvement (including stressful life events and/or lack of social support network, etc.). Institutional factors refer to the attitudes and practices of school personnel. These researchers also considered the moderating effects of family structure and the gender of the child.

Grolnick, et al. (1997) concluded that multiple factors, at several levels, influence parental involvement. They explained that those factors vary for different types of parental involvement. For example, maternal beliefs in the effectiveness of their own involvement (i.e. when mothers consider their roles to be that of a teacher), influenced whether mothers were more likely to be more involved in the education of their children. The researchers also found that two-parent households were more likely to be engaged in the education of their children than parents from single-parent households.

Additionally, they found that parents who rated their children as more difficult were less involved personally and were also less likely to engage in cognitive activities with their difficult children. These researchers suggest that their findings support earlier studies that had found that parents with more social support were more likely to provide intellectually-stimulating activities for their children outside of the school, such as taking them to the library or discussing current

events with them (e.g. Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994). Therefore, it appears that social support enables parents to mobilize resources to cope with stress. Furthermore, Grolnick, et al. (1997) found a strong relationship between the individual characteristics of parents and children with the cognitive involvement variable and, to a lesser degree, with the personal involvement variable.

They found that the strongest effects of individual characteristics were from parents' provision of exposure to cognitively stimulating activities for their children at home. However, this strong effect was moderated by the gender of the child as impacted by contextual (family) factors, which they discerned to have a greater effect on the involvement of mothers of boys. Interestingly, classroom (school) factors had a greater effect on the involvement of mothers of girls.

Difficult context, social support, and teacher attitudes and practices were all factors that were associated with parental low school involvement and low personal involvement. However, the results of the Grolnick et al (1997) study did not support the claim that the level of parent involvement at school varies, based on the gender of the child. Interestingly, some of their results support Epstein & Becker's (1982) earlier research findings about the significance of teacher philosophy towards family participation in schools, and towards teacher practices of involving (not involving) families in the school life of children; which all impact the level and type of parental involvement in schools. Thus, Grolnick et al (1997) provide further support to the claim that positive teacher attitudes, regarding parental involvement in education, are positively associated with: (a) active parent attitudes, (b) less challenging life contexts, and (c) more social support.

In their full model, demographic factors, such as socioeconomic status and family structure, no longer contributed to parent personal involvement when controlling for other variables. However, teacher practices were moderated by other factors such as life context, attitudes, and gender of the child. These researchers concluded that parents who see themselves as teachers are "*active users of involvement, whereas those who do not see themselves in this manner or are in difficult contexts are less affected by teachers' attitudes and behaviors.*" (p. 547). Interestingly, this particular conclusion about the impact of parental perception was justified by the researchers to suggest that parents who are extremely stressed—or those whose values and attitudes are not well matched with those of teachers—may not "*receive the teacher's message, even if he or she is attempting to involve them.*" (p. 546). This speaks strongly to the idea that factors outside of school can weaken school parental involvement outreach efforts.

Thus, stress is situational, such that those with extra support (regardless of family structure) are more resilient and able to engage more positively with the demands of the educative tasks of parenthood in collaboration with schools.

What makes this study and its presented model strong is its research design which was successful in depicting the ways in which parental involvement processes at home and at school influence student motivation (directly and indirectly). Statistical regression method was used to control for various variables in order to test their contribution to the model. Those strong aspects notwithstanding, a weakness of the study is that its results did not distinguish in-group variations based on the race and ages of the parents or teachers' ages or teachers' length of professional experiences or racial background. Consequently, the cultural effect on individual role construction of the teachers and parents is unknown, because it was not an integral part of the investigation of the study's objectives.

Another group of researchers were also able to demonstrate an association between parental involvement and the nature of the contact between schools and families in a multi-site study in the United States. Kohl, Lengua & McMahon (2000) characterize parental involvement in education, not only in terms of quantity, but also in terms of its quality and by the source of the initial and intentional contacts between schools and families. According to Kohl et al (2000), the nature of the quality of parent-teacher relations should be part of the analyses of family-school process factors in order to address imprecise measures obtained in many studies which have been carried out in the area of parental involvement. These researchers were able to delineate the relationship between three specific family and demographic risk factors (i.e., parental education level, single-parent status, and maternal depression) and six parent involvement factors (i.e., parent-teacher contact, parent involvement at school, quality of the parent-teacher relationship, teachers' perceptions of parent involvement, parent involvement at home, and parent endorsement of the school).

Measures were obtained from a normative sample of 387 children in kindergarten and first grade from high-risk neighborhoods in four states (North Carolina, Tennessee, Washington, and Pennsylvania) in the United States. Home interviews were conducted with primary custodial parents in the summer prior to their children's enrollment in the first grade. Teacher reports of parental involvement were obtained in interviews with teachers of those children in first grade in the following spring. Using the Parent-Teacher Involvement Questionnaire, parent and teacher

reports were then gathered at the end of the school year. This approach facilitated examination of the pre-dimension and post-dimension views of the study participants.

To analyze their data, Kohl et al (2000) conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using a covariance matrix, and maximum likelihood estimation with list-wise deletion of missing data. The results of this CFA statistical procedure indicated that their theoretical model provided an adequate fit to the data. A test of multivariate kurtosis, Mardia's coefficient, for the model indicated potential distributional problems. However, the researchers reported negligible differences in the parameter estimates using regular versus scaled, robust standard errors, suggesting that kurtosis did not result in a decrement in fit. When the fit of the model was considered satisfactory, composite scores for each factor were formed by averaging the items within each factor. The composite score for a given subject was considered missing if 25% of the items comprising the factor were missing, with the possible range of scores for each factor being 0 to 4.

They found that all three of the risk factors they had identified for their study were significantly and differentially related to the six parent involvement factors. For example, lower-parental education level was: (a) significantly associated with lower levels of active involvement in many areas; but, (b) surprisingly, it was not related to the quality of the parent-teacher relationship or the parent's endorsement of the school. In addition, depressed mothers were less likely to demonstrate parental involvement in almost every dimension identified for that study, except in direct parent-teacher contact. Single-parent status was associated with the fewest number of parent involvement factors. No significant differences were found between African-American and European-American parents in their involvement patterns. The researchers assert that this model of parental involvement "*allows for the assessment of multiple, conceptually distinct, yet empirically related aspects of parental involvement*" (p. 518). However, what is not clear is whether these researchers controlled for socioeconomic status to arrive at their finding that there were no significant racial differences.

The next section in this chapter covers parental involvement studies that are relevant to families from diverse and immigrant backgrounds in the school-family partnership scholarship in the literature review for this study.

Diversity in Parental involvement in Schools

The weight of empirical evidence seems to suggest that it is important to problematize the traditional notion of active parental involvement/engagement as a mere physical visibility in schools as that is not the norm for vulnerable groups who come from poor or from diverse racial cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Boethel, 2003; Lopez, 2001; Nderu, 2005; Smit & Driessen, 2005). According to research in several countries, ethnic and immigrant families may be marginalized in day-to-day interactions with schools and in their access to resources that they need to support their children as students (Crozier, 2001, Turney & Kao, 2009; Theodoru, 2007). However, those parents are simultaneously held responsible for keeping up with and supporting the school life of their children (Bakker and Denessen, 2007; Denessen, Driessen, Smit & Slegers, 2001; Guerin & Guerin, 2007).

In a multi-rater study conducted in the U.K., Harris & Goodall (2008) found that there is indeed a dichotomy in what parental involvement means to different people, as evidenced by the claim (depending on the responder) that the value of parental involvement in schools elicited two types of responses, i.e., “*what is it that parents actually do,*” and the “*value that those actions are perceived to have*” (p. 282). In that study, parent interviewees tended to view parental engagement as securing “*support for students*”, while teachers viewed it as a mechanism for “*improved [student] behavior and support for school.*” In contrast, students viewed parental engagement as being primarily about “*moral support*” and showing interest in their educational progress (p. 282).

In the United States, Turney & Kao (2009) investigated the relationship between race and immigration status and parental involvement in schools. Using a nationally representative data set from the Early Child Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Cohort (ECLS-K), they found variations in parental involvement in schools according to parental ethnic diversity status and immigration status. For instance, they examined race and immigrant differences in parental involvement in schools, comparing immigrant parents to white parents. They stated that immigrant parents reported more barriers to participation; and, as a result, indicated that they were less likely to be involved at school. Two variables (time spent in the United States and English language proficiency) were positively associated with parental involvement in schools except for foreign-born Black parents. These researchers concluded that Hispanic and Asian parents tend to become more involved as they spend more time in the United States and gain

linguistic competency. By contrast, Black foreign-born parents become less involved in schools the longer they have been in the U.S. They explained this finding is probably indicative of increasing marginalization over time for this immigrant sub-group.

Similarly, in the case of Somali parental involvement in the education of their children, some researchers argue that the forms of presence in schools that Somali families display are not congruent with what “*the teacher was seeking*” (Guerin & Guerin, 2007, p 151). In such instances, educators and other school personnel may not be cognizant of the contextual barriers to Somali parents’ physical presence for scheduled events at schools. These barriers may, among other things, include: language barriers, child care needs or transportation issues, inability to obtain permission to leave for school events during working hours, lack of trust between parents and school personnel, etc.

In general, existing parental involvement research suggests that communication patterns between schools and families can be divided into three distinct categories: (1) planned and school-based communication to families which are intended to encourage student commitment to school life responsibilities, and afford families the opportunity to participate in the school life of their children if they wish to do so (top-down); (2) spontaneous communication, whereby families contact schools on their own, even if no problems have arisen, or, conversely, when teachers contact families about curricular issues or problem behaviors of students; and (3) parent advocacy to modify school policies and processes for the benefit of their own children or parents seeking to participate in school affairs in general (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Driessen, Smit & Slegers, 2005; Lareau, 2002).

Apparently, Somali families’ communication with schools tends to be one-way (top-down). Reportedly, Somali parents tend to be apprehensive of contacts with the school, given prior negative history with school personnel who are more likely to call Somali parents only when there are disciplinary problems (Good, 1999). Another area reported to cause tension between schools and Somali families is the behavior of Somali children. For example, some Somali children are described in the immigrant family literature as “*hyper-active*” and more likely to be suspended in Canadian schools (Reitsma, 2001, p. 15). In England, some schools claim that Somali students “*find it difficult to fit into routines including the school ethic.*” (Demie, McLean, & Lewis, 2007, p.17). Additionally, communication channels between home-school contexts are reported to be extremely shaky whereby Somali families in Canada were reported to be confused and dissatisfied with the tracking of their children to special education classes—

particularly in situations where parents felt that they did not give informed consent for the tracking of their children, and some even expressed distress about failing their children (as parents) by not protecting them from such tracking by schools. These parents reportedly were under the impression that tracking afforded their children increased sheltered time to improve their academic English before getting mainstreamed into regular classes. In other situations, Somali parents in that study were described as feeling shut out of the planning process for special student services in a way that was meaningful to them (Mahamed, 2010).

In the United States, several researchers investigated Somali parent perceptions about their understanding of their responsibilities and roles in formal education in the United States. One of the primary findings of those studies is that Somali families are not sure of their formal role in schools or are not confident about how to support schoolwork outside of the school time (Nderu, 2005; Roy & Roxas, 2011). That finding is ironic because the researchers of these studies, which were conducted in three states (Minnesota, Michigan & Texas), confirm that they have found that Somali parents to value education and very supportive parents of their children.

Nderu (2005) used Epstein's conceptual framework, Overlapping Spheres of Influence, with a sample of thirty-one Somali parents in a Midwestern state in the United States. She found that those parents—mostly mothers—were somewhat engaged in the education of their children. She concluded that the parents in her sample seemed to hold a view of parental responsibilities that did not align with the partnership vision as envisaged by this framework. More specifically, those parents felt that it was their responsibility to ensure that their children were fed, clothed, and cared for to be ready to be sent to schools, where they would then be taught by professionals (Parenting or Type 1 of Epstein's typology of six types of parental involvement). They also considered their role in educating their children to be a partnership equal to, but separate from, schools. This is evident in Somali parents' descriptions of schools as "do[ing] only half, the other half is the parent's" (Nderu, 2005, p. 99). Those parents were reported to be dissatisfied with the communication style of teachers which they characterized as being mostly one-way, i.e. from school-home (Communicating or Type 2). The majority of Somali parents in that study also reported that they did not volunteer at the schools that their children attend (Volunteering or Type 3).

Nderu (2005) concluded that the parents in her sample did not engage in Types 4, 5, and 6 of Epstein's parental involvement typology. However, what was not readily discernible in detail was the researcher's reasoning for reporting that learning at home (i.e. Type 4 of Epstein's

typology) was not evident in in study findings (p. 99). One may argue that Type 4 parental involvement was evidenced by Somali parental activities outside of school time as reported by the parents themselves (Nderu, 2005, pages 77-78). For instance, some parents mentioned they seek help for their children in completing homework assignments, for example, when they could not offer help themselves due to low print-literacy and/or low proficiency in English, as was the case for many of the participants in the study. Also, some parents reported that they check their children's bags to see who (among their children) was performing well by attaining As and Bs. In addition, some of those parents indicated that they monitor the after-school activities of their children to curtail TV time, and attempt to anticipate teacher expectations by requesting notes from the teacher to see an outline of homework assignments for the week (though this was more typical for parents who were more proficient in English). These behaviors seem to suggest parental support of student learning at home to some extent even though parent may not be familiar with the subject content itself.

The studies described above indicate that there is a marked disconnection between educators and Somali families in terms of: educational goals, behavioral and attitudinal expectations, and ideas about competence, discipline, and potential. A relationship between schools and Somali families that is distant and distrustful in nature is harmful to the academic achievement and educational attainment of Somali students in the United States (Roy & Roxas, 2011). However, two additional international comparative studies which further explored Somali parental involvement in the education of their children in the Western world present a more mixed outlook of the patterns of Somali parental involvement in the education of their children.

In 2005, Dutch researchers conducted a study with 1000 parent participants of primary school children in Rotterdam, the Netherlands (Smit & Driessen, 2005). Their sample was comprised of nine diverse groups (Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese, Antillean, Cape Verdant, Pakistani, Yugoslavian, Somali, Russian, and Dutch). The results of that study indicate that: (a) Somali parents had the least contact with schools in comparison with other groups, and (b) they tend to have the most "*frequent*" problems even when in contact with schools (Smit & Driessen, 2005, p. 175).

In Britain, several factors were identified to hinder Somali students' school academic and social success, including: poor school attendance, low-income status, single-parent families, and membership in large households, negative teacher perceptions about Somali students and their families, discordant school-home links, and lack of role models for students (Demie, Lewis &

McLean, 2008). Nevertheless, the results from these 10 case study schools in the inner and outer London area in Britain suggest that, despite a significant high school diploma attainment gap between Somali students and other student groups, there are pockets of success in urban education in Britain whereby Somali students are successful to progress very well in supportive school environments (Demie, Lewis & McLean, 2008). These effective schools tend to provide appropriate support strategies which include school parental involvement programs where there are norms of high expectations for educational excellence; good teaching; and palpable commitment from the school leadership to cultivate personal relationships with students, parents, and the larger Somali community.

However, what has not been established in all of the foregoing studies is the nature and range of family/school process factors which can be considered salient for culturally and linguistically diverse groups with relatively recent immigration history in a state where they are visible minority. Therefore, one may wonder about: (1) how do Somali family (parents) and schools (teachers) determine their roles, responsibilities, and the risks they envision as barriers that should be taken into account in order to educate Somali children in the U.S. educational system?; (2) to what extent do parents and teachers differ in how they communicate about establishing and maintaining supportive environments for mutually transparent expectations to support Somali-descent students develop their own repertoire of self-regulation so they can attain academic success and abstain from disruptive behavior at school?

In general, the extant school-home partnership literature suggests that poor and ethnically, racially and culturally diverse parental groups may have a high regard for schools, despite their physical absence from schools (Crozier & Davis, 2007; Lopez et al, 2001; Turney & Kao, 2009). This observation is supported by empirical evidence which indicates such families may be invested and are active in supporting the academic success of their children despite tremendous material barriers and strict parenting rules, but in ways not well-understood by educators (Basford, Hick & Bigelow, 2007; Chao, 2000; Demie, Lewis & McLean, 2008;).

In the following section the summary and conclusions of this literature review on the topic of parental involvement as well as the presumptions of the study and the conceptual framework that is selected to ground the study are presented.

Chapter Summary and Conclusion

Parental involvement in education tends to be framed from multiple perspectives due to its significance for positive student outcomes and success of school-family partnerships. The sources (educational opportunity or lack thereof) and consequences of educational inequality have been a perennial policy and research question that problematizes the academic and non-academic disparities that exist in the student body in many schools that educate children who come from families with diverse socio-economic and socio-cultural backgrounds. For decades, theorists and researchers in the social sciences endeavored to investigate and analyze the endogenous and exogenous aspects of whether, how and the extent to which families participate in the educative enterprise of their children, and what that means for the endorsement they bestow on schools.

The copious literature on the topic reveals robust and divergent views regarding the judgments and philosophies that schools (teachers) and families (parents) display in terms of: (a) the value that they assign to family participation in schools, and (b) what they regard to be the appropriate attitudes, skills, and behaviors to create space for shared responsibility to foster the academic and non-academic success of school children (Christenson, 2004; Harris & Goodall, 2008; Smit & Driessen, 2005). These world views manifest themselves as varying orientations towards what should be expected about how to structure a school-family partnership with regard to roles (assumed or assigned), rules to be observed, risks to be taken into consideration, and material and non-material resources needed, and information networks to be utilized (Lareau, 2002; Epstein & Becker, 1982; Weiss et al, 2009). In addition, these divergent orientations indicate the values and preferences of teachers as they encourage children to take responsibility for their own learning and behavior in supportive home environments (Epstein, 1986; Epstein & Becker, 1982; Harris & Goodall, 2008).

According to Borman & Rachuba (2001), the four most important school variables discerned in effective schools are: (1) Maximizing learning time, (2) monitoring student progress, (3) having strong principal leadership, and (4) striving to maintain school-wide goals for educational excellence. From that vantage point, teachers are considered to be responsible for the implementation and sustainability of instructional time and student progress monitoring. However, in order to extend the learning time and the monitoring of student progress from the school to the home environments, teachers and families need to collaborate to enhance student

academic motivation to do well in school and to behave in ways that are sanctioned by schools and families alike.

Schools, as public institutions, are able to intentionally design the nature of the partnership they prefer to have with families and as such implement strategies that enable them to meet legal mandates while simultaneously accomplishing their own organizational goals (Christenson, 2004, Epstein, 1995). Schools utilize one of four models of partnerships with families (Swap, 1993): (a) traditional protective model; (b) school-to-home transmission model; (c) curriculum enrichment model, and (d) the partnership model. Thus, scholarship in education, psychology, and sociology is focused on finding ways to adequately isolate and statistically analyze the process factors depicted in child-family-school variables, which differentially impact student learning in a specific school-family-community context. Scholarly work in that regard present analyses about the nuances of the social relations within and across groups and contexts. Existing theoretical and empirical explanations by various scholars offer that family and school process factors are governed by expectations, role differentiation, parenting/teaching approaches, and psychological salience (self-efficacy) to support student learning and development.

In conclusion, divergent conceptualizations of parental involvement in education, as discerned from this literature review scan suggest that the variables depicted in Figure 1 (below), as considered from three major theoretical lenses, influence parental involvement in education using multiple levers:

(1) **Levers of contextual influence of school-home processes**, which incorporate ideas about competency, resource allocation, power-sharing, and decision-making to attain student educational success and positive development (Epstein's *Overlapping Spheres of Influence Framework*, 1987, 1995, 2002).

(2) **Levers of internalized influence** that may create opportunities (or hurdles) that are based on parental role construction for involvement in the education of their children. This particular influence is due to parental judgment of their own efficacy to teach, parental perceptions about cues from their children and teachers for getting involved—as impacted by family and child life contexts; and the teachers' collaboration, orientation and training (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997; Green et al, 2007; Grolnick et al, 1997; Grolnick & Pomerantz, 2009).

(3) **Levers of relational influence**, through parenting styles, language use, cultural habits, and ability to access material and social resources through socioeconomic and socio-cultural intergenerational advantage. Given which aspect(s) of relational influence is (are) strongest,

opportunities for success may be enhanced or constrained for young people educationally, socio-emotionally, and economically (Chao, 2000; Horvat, Weininger & Lareau, 2003, Kim, 2009).

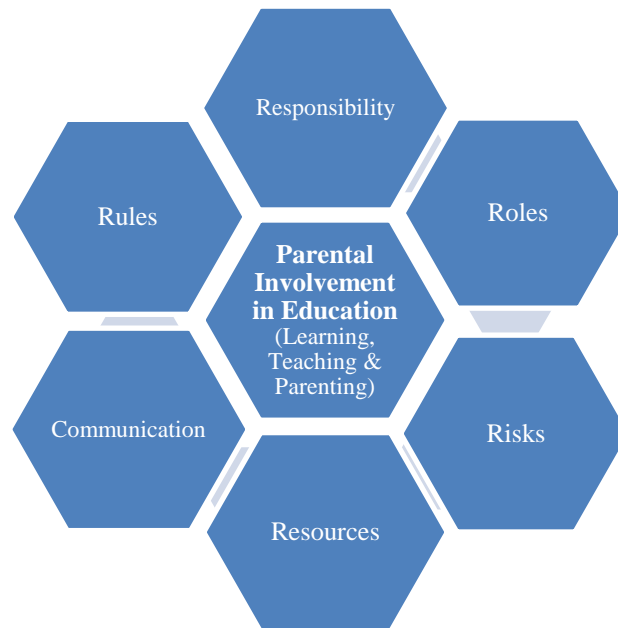


Figure 1: Dimensions of Parental Involvement (based on the literature scan presented above)

Therefore, the guiding question derived from this literature review is: “*What are the factors that shape how school personnel and Somali families view effective parental involvement in the education of Somali children?*”

The researcher made the following two presumptions before the study started based on the extant parental involvement literature:

- (1) The findings of these case studies may support earlier findings that teachers and Somali parents do not agree on what they consider to be effective strategies for family participation in the education of Somali children to support the academic and social development of Somali children in the United States (Nderu, 2005; Roy & Roxas, 2011).
- (2) However, it is possible that the study’s settings in a charter school and a non-charter school may impact the extent and direction of that disconnect, due to particularistic circumstances that exist in these organizational settings which are recognized and reported by the study participants.

In conclusion, based on the content of this literature review, it is evident that Epstein's Overlapping Spheres of Influence Framework provides a useful tool as a starting point to delineate school-home process factors that exist in the contexts of the study. Therefore, Epstein's framework is used as a conceptual grounding for this study as it provides the appropriate theoretical and conceptual moorings for understanding school-family partnerships that support positive academic and social outcomes for school age children.

Chapter Three: Study Methodology and Methods

Overview

The intention of conducting these case studies is to fill a current gap in the existing literature of parental involvement in education as it relates to the nuances of the “*invisibility*” of Somali families in schools in the Western world (Mclean & Lewis, 2007; Nderu, 2005; Roy & Roxas, 2011; Smit & Driessen, 2005). Reportedly, such invisibility is indicative of Somali parents’ disengagement from active involvement in the education of their own children. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to determine the views of Somali parents and teachers regarding effective parental involvement in the education of Somali–American school children. In addition, two Somali-speaking administrators (principals) were interviewed about their personal approach to promoting successful school-family partnerships at their respective schools as separate and bounded contexts. The bounded system and units of analysis are middle school Grades 5th -8th at two urban public schools.

The overarching research question that guides this work is “*What are the factors that shape how school personnel and Somali families view effective parental involvement in the education of Somali children?*”

The research sub-questions that are addressed in this study are:

1. What do Somali parents and teachers (Somali and non-Somali) view as *parental involvement* in the education of Somali children?
2. How and to what extent do Somali parents and teachers differ or concur in their views of *parental involvement* in the education of Somali children?
3. What do teachers view as opportunities for *parental involvement* in the education of Somali children?
4. What do teachers see as barriers to *parental involvement* in the education of Somali children?
5. What do Somali parents consider as opportunities for *parental involvement* in the education of their children?
6. What do Somali parents view as barriers to *parental involvement* in the education of their children?

These case studies offer information-rich social contexts to examine the layers of meaning that link the linguistic and cultural frames that teachers and Somali parents may use to make sense of the phenomenon of parental involvement in education. The remainder of this chapter provides a description of the study research design, rationale for adopting a qualitative research approach, data collection methods, data analysis procedures and considerations of the researcher's role, research ethics, and study limitations.

Case Study Research Design

Yin (2009, 2011) affirms that as a methodology, a case study is appropriate when: (a) research problems require posing certain questions of what, how and why; (b) an investigator has no control over actual behaviors or events in a particular setting; and (c) the focus is on a contemporary and complex phenomenon that is under study. Furthermore, Creswell (2007) argues that a case study inquiry approach is useful when “the investigator explores a bounded system (i.e. a *case*) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving *multiple sources of information*, and reports a case *description* and case-based themes” (p.73).

Therefore, the guiding research question in these case studies is intended to illuminate how teachers and Somali parents understand what effective parental involvement in education means from their own viewpoints. The dimensions that may shape such an understanding may include how they anticipate and communicate about perceived opportunities or challenges within a policy-driven organizational structure. Therefore, both the first and third conditions of the case study design are fulfilled. Furthermore, the second condition of the appropriateness of a case study approach is met because the researcher does not have control over the behavior, experiences or events that drive the actors' understanding of the phenomenon or the interactions that emanate from such an understanding to promote (or hinder) effective Somali parental involvement in education of their children.

Thus, a multiple case study research design is chosen for this study because it affords the researcher some flexibility to use theory a priori as a guide for the purpose of planning for the data collection stage and for the data analysis stage (Yin, 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Silverman, 2006). Such a design strategy also facilitates with-in and across-case comparisons and contrasts of the perceptions of groups under study (Stake, 2006, Stake, 2010).

Rationale for Qualitative Research Approach

Ontologically, this study is situated in a constructivist worldview with its philosophical orientation of interpretivist logic (Creswell, 2007). Epistemologically, qualitative research in education is concerned with “*examining explanations for puzzling situations in a specific time and place*” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 11). Researchers who employ the qualitative inquiry approach tend to prefer a distinct research design and methods that do not entirely depend on sophisticated statistical manipulations to make inferences from data (Eisenhart, 2005; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Maxwell, 2004). Rather, they may seek to discover patterns that address their research questions and explain the meaning of the interrelationships that link concepts, ideas, events, and processes to a multiplicity of classes within a specific phenomenon (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Rapley, 2011). According to this interpretivist tradition, an understanding (*Verstehen*) of the patterns that explain the dimensions of a phenomenon depends on “*the context and intention of the actor*” (Schwandt, 2000, p.191). Thus, interpretive researchers make their assertions about a phenomenon that is under investigation by employing the following three specific inquiry strategies:

- (1) Empathetically identifying with the actors they study and reporting those actors’ beliefs, desires and thoughts; (2) using analytic tools and techniques to probe the social reality in the daily life of those actors as exemplified in conversation and expected interaction within institutional and cultural norms; and then (3) doing an in-depth analysis of the structure of the systems of meaning that are used to guide human action (Schwandt, 2000; Silverman, 2003).

A primary criticism against qualitative research is the subjectivity that may arise from a researcher’s theoretical stance, types of research questions pursued, research methods used, and the analytical or reporting frames utilized to present study findings (Diefenbach, 2009; Silverman, 2003). However, in response to subjectivity criticism, qualitative researchers assert that any scholarly inquiry is a human effort to make sense of the world. Therefore, it is not entirely possible to completely banish subjectivity from research, regardless of the research approach undertaken in social sciences—qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods (Creswell, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

This counter argument is even more pertinent when a study pertains to specific people or to a social interaction or event (Holstein & Gubrium, 2011; Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Schwandt, 2000; Silverman, 2006). Finally, Creswell & Miller (2000) maintain that qualitative researchers enhance the quality and trustworthiness of their scholarly inquiry through the strategies depicted in Table 1 (below) utilizing validity procedures within the appropriate qualitative paradigm lens and its concomitant assumptions as guidance.

Table 1: Trustworthiness Criteria under Various Paradigms

<i>Paradigm assumption/Lens</i>	<i>Post-positivist or Systematic Paradigm</i>	<i>Constructivist / Interpretivist Paradigm</i>	<i>Critical Paradigm</i>
Lens of the researcher	Triangulation	Disconfirming evidence	Researcher reflexivity
Lens of study participants	Member checking	Prolonged engagement in the field	Collaboration
Lens of people external to the study (reviewers, readers)	The audit trail	Thick, rich description	Peer debriefing

Source: Creswell & Miller, 2000, p.126

In summary, the assessment of the rigor and quality of qualitative research reports are met by using specific trustworthiness criteria as such standards offer readers adequate transparency. In order to do so, researchers support their knowledge claims of scholarly inquiry results and findings by using specific techniques to share the processes of their research. These techniques include: (i) description of the circumstances of data collection procedures, (ii) adequate presentation of the data analysis, and (c) explaining the data interpretation approaches that were utilized to reach certain conclusions. Thus, validation of claims of qualitative research knowledge becomes a matter of the consensus of the scholarly community members in social sciences, while simultaneously acknowledging the positionality of the researcher (Silverman, 2006; Stake, 2006). Such a consensus focuses on four aspects of rigor: (1) *credibility* which is concerned with the plausibility of qualitative research as it relates to its internal consistency, including capturing study participants' actual views and making logical and compelling knowledge claims based on study data; (2) *transferability* which is concerned with how readers of qualitative study reports must be afforded an opportunity to reach their own informed judgments

about the applicability of the conclusions and findings of qualitative research reports to their own contexts; (3) *dependability* which is concerned with the need for transparency of details about actual research activities, data collection procedures, and decision-making points and choices that relate to the nuances of the data analysis and interpretation; and (4) *confirmability* which is concerned with the responsibility of the qualitative researcher to convince readers of his/her research reports as it relates to the adequacy of both the study data and study findings by minimizing researcher bias and using triangulation approaches (Morrow, 2005; Shenton, 2004; Silverman, 2006, Stake, 2006; Yin, 2011).

Study Context: Access and Study Participants

The two schools in these case studies are Back-to-Essentials School (BES) and New Heights Academy (NHA) –both of which are pseudonyms used to protect the privacy of the study participants. These schools are selected for study participation because they represent particularistic contexts to better understand the dimensions and dynamics of parental involvement in education—from multiple perspectives and from with-in and across two schools that were specifically designed to meet the unique educational needs of Somali-American school children. Both BES and NHA schools draw their students from neighborhood and non-neighborhood residential areas in the metro counties in a state in a Midwestern region in the United States.

BES, a non-charter school, serves students in Grades 6th -12th while NHA, a charter school, serves students in Grades K-8th. These schools are relatively small in size with combined student enrollment of 514 students in the 2012 academic year. Both schools are categorized as Title I entities. Schools that receive Title I funds of Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) are required to meet certain improvement requirements per each state's own assessment and academic standards. The intention of such requirements is to enhance the teaching capacities of teachers to improve the academic performance of disadvantaged student groups.

To gain access to the study sites, the researcher directly approached two school administrators (principals) to facilitate the participation of their respective schools in the study. This approach included phone calls, several face-to-face visits and formal written requests (see Appendices F and G). Both administrators agreed to let the school community know more about the proposed study and the confidentiality safeguards built into the study. Furthermore, the researcher approached the school Parent Liaisons and the school administrative staff at each

school to get a sense of each school's parental involvement programming. Finally, the administrators suggested to the researcher to consider attending school parental events, including family night gatherings to mingle with the school community (immersion in the field).

Study Sample and Trustworthiness Criteria

According to Onwuegbuzie & Leech (2007), qualitative researchers must strive to provide a “superordinate concept of sampling designs” in order to advance explanatory comparisons that link sampling designs to data analysis techniques (pp. 239-245). *Maximum Variation Purposeful Sampling* is appropriate for the selection of study participants within and across schools in this research (Merriam, 2009). This non-random sampling approach is useful for documenting the spectrum of diversity in the views and positions of teachers and Somali parents regarding parental involvement in the education of their children. It also serves as a tool for the authentication of primary common patterns of such perspectives or even lack of opinion with regard to effective Somali family engagement in the education of their children (Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Silverman, 2006). Additionally, it facilitates the analytical flexibility of the researcher to check whether these primary patterns continue to hold among outlier cases while also “*capturing and describing the central themes or principal outcomes that cut across a great deal of participant or program variation*” (Patton, 1990, pp. 169-172).

More specifically, this sampling strategy is appropriate for the information-rich cases under study because the researcher anticipated that some parents may be very involved in the school itself, as evidenced, for instance, by their membership in school governing bodies or by the distinct nature of their collaboration with the school's needs. It was also expected that some parents may never or seldom participate in the school life of their children at school or at home based on barriers already identified in the parental involvement literature (Kim, 2009). Likewise, the researcher accepted that some teachers may choose not to engage families at all, or to do it only occasionally (Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Grolnick et al, 1997; Swap, 1993).

Variations in participant views can be teased out by examining together the institutional and interpersonal processes as influenced by the demographic characteristics of the study participants. These characteristics may include: gender, personal experience (either as a teacher or as a parent), preferred communication style, and conflict resolution approach. Hence, the range of world views, expectations and ideas for future improvement that parents and teachers may have about how to support student learning is contingent upon their understanding of their

collaborative interactions. That understanding may have evolved within specific parental involvement policy environments and under the leadership of two administrators who share certain demographic background characteristics (e.g. immigrant background, speaking the same language, same gender and both educated in Somalia and in the West). Yet, these leaders may have different leadership styles or even divergent life experiences—including the administrative and political environment at their respective schools.

There is currently no consensus on what the exact sample size for qualitative inquiries should be (Onweuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). However, an early decision about study sample size is important for two reasons ((Maxwell, 1992; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Morrow, 2005; Onweuegbuzie & Leech, 2007; Yin, 2009). It establishes the extent to which a qualitative researcher can strive for and recognizes data adequacy or data saturation (Patton, 2002). It also provides an intentionality that ultimately determines the conclusions or assertions, and recommendations that can be made as a result of the findings of qualitative research— by employing internal statistical generalizations, analytic generalizations as well as possible case-to-case transfers.

Accordingly, Miles & Huberman (1994) suggest that the primary “*concern of qualitative research is with the conditions under which the construct or theory operates, not with the generalization of the findings*” (p. 29). Based on the foregoing, an invited sample of thirty (30) individuals from the two schools is considered to be an appropriate sample size. These participants were expected to reflect the multiple views, expectations, and experiences of parents and teachers in the study contexts. This sample was intended to target ten (10) parents and five (5) teachers in each school, with equal proportions of males and females (50% each) along with the two administrators whose input was expected to inform the ideas behind school policy documents.

In addition, Stake (2010), Dey (1993) and Silverman (2006) support that the qualitative analytical evaluation of a phenomenon must include mapping of the conceptual ambiguities and contradictions that are evident in a variety of situations, which is useful to assess conceptual boundaries. Thus, a qualitative evaluation is not expected to establish precise measurement or central tendencies of a phenomenon, which are the strength of the random sampling and other statistical data analysis approach. Finally, relatively small size samples allow qualitative researchers to avoid unwieldy amounts of data that may undermine data management efforts

because managing data to tease out meaningful insights from information-rich cases is critical for knowledge claims (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 1990).

Table 2 (below)—as marked by a checkmark (✓)—indicates the trustworthiness criteria used in the case studies:

Table 2: Rigor standards: Qualitative research trustworthiness criteria

Quality Criterion	Possible Strategies to Enhance Trustworthiness	Criterion employed in this study	
		Yes (✓)	No (x)
Credibility	Adoption of appropriate research methods	✓	
	Development of early familiarity with participating schools	✓	
	Random sampling of participants		x
	Triangulation (multiple data sources and data methods)	✓	
	Tactics to help ensure honesty in informants		x
	Iterative questioning in data collection dialogues (across sites)	✓	
	Negative case analysis	✓	
	Debriefing sessions between researcher and advisors	✓	
	Peer scrutiny of research project		x
	Bracketing researcher prior knowledge of topic during analysis	✓	
	Researcher reflexivity (background, credentials & experience)		x
	Member checks		x
	Use of reflective notes	✓	
	Thick description of phenomenon under scrutiny	✓	
Examination of previous research to frame findings	✓		
Transferability	Contextual information for readers to understand people, events/ideas	✓	
Dependability	In-depth description of methodology to provide transparency	✓	
Confirmability	Recognition of inherent weaknesses of study methods	✓	
	Data displays to establish audit trails to be scrutinized by readers	✓	

Source: Adapted from Shenton, 2004, p. 73; Morrow, 2005, pp. 251-252; Silverman, 2003, 2006

Data Collection

Following the University of Minnesota’s institutional Review Board’s authorization, and the presentation of the participant consent forms to the school administrators, the researcher started approaching teachers and parents to invite them to participate in the study. The researcher

then sought formal permission for observing school administrative staff conduct their normal daily activities at different times during the period of the field work. These observations brought into focus how the school's formal administrative machine deals with parental needs as they call, walk in or are summoned to address school issues related to their children.

As the focus of parental involvement in education is at the intersection of policy targets in schools, and private practices of individuals across the school-home context, it is a phenomenon that requires scrutiny by using multiple sources of data (Patton, 2002; Stake, 2010, Yin, 2009). According to Yin (2009), multiple sources of evidence in case studies establish “*converging lines of inquiry, a process of triangulation*” (p. 115) which is “*aimed at corroborating the same fact or phenomenon*” (p. 116). Such sources of data evidence span a number of approaches, which include:

- (1) Direct observations of events in real time within the natural context of the case;
- (2) Conducting interviews (including focus group interviews and individualized face-to-face conversations with key informants);
- (3) Analysis of administrative documents and/or public records of organizational processes or even the personal documents of participants or the mass media coverage of the context;
- (4) Participant observation that includes the role the researcher chooses to assume in terms of an active versus a passive role in the study environment; and
- (5) physical artifacts that indicate the date and type of activity or process.

A qualitative method design using a face-to-face interview protocol—as the primary data collection medium—is appropriate for this research because it is much harder to capture how study participants structure their own social process and meaning systems using a survey instrument (Miller & Glassner, 2011; Schwandt, 2000; Silverman, 2006). More specifically, Miller & Glassner (2011) stress that the strength of the interviewing method lies in its utility in illuminating two intertwined dimensions that facilitate theoretical consideration of a phenomenon under study through:

- (a) examining its nature within the contexts and situations in which events and behaviors emerge; and
- (b) striving for a deeper insight into the cultural frames which individuals

use to make sense of their own expectations and experiences on the basis of their specific demographic characteristics such as gender, social address, and life experiences.

Together, these two dimensions afford researchers an opportunity to scrutinize possible contradictions in an interviewee's statements or body language, by probing and unbundling. Probing involves following up with clarification requests in order to help the researcher get a better sense of the reasons behind any contradictory claims or unspoken inconsistencies within an interviewee's own norms and values. Unbundling involves an analytical reflection on such contradictions to arrive at the aspects of within-group differentiation at the data analysis stage.

Finally these two dimensions facilitate the interviewers' self-awareness of their own impact on the pace and quality of the interview, depending on their own interpersonal social skills and presentation (Miller & Glassner, 2011; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Furthermore, Miller & Glassner (2011) acknowledge that such opportunities for follow-up and clarification afford researchers a certain level of responsiveness to social contexts (using techniques intended to alleviate social influence problems). For example, earlier studies which use focus groups of Somali participant respondents suggest, that a follow-up via one-to-one interviews, allowed some of those respondents to clarify their earlier positions, which sometimes resulted in respondents' retraction of their initial agreement with ideas presented during a focus group interviewing stage (Nderu, 2005).

In short, the face-to-face interviews method produces accounts that integrate depth and breadth in interviewer interpretations. This authenticates respondents' various worldview orientations, which helps researchers attain analytical depth at the data analysis phase (Creswell, 2007; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). In addition to the one-to-one face interviews, documents included in the analysis of this study are intended to capture the organizational version of reality.

According to Atkinson & Coffey (2011), documents describe how organizations explain roles, responsibilities, and expectations for achievement or even for justifying merit or assigning blame for their outcomes. Thus, documents are valuable additions to the collection of a study's empirical material (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 2010; Yin, 2009).

Finally, attendance of some of actual formal family/community events as well as casual engagement of individual parents by school administrative staff is meant to enrich contextual data about how parent and community involvement "*work*" is done (Stake, 2010, p. 40). For instance, participant observation at one of these formal events and sitting in the front office enhanced the

researcher's actual experience of instances of what participant schools considered important enough to exemplify their formal outreach efforts to families and school community members –as their objective for promoting a network of support for actualizing improved student academic performance and social adaptation.

In engaging in these three data collection methods, the researcher deploys multiple analytic sources that are informed by “*how events, actions and meaning are shaped by the unique circumstances in which they occur*” (Maxwell, 2008, p. 221). Furthermore, using these data collection methods, at the participating schools, facilitated examination of both the etic and emic nuances (attributes) of Somali parental involvement in the education of Somali children.

In that sense, the emic view is concerned with attributes which include roles, values, and the philosophical orientations of the study participants in their ordinary daily social realities (Silverman, 2006; Stake, 2010). Such attributes were expected to influence study participants' choices for action regarding parenting, teaching and leading activities, in which they normally engage in, to support student learning and development across the school-home contexts. These attributes also encompass an etic view concerned with the organizational policy structure of parental involvement outreach efforts at these schools. This structure includes programs that guide school-family outreach plans, procedures, and activities. This may, in turn, lead to specific instances that educators and parents discern as useful (or not useful) moments for anticipating, planning or participating in order to promote adequate supports for student learning and positive behavior. However, the researcher understood that it is imperative to anticipate that cultural manifestations may impact how certain things are said (not said), and how meanings may be nuanced and layered (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

Therefore, this case study design approach emphasizes the triangulation of data sources from multiple informants and data collection methods so as to mitigate possible negative respondent effects. In addition, such a design mitigates researcher effects that include prolonged intrusion into the personal and public space of study participants while a guest in a particular school. Moreover, using such an approach facilitates analytic bracketing during the data analysis stage.

In a nutshell, the case study design offers the best way to understand the range of perspectives on effective Somali parental involvement in the education of Somali-descent children. This design facilitates discovery of both what the study participants know about effective parental involvement in education and what they actually do to improve the

achievement orientation and social adjustment of Somali-American school children. Table 3 (below) shows the details of the study data collection sources, rationale, and timeline:

Table 3: Data collection sources, rationale, participants, and timeline

Data Sources	Rationale for using the Method	Study Participants (Who/Where)	Study Timeline (two phases)
Face-to-face semi-structured interviews Protocol (<i>see Appendices A,B,C</i>)	Capture meaning from interviews (teachers/families) (Holstein & Gubrium, 2011; Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Silverman, 2006)	All individuals who agreed to participate in the study (participants) at a place convenient for them	BES: Feb-April 2014 NHA: April-June 2014
Observation of some events (Stake, 2010; Yin, 2011) include several school-wide events, such as Open House/ Back to School Nights workshops/science fairs/ or meetings including PTA or other school community events (See Observation Check List - Appendix. D)	Observation of topics covered with families offers an opportunity to enrich case context description that enhances study credibility criteria. It is also an opportunity for participants to get used to the researcher in the field.	Events that are open to the school community (families, school staff, and interested others)	Parent Night @ NHA May 22, 2014 On an alternate schedule: Observe administrative staff at BES and NHA weekly on Thursdays for 3 hours from March-June 2014
Document Analysis (See Data Analysis Check List— Appendix. E)	Capture the organizational version of reality (Atkinson & Coffey, 2011).	Web sites (participating schools, state, district, and federal) External documents (School brochures, school improvement plans & parental involvement plan, school-family compact) Internal documents (Minutes, messages on school walls or any other available materials in the office on behavior/ homework)	BES: Feb-Mar 2014 NHA: April-June 2014

Researcher Role

In a qualitative study, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2010). Therefore, both the researcher's prior knowledge and empathetic interest in the people and topic under study come to the fore. As a Somali-American parent whose own children attend American schools, the researcher is knowledgeable of the sensibilities of Somali immigrant parents whose grade school-age children attend schools similar to this study participant schools. Likewise, as a professional who works in a work environment permeated by legal mandates and regulatory guidance, the researcher is empathetic to the teachers who are doing their educators' jobs in a policy-driven work environment. However, these possible sources of bias can both be minimized by striving for "*data redundancy*" that is targeted at the research questions level (Stake, 2010, p. 94). In addition, journaling and reflective notes—that help the researcher to maintain analytic bracketing throughout the data collection and analysis stages—promote researcher reflexivity and transparency (Anfara et al, 2002; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2010, Yin, 2009).

Data Analysis

In pursuit of recorded and manageable data, researchers who utilize qualitative research approaches engage in an intensely iterative process (Creswell, 2007; Maxwell, 2008; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). According to Rapley (2011), iterative and parallel tasks in the data analysis stage reflect three distinct aspects of analysis that are designed to achieve the following objectives:

- (1) Categorization of raw data (includes coding, thematic analysis and memoing, i.e. the discovery and exploration aspect of data analysis);
- (2) Linking concepts that reflect similar views by refining thematic categories even further (by using techniques that compare across-groups and across-sites such as narrative analyses, individual case studies, i.e., the conceptual description aspect of data analysis); and
- (3) Offering explanatory accounts of the phenomenon through techniques such as discerning emergent patterns or associations which can provide meaning to the

mechanisms or processes under study, which somehow summarize the interrelationships of those mechanism and processes (i.e. the interpretation aspect of data analysis).

This multi-aspect approach to data analysis is possible only with iterative review of the corpus of data at both the abstract and concrete levels. Thus, a major role of the qualitative researcher is to explain underlying rules and structures of the data to provide explanatory accounts that do not strip the data from its context. Usually, researchers accomplish that objective by using summaries, boxes, figures, and even by using low-level statistical analysis and metaphors, as appropriate. These analytic tasks include managing voluminous amount of data (i.e. data reduction) and building a database that is used to interpret and explain the importance of relationships within the data, while connecting study findings with the presumptions of the study (See Chapter Two). Furthermore, these techniques support researchers' efforts to avoid overextending their assertions about the eventual findings of their studies beyond their actual data set results (Miles & Huberman, 1994, Maxwell, 2008, Silverman, 2006, Yin, 2009).

The thematic framework analysis approach (Rapley, 2011) fits the data management tasks of these case studies because it comprises both a deductive phase (i.e. pre-determined theoretical-based conceptual themes) and an inductive phase (i.e. themes that are pulled directly from the corpus of the raw data). This approach is used for the data analysis stage of this study in iterative sequences.

At the deductive phase of the data analysis, Epstein's *Overlapping Spheres of Influence* (OSI) typology provides the initial conceptually pre-determined categories (i.e., coding into categories). This was intended to guide the preliminary codes which were subsequently expanded to include additional categories and concepts as they emerge directly from the raw data. At the inductive stage, each audio-taped interview for these case studies, which was about 45 minutes long, was transcribed verbatim to ensure richness in the emic data analysis component of the data analysis. Interviews in Somali were translated into English including quotations and key emic concerns and are presented in the study report. Transcribed interviews, observation notes, documentary analysis notes, and reflection notes are coded and analyzed using Rapley's thematic framework analysis approach (Rapley, 2011). The study's original database was kept in a separate file than the rest of the subsequent iterations (Yin, 2009).

More specifically, the iterative review of the raw data is intended to help the researcher get familiarized with the raw data in two stages (deductive and inductive phases). Firstly, at the

deductive phase, a trial run of the code list was conducted with four transcripts (one parent and one teacher in each school). Epstein's six types of parental involvement (parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with community) provided the initial coding schema. Additional emergent codes and categories were derived or collapsed/split as appropriate. Then, a code book was created, revised and refined multiple times until saturation was reached. This codebook included a description of each code (taking into consideration what needed to be modified in terms of labeling and indexing which includes categories that did not fit with Epstein's parental involvement typology). This approach to developing a data code book is useful for analyzing all the transcripts, field notes, memos/activity logs, and school-produced documents to help with forming themes and sub-themes that explain the form, scope and breadth of the phenomenon under study.

Once those categories coincided with the substantive constructs that have been validated by Epstein's effective school-family partnership theory as exemplified by her six types of parental involvement, the initial thematic summaries were created to display initial ideas across interviews within each setting (school) and across groups (teachers, parents). Emergent themes from the data sources were further identified. The rationale for inclusion or exclusion as a theme was based on a review of the potential theme three times to check if a theme works in relation to the raw data set; and to check for examples that do not fit and explain why they do not fit (i.e. negative instances). In addition, exemplars of real text for each theme were necessary to solidify decisions for inclusion or exclusion. The thematic summaries were then further edited, segmented, and summarized so that comparisons could be made within and across settings to identify how themes and sub-themes fit or do not fit together, while allowing for emergent ideas.

Secondly, at the inductive stage, reflection and refinement of themes, including those that did not fit Epstein's typology, drove the evaluation of the complexity, associations, and sequences as suggested by the specifics of the reduced data. Following researcher reflection on any new emergent conceptual understanding, further comparisons were made with the original transcripts in order to get a global sense of the corpus of data as a whole. Thus, this iterative process of looking for links, patterns, associations, relationships, and sequences solidified the final themes as indicative of the patterns underlying the data that established full relationship with the data.

The review of such relationships, in terms of processes and mechanisms, facilitated the presentation of the analytic interpretations that reflect the *within* and *across group perspectives* on effective Somali parental involvement in education of Somali children in the contexts under study.

Once the data analyses process was complete; *within* and *across group* comparisons and contrasts were possible using frequency counts, figures and tabulations.

Study Research Ethics

Rubin & Rubin (2005) stress “*the importance of obtaining rich data in ways that do not harm those who are being studied.*” (p. 97). This study is done in conformity with the following key ethical requirements for doing research in the social sciences: (a) obtaining an informed and voluntary consent of the participants; (b) protecting the confidentiality of information shared by study participants; (c) ensuring the anonymity of study participants, unless they specifically request their identity to be revealed; (d) doing no harm to the study participants in the process or as a result of their participation in a research project; and (e) allowing participants not to answer any questions or stop at any time they choose to do so.

The data collection efforts of the researcher meets all of the research ethics requirements listed above, all of which fall within the parameters of the *University of Minnesota’s Human Subjects Protection Protocols*, which are designed to be followed by all researchers who are affiliated with this University before any research activities can begin (see Appendix C for details). Access to the study data was limited to the researcher. Furthermore, all the data records for this study are password-protected on a computer at home that is accessed only by the researcher. Furthermore, data back-ups are stored on two additional storage devices, i.e. a flash card and on an external hard drive (both password-protected) which are stored in a locked-up drawer at another location.

Study Limitations

The focus of these case studies is to examine the range of perspectives and positions held by teachers and Somali parents in two urban public middle schools in a Midwestern region of the United States. The study was conducted at the participating schools at a time when school personnel working at these schools were from multiple ethnicities (European-American, Somali, other Africans of non-Somali decent, and Arab). Nevertheless, the study participants are limited to Somali-speaking foreign-born teachers and native-born European-Americans as those were the only two groups who volunteered to participate in the study. It is also limited by the extent to which the respondents are candid with their responses about their views of effective Somali parental involvement in education. The small sample size used in this study means that the study

findings are not generalizable to other similar populations, including the larger population of parents or teachers who are responsible for student learning of Somali middle school children in other contexts. Despite this lack of direct transferability to other contexts, the findings of this study may be of interest to stakeholders such as parents, teachers, school administrators, community leaders, and policy makers who are designing or implementing family engagement and support programs for promotion of student motivation for learning or for reducing student behavioral problems.

Chapter Conclusion

A qualitative case study approach, multiple data sources, and an iterative data analysis and interpretation are useful in examining the understanding of the phenomenon of Somali parental involvement in the education of their children. In general, qualitative researchers benefit from using multiple data sources in their endeavor to create contextual categories that are linked to study participants' authentic orientation (Creswell, 2007, 2009; Silverman, 2003). For instance, by focusing on the nuances of reality that various data sources present, a researcher may reflect on specific evidence of organizational reality (Atkinson & Coffey, 2011, p. 84). This approach enhances the scope and depth of the descriptive and explanatory accounts related to the underlying rules and structures of the subjective meaning of action on the part of actors in multiple settings (Maxwell, 2008; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Schwandt, 2000; Rapley, 2011; Stake, 2006, 2010).

In the following chapter (Chapter Four), the collected data is categorized and analyzed using Epstein's Overlapping Spheres of Influence Framework. Emergent themes are aggregated to arrive at interrelationships level to explain similarities and/or discrepancies in perspectives on effective Somali parental involvement in education.

Chapter Four: Study Findings

Restatement of the Study Purpose

The purpose of these qualitative case studies is to determine the views of Somali parents and teachers regarding effective parental involvement in the education of Somali–American school children. In addition, two Somali-speaking administrators were interviewed about their personal approach to promoting successful school-family partnerships at their respective schools. Furthermore, The inclusion of various school configurations (a charter school and a non-charter school) in this research illuminate how teachers and parents under different organizational conditions perceive effective strategies that support the complex work of parenting, teaching and learning in those settings.

Restatement of the Study Guiding Question

The overarching research question that guides this study is: “*What are the factors that shape how school personnel and Somali families view effective parental involvement in the education of Somali children?*”

The findings of the study that are presented in this chapter include: (1) study participants’ understanding of what effective Somali parental involvement in education means, in terms of their own beliefs; and (2) their perceptions of the strengths and challenges of school-based parental involvement and academic socialization on the basis of their expectations and experiences.

Four primary themes emerge in the subsequent analysis of the study’s interview data. Each theme includes several construct areas, each of which is linked to the overall concept of parental involvement in education. Those themes are: *Accountability* (i.e., school/family role definition; and communication between schools and families to support student learning); (b) *Attitude towards* (Authority; credibility and trust; culture, responsibility; and parents’ practical knowledge); (c) *Relationship-building* (as it relates to the interactions and experiences of teachers and parents as they consider what they view to be best for student learning and development across school-home contexts); and (d) *Family Process* (which includes parental attention to the child at home, family relationships, family expectations for student behavior at

school and at home, and family routines to support children as students to complete their schoolwork at home and at school).

Further analysis of those four themes facilitated the review of within-group and across-group similarities and/or differences in study participant perspectives within each school and across-schools. The chapter concludes with a summary of the findings that culminate in three factors that arise from interrelationships of the four themes as described above. This summary is intended to explain the beliefs, expectations, and personal approaches to parental involvement from the perspectives of school personnel (teachers and administrators) and Somali parents.

Study Setting

Case 1: New Heights Academy (NHA)

New Heights Academy (NHA) is a charter school located in its own school district. It finalized its current configuration of Grades K-8 in 2005. According to the school personnel, the majority of the students at this school are first-generation Somali-Americans who come from families who may have resettled from African or third countries as a result of political unrest and strife in their original homeland. At the time of the study, this school drew its student body from the metro counties in the metropolitan region of the state. The school's enrollment procedures begin with selection by a lottery process that takes into consideration sibling admissions. Therefore, some families may have more than one child at this school. In 2013-2014, NHA was designated as a school-wide Title I Focus School by the state education agency. Focus schools are mandated to set aside 20 percent of their Title I funds to support school improvement efforts to raise student proficiency in math and Reading, growth and graduation rates as well as to reduce the achievement gap between various groups of students (across race, socioeconomic status and ability status). In addition, Focus Schools are considered to be among the ten percent of the schools in a particular state with the greatest contribution to a state's achievement gaps among student sub-groups. Therefore, such schools are required to meet additional requirements, including technical assistance from the State Department of Education so that such schools can develop and implement their improvement plans. Such plans are intended to target specific needs of low performing students in a particular school –including those with low-income status, those with limited-English proficiency status or those who come from diverse ethnic or racial backgrounds. Finally, Title I schools must comply with policy and practice provisions in the law

that promote parental involvement in the education of their children (i.e. NCLB, Title I, Part A, Section 1118, which is implemented in state statutes such as Minnesota Statutes 124D.8995). The organizational configuration (Figure 2 below) depicts NHA’s internal stakeholders who were charged to oversee and monitor its Title I School Improvement Plan (SIP), and activities.

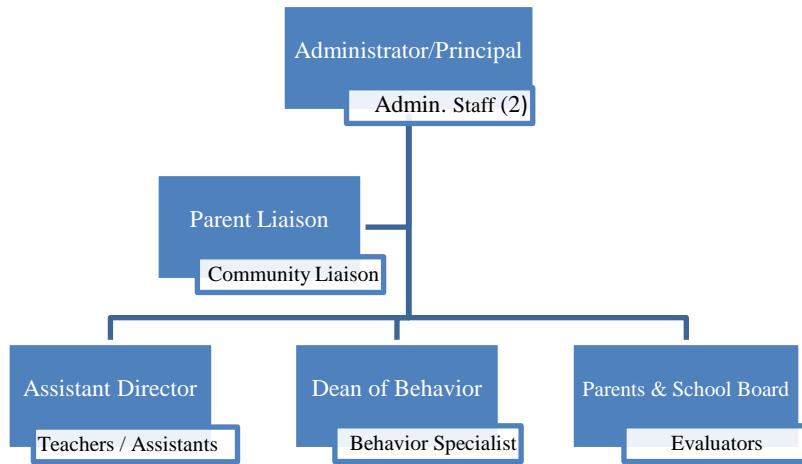


Figure 2: NHA organizational configuration of school parental involvement outreach structure

In total, at this study site, 13 individuals (7 males and 6 females) were interviewed by the researcher in one-to-one and face-to-face semi-structured conversations that were audio-recorded. The interviewees at this school were comprised of 7 parents, 5 teachers and 1 administrator/principal. They were invited to respond in the language in which they felt most comfortable conversing. All the interviews were transcribed in the language the interviewee was speaking (English or Somali). Then, the interviews in Somali were translated into English. Only one Somali-speaking person chose to respond to most of the interview protocol questions in English.

Case 2: Back to Essentials School (BES)

Back to Essentials School (BES), a specialty school, is run by a non-profit agency for a large urban school district. It focuses its programming on a school configuration of 6th through 12th grade. It was designed to meet the needs of two disparate student groups: Students on a college-prep track and students who are still progressing in their academic-English-language acquisition. Similar to the student body of NHA, students who attend this school came from

many neighborhoods in the metro area of the state. The nature of the school was elaborated by one of the teachers at this school as follows:

We draw our student body from all over the metro area. Families are choosing to come here. We are contracted by the school district. We don't share their resources. We are not district employees. We are essentially a non-profit that is contracted by the school district to run their school for their students. It is a parallel situation to the district contracting with the food service provider, except that it is a different world than what we do. So we are included in their larger umbrella because the students are all their students. We run our programs according to their rules for student graduation requirements and other things (Melissa, BES, teacher₂).

Many of the families who enroll their children at this school tend to be newer immigrants who arrived in the United States in the mid/late 1990s or later. Like NHA, this school is a school-wide Title I school that is supposed to meet the same Title I requirements as described earlier. This school's assessment rate improved from 77.42% in 2012-2013 to 88.27% in 2013-2014. Due to that improvement, the school was removed from its earlier "Continuous Improvement" school designation at the state level. In 2013-2014, its enrollment numbers improved as well (compared to 2012-2013).

The organizational configuration shown in Figure 3 (below) depicts BES' internal stakeholders who may be involved in the planning and/or implementation of its Title I School Improvement Plan (SIP) as well as in the school's parental involvement in education programming and outreach (based on the school's improvement plan and interviews).

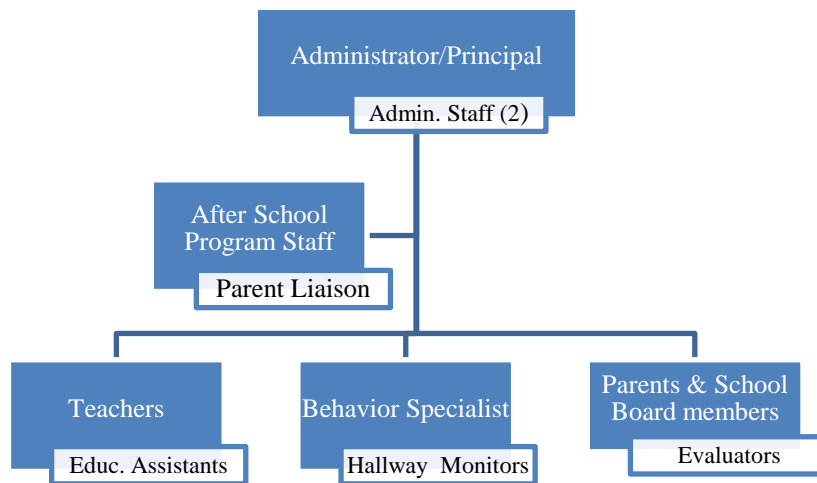


Figure 3: BES organizational configuration of parental involvement outreach structure

At this study site, 13 individuals (7 males and 6 females) were interviewed by the researcher in one-on-one and face-to-face semi-structured conversations which were audio-recorded [7 parents, 5 teachers and 1 administrator/principal]. All the interviews were transcribed in the language the interviewee was speaking (English or Somali). No Somali-speaking study participant chose to respond to the interview protocol questions in English. However, one study participant requested the study Consent Form to be read to her both in English and in Somali before she signed it.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the interview data is aggregated within and across participants at the two study sites. The initial analysis is guided by Epstein's conceptual framework of Overlapping Spheres of Influence as exemplified by its six types of parental involvement in education.

The responses of the Somali parents at the New Heights Academy (NHA) indicate that they all engage in four parental involvement types: *Parenting, Communicating, Learning at Home, and Collaborating with Community*. In terms of *Collaborating with Community*, all the parent interviewees indicate that they are aware of the availability of free-of-charge homework support services at libraries in areas where their families live or in the city where their children go to school (which may not be where the family lives). The majority of NHA parent interviewees (57%) report that they find community resources for academic support for their children by word of mouth first or through their own internet search for resources. Other parents acknowledge that they get help from the school office which is often targeted at struggling students. Only two parents (14%) mentioned their awareness of enrichment opportunities for students at NHA or even of the existence of extra-curricular programs that may be available to families through neighborhood agencies.

In terms of volunteering, three out of seven of the NHA parent interviewees (43%) confirmed that they volunteer at NHA. Of those who mentioned that they do volunteer, all of their volunteering is comprised of non-academic tasks upon request from the school personnel (e.g. transporting other parents to school events, setting up and cleaning up for school events, tidying up classrooms, shelving materials in the media room, and helping out during field trips or recess time, etc.). None of the NHA parents report that they participate in the planning or decision-making process of the school—including sitting on the advisory boards or joining parent-teacher organizations. In elaborating the nature of volunteering at his school, the NHA

administrator (principal) confirms minimal parental volunteering and total lack of parent participation in the school planning and governance affairs this way:

We have a PTO, and we do organize [school] events. Although teachers have keen interest in the PTO, we do not find strong support from the parents. Actually, parent participation in this group is getting weaker over the last two years. Some parents signed up, but [then] they withdrew their membership, because, they [had] thought initially that this body was where school hiring decisions were made. Once they had found out that was not the case, they were no longer interested in the other functions of the PTO nor did they want to continue to be members. We don't know why! (AKA, Director, NHA).

This less-than-optimal view of Somali parental involvement at this school is further supported by NHA teacher comments which suggest parental volunteering at this school to be lacking—at least at the middle school level:

I don't know if we have a good system for handling parent volunteers at our school or as a way of communicating about what opportunities we have for them at the school. I think that has to do more with a systematic change that has to happen for the whole school. We have tried to pull in parents to the school [during] the last few years but I don't think we got a lot of a response. We have a few who come in on a weekly basis. But they are more in the younger grade levels. They don't seem to be as involved in the middle school. (Dianne, teacher₁, NHA).

We want parents to be volunteering at the school. We had mixed success. We had few volunteers but we had more than we did last year. We tried pushing for parental involvement this year during the school day (Rachael, teacher₅, NHA).

I don't have any parent volunteers in my classroom. You see most of the volunteers at this school in K-3 grades (Khalid, teacher₂, NHA).

In sum, at the initial stage of the data analysis, it was evident that most parents at NHA exhibit a rather passive parental involvement pattern. This is indicated by the fact that the parents at this school self-reveal that their participation in the school itself tends to follow one of two patterns: (a) parents who volunteer sporadically, and only in informal school support activities, rather than in direct academic support for students at the classroom level; and (b) parents who are currently totally disengaged from membership in the school planning and school governance bodies. This characterization of the parental involvement pattern of parents at this school is supported by the school personnel experience (as described in the comments above).

At the time of this study, NHA's parental involvement program and activities did not demonstrate all of the six types of Epstein's framework which are indicative of active parental involvement in education. According to Epstein's conceptual framework of Overlapping Spheres

of Influence, all of the six types of parental involvement in the model must be present for a school-family partnership at a specific school to be considered successful.

In contrast to the passive parental involvement pattern of NHA parents, the BES school personnel (director and teachers) report a more robust Somali parental involvement pattern at their school as suggested by favorable comments below:

We are proud of the level of involvement of our parents in the education of their children and connection to the school. Also, it is gratifying to see children who came to us as 6th graders “oo qalin jabinaysa” [who are now on the verge of breaking the pen, i.e. graduating from school]. We also have a successful PSEO program. It is a triumph for our students, families, and for us as a school (ARAD, Director, BES).

We get a pretty good turn-out. May be more than half of our families. Whoever can make it. Depends on the family. Mom and dad. One or the other or whoever can make it (Mark, BES, teacher₁).

The school invites parents to Parent-Teacher Conferences and Parent Nights. And they come. I think we get a participation rate of more than 75%. I would think about a half come on their own. As for the rest, you have to do other things to get them through the door (Liban, BES, teacher₅).

One of the nice things about this school is that the parents have clearly and intentionally chosen this school, because it is culturally responsive. So, there is support and buy-in for the school. I think this is different than regular district schools because there are Somalis in authority here. There is a lot of communication that goes on. So parents are free to come in or call and be in the picture (Melissa, BES, teacher₂).

The attendance rate of 50-75%, as remarked upon in the foregoing comments, appears to favorably rank with the U.S. national parent-teacher conference attendance rate of 76% (Noel, Stark & Redford, 2013). Also, more BES parents report, compared to NHA parent interviewees, that they volunteer at school [i.e. five (5) out of seven (7) or 71%, compared to only three (3) out of seven (7) parents or 43% at NHA]. In that regard, BES parents also report that they volunteer in a wider range of activities including: (a) supporting the school’s fund-raising efforts for prizes presented for academic excellence at the end of the school year, helping out with food service during school events, (b) monitoring the hallways to make sure that students do not loiter so they get back to their classrooms on time, and (c) helping other parents with transportation to school events.

Moreover, whereas none (0%) of the NHA parent interviewees indicated that they participate in the planning or decision-making process of their school, three out of seven BES parent interviewees (43%) report that they do participate in that process. Those BES parents further describe their membership role in the school’s the decision-making bodies to range from

sitting on the school parent advisory council or as observers of all school advisory council meetings or as parent representatives at the school board (or even the at the district board). One parent mentioned he is a regular at the school board retreats as well.

Despite this higher participation in the school governance affairs at BES (compared to NHA), it appears there is still disconnect between the perceptions of teachers and Somali parents at BES when it comes to the frequency and effectiveness of volunteering at this school. For instance, only one teacher confirms that he is aware of BES parents who frequently volunteer, albeit in a non-academic capacity. Furthermore, two out of five teacher interviewees (40%) express uncertainty about the existence of parent volunteers at their school (in their experience) this way:

I don't see a lot of volunteers in this school to be honest with you. May be there is, but, I am not aware of it. Where we have a real issue is getting parents for chaperoning for field trips, stuff like that. You know, I usually send [with students] a permission slip [that parents need to sign]. I rarely get it back and I never get that back saying "Yes, I will chaperone." I told the students to ask their families. Probably they are not even asking. I am not sure why that is.[So] I mean I know it may be there are other kids at home or people can't leave. There are all sorts of things (Christine, BES, teacher₃).

Parents do not volunteer in my classroom. I don't know if there are parents who volunteer at the office though (Liban, BES, teacher₅).

Equally puzzling is the fact that teachers at BES are even less certain of the extent of parental participation in the school planning and decision-making process. For example, none of the teacher interviewees indicated that they are aware of Somali parent contributions to their PTO or any other advisory role parents play at their school. Such differences in teacher and parent perceptions regarding the nature of what they consider active parental involvement appear to be due to either (or both) of two reasons: (1) parents are not volunteering to help teachers with the tasks that the teachers want or find most useful; (2) teachers are not aware of all the volunteering and decision-making opportunities or other activities that parents contribute to (or choose to contribute to) at this school.

This assertion is supported by one administrator's following comment:

We know our parents want to come in and support the school one way or the other. We also know our parents want to have their own space where they can come in and connect not only with the school staff but also with one another. We feel that, at this school, we have not yet been able to create systematic ways for parents to be in the classrooms with their children. Right now, we are working on thinking through the right approach, so we can get more parents work with teachers on field trips. That is an area that the teachers expressed they need help with. So we know [that]

increasing opportunities for our parents to volunteer is an area we need to improve on. It is still work in progress. "Waan ka shaqaynaynaa" [we are working on it] (ARAD, Director, BES).

In sum, Somali parents at BES are more active in their parental involvement pattern than Somali parents at NHA. For instance, they exhibit more school-based involvement as they volunteer in a wider variety of activities and, and a number of BES parents serve on school advisory council or other school governance bodies. However, the interview data analysis indicates that Somali parents, as a group, predominantly engage in home-based parental involvement which constitutes: *Parenting*, *Communicating* with schools in response to school-initiated contact, *Learning at Home*, and *Collaborating with the Community* by enrolling their children at programs at public libraries or at neighborhood agencies.

At issue, then, is the determination of the extent of overlap or otherwise, in the context of these two schools, between the perceptions of teachers and parents as it relates to what they understand to be effective Somali parental involvement in the education of Somali-descent children. More specifically, it is necessary to examine their perceptions from three aspects: (1) what they believe to be effective Somali parental involvement in education of Somali-American children, (2) what they see as possibilities (opportunities) for promoting Somali parental involvement in the education of their children based on their personal experiences and interactions; and (3) how they approach limitations (barriers) that constrain support for student learning process, behavior, and progress.

The rest of this chapter presents the findings of these case studies which answer the study research questions and concludes with a visual display of the interrelationship of the factors (themes) that emerge from the data. These themes shape the views and practices of the school personnel and parents with regard to what they consider effective parental involvement in the education of Somali children.

Research Sub-Question #1: What do Somali parents and teachers view as parental involvement in the education of Somali children?

Theme One: Accountability – “Getting the Job Done”

Accountability emerged as a central concept in the data in terms of what the study participants see as the “do your job” aspect of parental involvement in education, given formal roles prescribed in the schools’ parental involvement policy and informal roles that the school personnel and parents adopt for practical reasons. In addition, there is a communication

component to this theme that the study participants see as crucial as it relates to sharing timely information (about the nature of the expectations of school personnel) on the responsibilities of students themselves with support from their families. This brings into focus a range of perceptions about the adequacy (or lack) of cooperative relationships between teachers and parents that is conducive to fostering student orientation to their own academic success and positive behavior.

Administrators' view: Schools cannot attain their organizational improvement goals for academic achievement without the support of the families of their students. In this view, parental involvement in the education of their children is seen to be integral to student academic success. Therefore, it is a shared responsibility between schools and families. These administrators believe that parents, who value education, show support for their children when they engage with schools in certain ways: (1) parents accept their role as partners with schools in the effort to boost the child's morale and to focus his/her attention on their own education; (2) parents know what is going on in schools as they frequently communicate with school personnel and remain in touch with them; and (3) parents talk to their children about school and orientate their children to the future—by helping their children understand the link between their current effort in school to their future academic pursuits. The administrators express their views of actively involved parents in this manner:

Parents are instrumental in preparing their children to commit to every day habits of being good students. Consistent parental interest in what their children are learning, and asking about it. That is important. That indicates to children that their parents value education. Without the support of parents, schools cannot do their job of educating students. To do so, families can help their children to complete their schoolwork at home, talk to them about how their work for the day connects to high school, and to college and beyond. Every spring and fall, we examine the percentage of parents who attend our school events because it is a state requirement to collect such information, and we also want to know how we can better attend to the interests and needs of our families (AKAD, Director, NHA).

Families who are getting honored along with their students are parents we know do several things to support the education of their children. They consistently come to parent-teacher conferences; they are in contact with the teacher, they have been in touch with the administration to some extent. That is, they not only provide an environment at home where students can do their schoolwork, [but] they also show up at the school. Sometimes they call me, sometimes they call the teachers; they are active trying to find out answers to any questions they have about how to support their students to succeed in school. I see them engaged with the learning of their children. They are part of that process. (ARAD, Director, BES).

Those administrators' comments (above) indicate the school leadership's view of the nature of a successful partnership between families and schools. Their comments also reflect school formal expectations for frequent parental interaction with teachers and other school personnel if they are to be considered to be involved parents who are indeed *active* and visible at the school. In this context, an *active* parent is defined as a parent who initiates contact with the teachers and administrators to seek clarifications about what is unclear about the school life of their own children, and who regularly attends school planned events (i.e. parents who "show up").

Finally, these comments indicate a preference for a specific type of talk between parents and their children (i.e. school talk) which is intended to model for children that their parents do value education and expect their children to put their best effort forth to do well in school. This verbal encouragement is complementary to the material support that parents usually provide their children to encourage them to complete their schoolwork. In short, the leaders at NHA and BES expect and prefer three types of parental involvement: (1) school-based, (2) home-based, and (3) academic socialization which is characterized by intense verbal exchanges at many levels (parent-teacher; parent-administrator, parent-child). In this sense, an active parent is expected to assume a supportive role to the school in the educative process—as such, parents are expected to prompt their children to "do their job" while they simultaneously support the school to "do its job" in order to meet its own formal educative goal and government funding requirements.

Teachers' view: The phrase "*hold accountable*" is a term which teachers frequently use to indicate that effective teaching depends on bringing students' academic and behavioral problems under control. The teachers say that they need occasional parental intervention to ensure that student behavioral problems in the classroom cease timely; and to encourage their children to get "the job done," and endeavor to do well in school as indicated by the following comments:

Honestly, I think my best parents I can tell who they are, not necessarily because I met them or even know them well. The reason I know they are my best parents is, because, I know their kid is held accountable. I see that kid, and I know how when that kid goes home, they have to tell the truth about the work they need to do. I am thinking of one kid in particular. In the four years that I taught the children of this family, I met that family probably twice but these children are never in trouble and [they] always do their job. And even if something minimal happens, like missing an assignment, that parent is always calling the school to ask why there is missing work and asks, "What can I do to help?" So I know this parent is involved and makes sure the kid gets the job done (John, NHA, teacher₃).

In situations when we call the parent to come in, we are really concerned about a student. [So] we have the family, all the teachers and sometimes the student. We all meet to discuss what is going on. Then there is a plan of some sort that everybody is accountable for. It is a very humbling experience for the student. It is almost all of a sudden; it is like the truth is all coming out at the same time (Christine, BES, teacher₃).

I make sure to let the parents know as soon as possible if the students are lagging behind and they are not bringing back their homework and as a result are failing the class. So they [parents] can do something about it as soon as they can. “[markaa] arrintaa waxa wax ka qaban kara waalidkii ilmaha soo dirsaday. Si uu waalidku arrintaa u ugaado in ilmihisu shaqadiisii aanu qabanayn, I make sure inaan gaadhsiiyo” [Only the parent who sent the child here can deal with such an issue most effectively. Therefore, I make sure to notify the parent so the parent knows that his child is not doing his job]. This is about the student who is not bringing in assigned schoolwork, does not remain seated, or doesn’t take school seriously. There is a point where the teacher reaches a limit; someone else has to step in to rein these students in (Khalid, NHA, teacher₂).

They [parents] need to encourage their student to do better. Is it a matter of what does this student need to do? [That is] What needs to change? That conversation [between parents-students-teachers] I hope will continue, because, really I can’t make a student do better. Really it is the student that needs to do the work. (Melissa, BES, teacher₂).

To bring in the parents that I think need to hear the poor performance of their children before it is too late, I place personal calls to the parents to alert them and ask them to come in and see me during the parent events, saying, “Waa macallinkii ilmahaagii hebel, waxaan rabaa inaad ee iitimaado oo aan kaala hadlo ilmahaaga gradekiisi iyo sidii loo arrimin laaha.” [This is the teacher of your child XXX, I am calling because I am concerned about XXX’s grades, I would like you to come in and see me so we can discuss and make decisions [about next steps]” (Liban, BES, teacher₅).

Parents’ view: Again, the phrase “*hold accountable*” came up in the parents’ views about parental involvement in education. However, it is evoked by parents as a parenting approach to help them to prepare their children to internalize the value of personal responsibility for own learning (depending on the child’s temperament and age). It is also used to indicate a parent’s strategy to define the kind of relationship the parent wants to cultivate with the school personnel when it comes to student misbehavior. Three parents share their thoughts about why they believe children should be held accountable this way:

Parents should hold their children responsible for their own performance. If I check XXX [name of online school grading system] and see missing work or bad grades, I say to the child, “Things are not all right now, but, I expect things will turn out all right.” So I encourage them to check the web site for themselves [first] and [then] check in with the teachers [later] saying [to the child], “You can go talk to the teacher about it, and let me know if that does not work out.” “Waxaan ka hortagayaa cilladda jirta oo waxay tahay mentalityiga la leeyahay halkan ilmaha markaad 18 gaarto ayaad qaan gaaraysaa oo aad masuul noqonaysaa” [I am counter-acting the phenomenon here of children considered immature and unable to assume responsibility for their own actions until they reach age 18]. I see 15- or 16- or even 17- year olds acting irresponsibly and immaturity, and if you ask them, “Why are you doing that?!” They tell you jokingly, “I am not 18 yet!”, “Sidii 18 jir markuu gaaro inay caqliigiisii iyo maskaxdiisii ay mar kaliya

imaanayso” [it is not as if their commonsense and maturity will arrive suddenly [to take residence in them] on the day when one turns 18] (Aweys, BES, Parent₄).

As a parent, you have to make sure that the child is doing their schoolwork. If the teacher is not explaining something well and “oo waalidku ka warhayo” [the parent is aware of the problem], the child will not suffer from frustration because the child will approach you and tell you [the parent], “This is what I don’t know, help me understand it.” Even if the parent does not know the material, the parent may still be able to help the child look for solutions like looking it up on the internet; parents can ask the child about the instructions that the teacher has provided to look into the assignment beyond the “warqadda duulaysa” [flying worksheets] that the child brought home to work on. After that, the parent may be able to help the child understand the rules they are supposed to follow and get a feel for the concepts they need to understand before they can complete their homework and other class assignments (Hawo, BES, parent₁).

If I am holding my child accountable for his actions and feelings and demanding he must do well in school, then I want to see that teachers are [also] held accountable for the role they play in that goal. I think adults (parents and teachers) have a [collective] role to play, and must consider what it is that they are doing personally to cause what the child is doing or how the child is feeling before they [as adults] demand the child to “cut it out” (Marwo, NHA, Parent₃).

Theme Two: Attitudes Impacting Student Success

Study participants often ascribe effective parental involvement in education to: (1) individual attitudes towards authority, (2) credibility and trust among parents and school personnel, and (3) cultural understanding and expectations, including beliefs about the child’s ability, persistence and temperament. In short, individual attitude is seen to impact the choices that administrators, parents, and teachers make, given their assumptions about how to best discharge their responsibility to guide Somali-American students reach their potential.

Administrators’ view: Based on formal assessments at their schools, both administrators allude to school strategies (as indicated below) that aim to reward high-ability students, if their parents play their part in supporting their children to advance to a higher level of academic success:

Currently, we encourage teachers to pay extra attention to children who seem to be capable to do work beyond what is covered in the class. Teachers provide higher level material to challenge those students so they don’t get bored. Some children may be exceptionally advanced, and sometimes homeroom teachers consult with other teachers to see if other teachers have the same sense of the talent or precociousness they are witnessing in these children. If all the teachers agree across the board that is what they are seeing too, then we compare that [fact] to their performance on state standards. If a child maintains [an] exceptional performance for a long time, we may even consider advancing the child to a higher grade if that is what their parents want. For younger children, we take extra precaution because we know the significance of social maturity in a student’s [long-term] school success (AKAD, Director, NHA).

We ask our teachers to differentiate their teaching to meet the needs of all their students. We encourage parents to think about college even for middle school students. Families that have sibling pairs at the school may have older students who are participating in PSEO classes, and they provide good role modeling for their younger siblings. We are finding now that as families learn about college access programs from one another, the demand for such programs is increasing. Finally, students who are at grade level and doing well have options [that] they can personally choose from. In middle school they have access to more advanced material. In high school they can take higher level classes. Sophomores take junior level classes or juniors take senior level classes, STEM courses, they can take Pre-calculus, etc. That is they can take more electives or they can take honor classes (ARAD, Director, BES).

Moreover, successful students give other students' parents a concrete example of parenting for college education preparation, i.e. "*vicarious experience of others' success in involvement or involvement-related activities*" (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1995, p. 315). However, one may argue that parents who are not present at schools miss witnessing such exemplars unless parents at these schools know each other outside the school context (i.e. through Somali parent social networks outside the school). Both administrators alluded to that point.

Additionally, student characteristics, including their temperament and ability, seem to weaken school and parental influence on student success—a problem that seemed to be more of a concern to Somali parents than it is for the school personnel as discussed in the Parents' view section (below).

Parents' view: Although the majority of the parent interviewees (11 out of 14 parents or 80%) report that they trust teachers as professionals, they vary in their understanding of what they, as parents, need to do to match their child's unique needs while being responsive to what the teachers want. In that vein, there are two groups of Somali parents who hold these perspectives on how to engage in the education of their children:

- (1) Parents who are more focused on their child's temperament or disposition (i.e. internal attribution); and
- (2) Parents who blame student misbehavior on external triggers that take away the child's attention from formal educational goals (i.e. external attribution).

The first group of parents attempt to mitigate the negative impact of child's natural tendencies (temperament) or to manage the child's frustration with the instructional goals of the school. These parents seemed to view teachers as allies to foster child motivation to excel in school as elucidated below:

Well, if I know that is the ‘dabeecad’ (personality/ temperament/nature) of my child and I already know that is how this child behaves at home, then, the teacher and I need to talk about it, so we can see how we can work it out and be on the same page. So I would say to the teacher “I am going to push from home and you push from school and let us be a team.” (Suuban, NHA, parent₄).

I think parents need to manage a child’s frustration well. I understand that sometimes he [her son] is frustrated because he says the teacher lumps all the students together for misbehavior in the classroom even though probably only a few acted out or started what got the teacher mad [in the first place]. I understand [that] children sometimes blame others; but, I want to make sure children, even shy ones, are involved in the review of facts of the situation, because, that will affect their performance and grades. The parent’s role in such a situation is to be a 3rd party to help the child with [overcoming] his fear of the teacher and help the teacher with his frustration with the child. Thus the role of the parent is important for improving the teacher-child relationship. In the end, this facilitates the teacher-parent-child problem resolution plan for the success of the child. (Hawo, BES, parent₁).

We have two boys who are both gifted in math. One does not need much pushing. The other is [more] interested in socializing and likes the idea that students find him witty so he is joking all the time. Sometimes, there is a strict teacher who takes our son with a firm hand, and that makes my wife very worried about our son’s emotional state because the boy is complaining [all the time]. Sometimes she wants to change teachers, but, we talk about why changing classes just because the teacher is demanding [for the child to be serious] is not wise. I think letting children know limits and boundaries makes them stronger adults (Adan, NHA, parent₄).

Parents [should] help their children gain confidence in their own worth so they can have the self-assuredness necessary to do well in school and resist negative peer influence that may pull them in the other direction. Such parents know the impact of their child’s “dabeecad” (personality/ temperament/nature) on their interactions with their teacher. [Therefore], they manage the conflicts between children and teachers if necessary (Magan, BES, parent₅).

Like the first parent group, as described above, the second group of parents, pay attention to the relationship between the child and the teachers; but, their focus is more on the child’s “Akhlaaq-wanaag” [good manners]. They are more focused on social development. This orientation manifests itself in parental attempts to minimize the child’s outward behavior that others can see as a child being socially out of line. They see “Akhlaaq-wanaag” as a precursor to student motivation to learn, and want their children to fix their manners first before they can focus on school curricular demands. Several parent interviewees explained that idea as follows:

Parents should inquire about the child’s “akhlaaq” (manners) at school because “akhlaaqda wanaagsan baa waxbarashduna ku jirta” [good performance at school/student learning is dependent on [the child’s] good manners] (Kayd, NHA, parent₂).

The message here is that it is my duty to convince my child that, “Adigaa wax baranya, macallinku adiguu wax ku barayaa, isagu wax ma baranayo, waa inaad ixtaamtaa, waa inaad maqashaa” [the teacher is there to teach you [as a student] not to learn, rather you are the one who is there to learn [as a student]; so be respectful and be attentive]. “Waa inuu cunugu macallinka ka dambeeyo oo wax maqlo; isaga iyo macallinku is fahmaan. Dee waxay ila tahay

macallinku inuu ilmuhu jecelaadona macallinkaa ka sameysta [I expect the child to defer to the teacher and listen to the teacher, so they get along, but, I think the teacher earns the child's regard and love with [his/her] own effort] (Halimo, BES, parent₅).

Waa inaad ogaataa wuxuu macallinku rabo ood soo eegto wuxuu cunuggu samaynaayo” [Parents should be aware of what the teacher wants even if it means you [take time to] go to see what the child is doing [at school] (Murayo, BES, parent₂).

Cunuga akhlaaqdiisu waa inay xag guri iyo xag iskoolba ka dhisan tahay. Waxa jira ilmo guriga akhlaaqdiisu ka dhisan tahay, laakiin markuu iskuulka tagaaan kuwa kale ee aan akhlaaqda lahayn ay badalaan. Cunugaaga iyo macallinku halkay kala joogaan waa inaad ka warqabta” [it so happens that a child, who is well-behaved at home may get negatively influenced by bad company at school. [So] you have to know how the teacher and your child get along]. (Shukri,NHA, parent₁).

Overall, the majority of Somali parent interviewees (78%) see that the education of their children is a shared responsibility with schools. Two mothers who graduated from U.S. high schools indicate that they also believe that schools should do more to educate parents on how to support their children emotionally (parenting education). However, they are the only parents who suggested such a role for schools.

Teachers’ view: All of the teacher interviewees (100%) mention that they communicate with the parents of the children they teach about the school expectations and about the teachers’ own expectations of their students in the classroom. School communication with families happens through any of three separate channels: (a) At formal planned school events (e.g. parent-teacher conferences); (b) through spontaneous teacher-initiated phone contacts regarding the child’s misbehavior at school; and/or (c) via written material sent home by mail or with the students. Half of the teachers (50%) reported that parents sometimes contact teachers on their own.

However, four out of ten teachers (40%) state that they find their communication with Somali families to be challenging in the areas of homework assignments and classroom behavior. For example, some parents would be incredulous when teachers tell them that their children are not turning in their schoolwork or are misbehaving at school. Although those teachers find parental incredulity as a threat to their own credibility with families, they differ in their views about what they see as the source of the parents’ negative reactions. Three teachers think that Somali mothers have a tendency to be over-protective of their children almost to a fault; and a fourth teacher described that such incidents are really about the fact that some children exploit their mothers’ unfamiliarity with the school language, which causes an occasional

misunderstanding between parents and teachers. Thus, one-third of the interviewed teachers attribute misunderstandings between teachers and parents to gender-based attitude problem. Several teachers explained that “attitude” problem in this manner:

I think that fathers are generally more accepting, [i.e.] hearing what is going on in the classroom, especially, if there is any kind of problems. The fathers are generally more accepting and say something like “O.K., my child could act like that;” whereas with the mothers, if you say that they are not turning in their homework or they are talking in class all the time, the mother is like, “No, no, my kid could not be doing that, that is not my child, no!” You know, as a mother, I kinda understand that. It is hard to look at your kid and say, “Yeah? That could be true. They don’t do that with me, but, okay!” Personally, it is hard to locate your child and have that honest conversation. I think, in general, the father tends to be less biased about that (Dianne, NHA, teacher₁).

You know how I was raised? If the school called my house, I could make any story I wanted to, but, my parents would not believe me, they would believe the school. I find [it] hard that when you are trying to get this kid do his work, do his math, do his language arts, whatever, and when he makes a mistake, it is okay, because his parents won’t step in and say “You made a mistake, and you are gonna have consequences, kid.” But the parents would say, “Oh, I know you did not do it, you are a good kid.” That takes all the power away from me, because, that kid now knows that it doesn’t matter what I say. He is just gonna tell mommy he did not do it and that is gonna be the end of it (John, NHA, teacher₃).

Hadduu macallinku dhaho ardaygani ma shaqayneen, sidaana ma samayneen, waa inuu waalidkua arrintaa ixtiraamo. Markaa waxa wanaagsanaaya xiriirka ka dhexeeya macallinka iyo waalidka sidaan anigu arko [If the teacher says this student did not do the work or did not do this or that, the parent should respect that [teacher’s judgment]]. Then the relationship between the parent and the teacher will be good. That is what I see] (Liban, BES, teacher₅).

Some students trick their parents, and the parents get surprised when you tell them the homework was not done or is incomplete. It goes something like this at home, “Ardaygii hooyadii waxay ku oranaysaa, ‘Ma shaqaysay?’ Ardaygiina wuxuu oranayaa, ‘Haa, Hooyo, waan shaqayeyey’ buu oranayaa, ma og tahay?” [when the mother asks the student, “Did you finish your homework?” The student would answer [Yes, mom, I finished my work. You know?] For some parents, busy work by students may look like good effort. Therefore, when the teachers tell such parents that the homework was not done or was incomplete, they are incredulous and may respond, “Dee wixii wuu ka shaqeyey oo warqaddii wuu i tusay” [But I know he did it. He showed me the sheet he worked on] (Khayre, NHA, teacher₃).

These comments suggest that teacher interviewees believe that they should contact parents to share with parents any concerns related to their children. It is also evident that some teachers believe that there is a gender difference in Somali parental involvement in the education of their children, at least, when it comes to student discipline in the classroom. What that suggests, in turn, is that teachers and Somali parents need to work more diligently on their personal relationship to discuss and address in a timely manner issues that come up at school

through productive dialogue—which is the topic of a third theme that emerged in the inductive data analysis stage as explicated below.

Theme Three: Relationship-building (Possibilities/Limitations)

Teachers' view: To encourage families to be more engaged with the school, five (5) out of ten (10) or 50% of the teacher interviewees mention that they share with parents practical knowledge about what goes on at the school so that parents can get a better understanding of how to help their children at home with schoolwork. Also, these teachers approach families in this collaborative manner in order to build personal rapport between teachers and parents. Some teachers describe their efforts in that regard in this manner:

At parent-teacher conferences, I show parents how we organize things at school, so they can visually see what the well-organized binder looks like that gets graded as quality work. We encourage our students to have a 6-subject binder with a pencil/pen pouch, and a planner that students are supposed to write in all the dates of their assignments. I say "As you are here, you can see what we are doing here." Sometimes, parents say, "I don't know when they have homework." So, I can point and say, "Here, we tell them to write in their planners when their homework is due. The students may or may not be doing that, but, as a parent you can check that and have a conversation about that at home." It helps if both the parent and the teacher [are] looking at the same thing. That way, the parent can [later on] say to the kid, "You need to be writing in all your assignments in your planner. Is everything in? It is your job to do it". (Christine, BES, teacher₃).

At teacher-parent conferences, I show them the books we are using and I tell them that a chapter in the book that is not related to the standards will not be covered, meaning we might not be covering everything in the textbook [cover to cover]. In my class, I provide time for students to finish most of their homework in the classroom. I also give them some supplementary work to do at home so their parent can see what they are learning in class. Some parents like to see their children bring schoolwork home. Otherwise, they think their children are not learning anything at school. (Khayre, NHA, teacher₃).

If I have a concern and talking to the student is taking us nowhere, I don't wait for the parent-teacher conference, I call the parents and invite them to [come and] sit down with me and the student so we can [all] have a conversation about the bad situation and what can be done about it. I try to break down what I see to pieces for the parents so they can get a full picture of my concern: "Here is what we need [for student] to get a good grade. Here is what is missing. Here is what was not done well. Here is what the student needs to do to get out of the current unsatisfactory or even failing status. Here is the deadline for all of that to happen." I also describe the behaviors I notice in the class that may be contributing to the problem, [i.e.] "XXX does not take good notes, does not pay attention in class; does not hand in homework, does not complete classroom work, does not do well because he/she wastes [too much instructional] time, etc.). Overall, parents are very supportive of the school and I try to help the parents to be aware of what is going on and be up-to-date with their student (Liban, BES, teacher₅).

With the parents, I would most likely be calling, I have a very good relationship with them, and they are very concerned about their child's academic progress. I haven't had a situation where I

need to have a Special Ed talk yet. That one is too soon to have my eye on. For the most part, the calls [to] home are usually about disrespect or not turning in homework or on the flip side if they have been working really hard on fixing their behavior and having a great week this week. I like to report that [too] to the parents, and I encourage them to give the child a lot of praise at home. Especially, if they are parents I have already called a number of times. If that child is having a couple of good days, I try to call right away. It is a lot easier now that I have a translator with me more often (Rachael, NHA, teacher₅).

At teacher-parent conferences, I can walk parents through the syllabus. We show parents the books [that] we use in our classes. Parents who are not coming to meet with me are not getting that walk-through nor would they have a chance to ask questions [if they don't understand something]. I am missing that group of parents [those who do not show up] to get that level of detail. As a teacher, I try to recommend books for students to read outside of the class-time, but, only few students seem to be interested in doing that additional work (Khalid, NHA, teacher₂).

These comments (above) suggest that teachers show parents that they care about their students as individuals. However, the main difference between Somali-speaking teachers and non-Somali-speaking teachers was the nature of what the teachers choose to show the parents. For instance, the majority of Somali-speaking teachers (3 out of 4) mentioned that they focus their conversation with parents on books and worksheets or other concrete materials, as a general topic, to draw the parents' attention to where they may be able to help their children—by themselves or with assistance from family/friends/tutors, etc— to improve on deficient schoolwork promptly. In contrast, the focus of the non-Somali speaking teachers was on how parents communicate effectively with their children as students at home. The reason that Somali-speaking teachers focus more on textbooks and homework is the fact that, culturally-speaking, Somali parents expect teachers to give them concrete examples of the rubric of the subjects that their children are learning at school. In addition, textbooks are considered relatively easy concrete exemplars to share with families. Therefore, Somali parents find it puzzling that schools in the United States do not allow their children to come home with all the textbooks that are used in the classroom every day. For parents who were educated in Somalia or elsewhere in a non-Western country, parents are used to student reliance on textbooks and bound notebooks to complete schoolwork outside of the classroom time.

Parents' view: Several parents [five out of fourteen parents (36%)] indicated that they would appreciate more information on how their children should complete their homework and where to look for additional resources for parents to be able to explain to their children complex concepts that their children are learning at school. These parents are interested in more information about the primary instructional source(s) so that they can be more effective in

supporting their children academically at home. One parent described how her task to monitor and supervise her child's homework completion would have been more manageable if she did not have to deal with multiple "flying [work] sheets" that come home with school children without textbooks [she was describing what was happening when a child is trying to take out homework assignment sheets out of a backpack]. She continued to put it this way:

As a parent, you have to make sure that the child is doing the [required] schoolwork. If the teacher is not explaining something well "oo waalidku ka warhayo" [and the parent is aware of the problem] the child will not suffer from frustration because the child will approach you and tell you, "This is what I don't know, help me understand it." Even if the parent does not know the material, the parent may still be able to help the child look for solutions, like looking it up on the internet; [or] parents can ask the child about the instructions that the teacher has provided to look into the assignment, beyond the "warqadda duulaysa" [flying [work] sheets]" that the child brought home (Hawo, BES, parent₁).

Another parent's comments further illustrate Somali parents' desire for more clarity from teachers, regarding parental monitoring role of student school work. This particular parent suggests that some students need more support than is currently available at school. Therefore, he suggests that it would be helpful if teachers send home short concept lists (particularly with low-ability or medium-ability students) to alert parents about areas that are crucial for student mastery of the material. He suggests that would mean that parents would be more successful in focusing students' attention on their own academic responsibilities. He elaborates that idea as follows:

Teachers understand the child's ability to learn better than anyone else. Some children get it right away, others need "in loogu celceliyo" [repeated exposure] before they can do the work [on their own]. I think it would be helpful if the teachers prepared a review sheet with 5 questions for every lesson covered that day. The child can then see the breakdown of the concepts that they must review for the next class. In my opinion, if the teachers ask the students the review questions of yesterday's lesson for 10-15 minutes before going on to the next section of the lesson, then the teachers can gauge class comprehension right away [along the lines of]: Is a particular student getting 30% or more or not getting it at all? Is two-thirds of the class getting it? If no one is getting it, then there is a problem. I [also] think if students know that there will be public questioning during the following class period about what they learned so far, and the parents know about those public questions, the parents would make sure to remind the student about the teacher's expectations of the student to respond to those questions, and the parents' expectations for the student to know the answers to those high level questions. [I think]it is for the teacher to tell the student, "We are going to review those questions and [or] variations of them next time." The child can then look over what was learned, and the parents can help the child [if needed]. Parents can either help the child themselves or they can ask their older children to help their siblings so that the child does not get stuck (Aweys, BES, Parent₄).

Since teachers expect parents to assume responsibility for helping students with homework and other school assignments outside of the class time. These two parents, both of whom are college-educated, suggest that parents need more information about the nature of not only the homework for that day, but, also about the necessary resources for the school-assigned homework.

Administrators' view: One of the administrators confirmed that, culturally-speaking, Somali-American students want personalized relationships with their teachers. Such a relationship would preferably be characterized by high levels of verbal exchanges between teachers and students as elaborated upon in the following excerpt:

Teachers need to establish and maintain [personal] relationships with students and their families. The key to that is for teachers to show, not just tell, your students that you care about them not just as students but also as human beings. That is a challenge for new teachers. I have seen situations where students love and respect their teachers from day one, because they know these teachers are able to show them they are there to support them as individuals. In other situations, I have seen teachers who are bright in the subjects they teach, but have difficulty working with students and their families. Our students like to talk to their teachers, so they can see when a teacher is uncomfortable [conversing] (ARAD, BES, Director₂).

The need for both technical and soft skills in teaching, as suggested in the administrator's comment (above), is confirmed to be important by some teachers and parents as follows:

I feel like if you just tell them [students], "You have to do it because I said so", it does not make a lot of logical sense to them especially if they don't like you. Then that makes it even worse because it is [from the student's perspective], "I don't like you and I don't want to do what you say", and they are sad if they don't see a reason to do it or do it [just] because "You are my teacher, and you have to respect them [teachers]" (Rachael, NHA, teacher₅).

"Waa inuu cunugu macallinka ka dambeeyo oo wax maqlo; isaga iyo macallinku is fahmaan. Dee waxay ila tahay macallinku inuu ilmuhu jecelaadona macallinkaa ka sameysta [I expect the child to defer to the teacher and listen to the teacher, so they get along, but, I think the teacher earns the child's regard and love with [his/her] own effort] (Halimo, BES, parent₅).

From the foregoing comments, it is evident that the school personnel expect (and parents accept to a certain extent, depending on family-school contexts) that there are roles and responsibilities that teachers and parents share, and there are others that they do not share. In that regard, both groups describe family process that they see as important in supporting students outside of the school-time to help them succeed academically and behaviorally.

Theme Four: Family Process to Support Student Learning

Teachers' View: All of the teacher interviewees (100%) believe that effective parental involvement in education, at its most basic form, means that parents arrange home processes (i.e. home-based parental involvement) that facilitate family routines to minimize distractions at home to encourage children to complete their schoolwork and turn it in a timely fashion (i.e. specific time, work space and school supplies and materials). They also believe that parents should show their children that they value education by talking to them about their school-day, and to let their children know about their high expectations for positive academic performance and school-appropriate behavior. This parental message is signaled when parents are in the habit of responding promptly to teacher-initiated contacts with parents about student issues that come up at school.

In addition, some teachers (30%) strongly feel that children should be well-nourished and well-rested before they come to school to be ready to learn. Another issue those teachers shared to be of concern to them was the phenomenon of school-age Somali children who attend formal day care centers for long hours after school. One teacher even described it as a negative shift in Somali family time structure, i.e. "*two shifts of school-to-school*" that gets in the way of effective parenting and learning (Qalinle, BES, teacher₄). Children who attend such centers are present at school tired, and oftentimes they do not turn in their homework on time. This state of affairs is seen as more of a problem in households in which both parents work outside the home on double shifts, and/or with single-parent households. In both of those situations, parents are described to be at disadvantage in their ability to structure their child's time for schoolwork and/or spending quality family time together during the school week.

Parents' View: Somali parents' perception regarding necessary family home processes to support children as students was similar to the teachers' (i.e. attention to the child by talking to the child; providing time, space, and school material and tools for schoolwork at home as well as parental regular attendance of teacher-parent conferences). One additional dimension of parental involvement in education that some parent interviewees (5 out of fourteen) see as a family process that is necessary for fostering student learning is the need to promote inter-family harmony and support (i.e. parents striving to agree on their parenting approaches, older children helping their younger siblings with homework, and all family members pitching in to do chores at home).

Research Sub-Question #2: How and to what extent do Somali parents and teachers differ or concur in their views of parental involvement in the education of Somali children?

Somali parent interviewees believe that *an optimally-involved parent in education* (ideal type) is an informed parent who knows what is going on at school and at home, who is in frequent contact with teachers, and who encourages his/her own children to work hard and to be respectful of older individuals, including older siblings. Half of the parent interviewees indicate that they worry about environmental distractions that hamper the educational and social success of their children. In short, these parents are interested in both the academic and attitudinal aspect of parental involvement in education.

Somali parent interviewees differ from teachers in their view about parental motivation to be visible at schools (in both planned and spontaneous visits to schools). Those parents believe that ideally involved parents endeavor to establish and maintain regular contact with teachers for the benefit of their own children for two reasons: (1) Teachers tend to respect those parents who are more visible in the school, preferably those who regularly meet face-to-face with teachers; and (2) teachers are more likely to pay more attention to students whose parents are more visible at the school. The following comments by parents highlight the parents' beliefs in that regard:

If parents don't go to the school, the teacher does not give 100% attention to the child. That is, because, if the teacher does not see you, she may say, "Oh, well, no one comes. It is like, "maxaa iga galay oo kale" [It is like, why should I care if no one comes, sort of] (Suuban, NHA, parent₄).

"Waa inaad ogaataa wuxuu macallinku rabo xitaa hadday tahay inaad tagto ood soo eegto wuxuu cunuggu samaynaayo" [Parents should be aware of what the teacher wants even if it means you go to see what the child is doing at school] (Murayo, BES, parent₂).

If you are going to the school, the teachers know who you are, and they know you are going to ask about what does not make sense to you. So they will prepare just in case you ask. (Adan, NHA, parent₅).

If you are going to the school, teachers know that you are paying attention to your child and know what is really going on at the school. So, they are more likely to pay attention to that child too. That is human nature. I think the reason is that teachers know such parents may have questions about what they don't understand and would like to know more. Just like you would prepare for test questions, "waa in macallinku waalidka wax uu ku qancin karo ay jirtaa" [teachers then have to prepare for parent's questions to provide convincing and coherent answers] (Aydeed, NHA, parent₅).

In contrast to parents, the school personnel believes that *an optimally-involved parent in education* (ideal type) is a parent who is: (i) communicating with the school personnel frequently about how a parent may collaborate with the school to motivate students to do well in school, and

(ii) timely intervenes with his/her own children when academic and behavioral issues come up at school. The vast majority of the interviewed teachers (90%) consider multiple-way communication to be crucial for establishing and maintaining successful school-family partnership that is conducive to student success in school.

Most teachers (70%) prefer face-to-face interactions, i.e. school-based parental involvement. However, three teachers out of ten teacher interviewees (30%) express emphatically their belief that physical parental visibility at schools does not equate parental presence in the school life of their children. Rather, those teachers believe that consistent parental control over their children and their ability to offer academic support (as needed), and to step in quickly to rein in their misbehaving children at school (following teacher requests) are needed to be *optimally-involved* parents. More specifically, those teachers want parents to be firmer with their children to ensure that normal teaching and learning routines at school do not get disrupted by the misbehavior of their children. Elaborating why mere physical presence at school is not always the best way for parents to show their engagement in the education of their children, two teachers illustrated variations in parenting approaches to raising well-adapted and successful children regardless of the parents' visibility level at school:

There are different ways [in which] parents can support their child's education. I think the most important role of parents is to value education as a concept. I would rather they have a tie with their children like talking to them about their work at school, and the child having a tie to their family. Telling the child, 'Here is why you need school. These are the things you need to know.' I would trust my kids for a while, but, if I get a call from a teacher; it is, "You are not going to do what you like until all of this homework is caught up on." That is a natural consequence approach. I think if we don't allow our children to fail sometimes, and then teach them how to handle that, they won't have coping skills. As a parent, you can scaffold that, from a very young age, with kids so they learn independence (Rachael, NHA, teacher₅).

I think the second piece [of parental involvement in education] is making sure your presence is known at the school. I don't mean like coming and asserting your will in the classroom; I mean to make sure that the teachers know your name, that they are allowed to call you if they need to; and that the teachers and parents together know that they are working together and hold that student accountable for what that kid has to do at school. So knowing... the teacher knows and the parent knows... and together they let the student know that there is accountability. Then, everybody is on the same page. (John, NHA, teacher₃).

Finally, all the teacher interviewees (100%) strongly recommend that parents must verbalize their personal interest in education and their high expectations for their children to do well in school—regardless of their socioeconomic status (e.g. education, employment status or family structure, visibility status, or cultural background). Those teachers suggest that parents (or

guardians) should engage in daily conversational interactions with their children as they ask them about their school day, encourage them to complete their schoolwork on time, and even let the child to lead the conversation wherever they may need to that day. For instance, when parents ask their children about what they are working on, or invite them to share what is worrying them. By engaging in those behaviors, parents show their children that they value their education. This type of talk which is called *academic socialization* in the parental involvement literature is crucial to link students' current schoolwork and positive behavior to success in school and in life after school (Grolnick, 2009; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Horvat, Weininger and Lareu, 2003; and Taylor, Clayton & Rowley, 2004).

To sum it up, Somali parents and school personnel, as two separate groups across the two participant schools, hold a similar view about home-based parental involvement activities that they consider to be necessary for the continuation of the instructional goals of schools at home. However, the two groups differ in their beliefs about the importance of school-based parental involvement activities, and the types of academic socialization that parents should engage in to foster academic success (based on their personal past educational experiences or upbringing). These beliefs and experiences inform individual expectations about the teaching and parenting functions of teachers and parents as explained in the following sections of this chapter.

Research Sub-Questions # 3 and #5 (Opportunities): What do teachers and Somali parents see as opportunities for parental involvement in the education of Somali children?

Opportunities for Parental Involvement: Teachers' Perspectives

According to teacher interviewees, opportunities for parental involvement at the school level coincide with the schools' formal policy, program and parental involvement outreach activities. The focus of such efforts is to provide families some information about the schools' formal expectation for parental involvement in the education of their children. For example, "welcome-back-to-school" packages are sent to all home addresses of students at the beginning of the school year. Such packages include school curricular goals for the year, class syllabuses, and lists of required school materials which families are expected to provide. The two schools also mail bilingual newsletters, flyers and notices about regular school affairs as general public information on the schools' academic after-school programs or enrichment opportunities (either at the school itself or at neighborhood community agencies).

In addition, the two schools send families generic instant verbal messages about scheduled school events. In that regard, one of the two schools uses reminder follow-up calls from teacher assistants and school administrative staff to personally invite parents to attend specific school events. As school-wide Title I schools, both schools are required by law to share with parents, at least at one of their Parent Nights, the schools' plans for meeting the needs of all students as well as those of the teachers in terms of teacher professional development.

At the school level, parents are expected to participate in school planned events such as Teacher-Parent conferences, Parent Nights and other school functions. At these events, the schools offer opportunities for families to learn more about the details of after-school programming or enrichment opportunities that are available for students. In addition, the schools expect parents to know that schools are required to meet certain state provisions to provide parents with information about state-wide assessments which usually happens at Title I parent nights. Furthermore, parents are expected to be aware of all the school discipline policies including the referral process for habitual misbehavior. Parents are offered to review that information in the Student Conduct Handbook at their convenience.

At the time of this study, both schools did have formal school improvement plans in place, but only one of the two schools had a formal school family involvement plan as part of its more comprehensive Title I School Improvement Plan. Policy-wise, these formal documents afford parents a formal opportunity to participate in the planning, review and development or improvement of these formal documents (if they choose to). Both schools provide formal volunteer opportunities for parents to support either the school itself (as members of the school advisory board) or to support teachers with tasks that they may need help with. Finally, both schools offer open-door opportunities for parents to drop in and check in with the office staff or visit with teachers either in their classrooms or even sit in classes to observe.

Thus, at the school-level, school personnel expectations for parental involvement in education means that the school discharges its formal job to communicate with families about the school's expectations. These expectations are focused on the roles that parents are expected to assume, and in the ways in which families may establish and maintain a formal engagement with the educative process of their children. In that respect, from the perspective of the school personnel, parents at the two schools choose their level of participation by accepting the schools' invitation for parents to formally join school-family partnership to support student learning.

A number of school personnel (four teachers from NHA and two teachers from BES as well as one administrator) differentiated parent participation patterns along a continuum of visibility and concomitant parental choices, regarding their school-based parental involvement. In their view, *invisible* parents are those who bring their children to enroll them in school, but very rarely came to the school thereafter. These invisible parents maintain contact with the school by phone as they leave detailed messages (to be relayed to teachers) at the school office about any academic questions they may have about their children. For all other types of questions, they call the school administrative staff with the expectation that their calls would be redirected to the appropriate school personnel or the administrative staff would provide the needed information. Parents who work more than one job (who may also be single parents or two-parent households who do not have support from extended family for child care duties) fell in this category. In addition, Newly Arrived immigrant families were reported to fall in this category as well. Two teachers described parent invisibility that they experience at their school this way:

Many of the new to the country parents come and meet me, but for the most part that is the last time I see them face-to-face. I would hear from them on the phone though. At least 1/3 of the student body at this school has been in the country less than three (3) years. (Khalid, teacher₂, NHA).

It is my job to set up three (3) literacy nights a year for parents to come and learn about our literacy program, [and to] get more involved in literacy with their students and how they can help them to read. I think [in] most of those nights only 1 or 2 parents show up! 1 or 2, so I mean we have a horrible turnout at those events, you know. (Dianne, NHA, teacher₁).

Along this continuum of Somali parental involvement in the education of their children, there are parents who display *shallow involvement* behavior, and who are considered to be somewhat involved by school personnel. Those parents occasionally come to the school to meet with the teachers during school planned events (i.e. they come only to teacher-parent conferences) to discuss the progress of their children. However, their involvement is mostly home-based and the teachers know and acknowledge that involvement. The third group of parents, i.e. the *adequately involved* parents, not only attend school events, but they are also in regular contact with the teachers via e-mail, phone or frequent, brief check-in/drop-in visits with the teachers-- either when they stop by after dropping off their children in the morning or before they pick up their children at the end of the school day. Teachers know this third group of parents well enough that they feel comfortable to stop them in the hallways to briefly ask questions about

their children or to alert them to anticipate emergent issues with their children at school. Many of the self-employed parents (e.g. business owners) or parents who have professional jobs and who are not available to volunteer during the day or to serve regularly on the school advisory council fall in this category. However, the *adequately involved* parents can be mobilized (by school personnel) to advocate for the school when the school's existence is at risk or when they are deeply concerned about school decisions about their own children.

Finally, the fourth group of parents or the *deeply involved* exhibit intense collaboration with teachers, school office and school leadership and they are seen by the school staff as very active. These parents attend all school events and are extremely attentive to the requests of the teachers to intervene, with students at home or at school, on their behalf. They do not hesitate to initiate contact with the school about any concerns they may have about the academic progress of their children or about the school's decisions as an organization. These *deeply involved* parents ask for, and expect help from teachers and other school personnel to address student difficulties. In short, they are very interested in participating in the school decision-making and governance matters. They regularly volunteer in various capacities to meet the needs of their children and the needs of the school simultaneously. Lastly, they are staunch advocates of the school at the community deliberations at the school board and school district levels.

Opportunities for Parental Involvement: Parents' Perspectives

Somali parents indicated that their understanding of the school's expectations of their parental role in education is to be both home-based and school-based responsibility. All of the Somali parents who were interviewed (100%) stated that they know that the school expects them to provide routines at home for their children (i.e. schoolwork work space, dedicated time and provision of school supplies/materials). Furthermore, all of the parent interviewees expressed their understanding of the school-level expectation that families, at minimum, need to maintain contact with the teachers to stay abreast of the academic progress and social adaptation of their children. In that regard, there is congruence between parent and teacher perspectives on school level expectations for parental participation in the school life of Somali children.

In contrast, nine parents out of fourteen (64%) stated that they understand that schools strongly encourage parents to volunteer in schools. However, that understanding was perceived by teachers not to materialize in parental volunteering at school. In fact, teachers at both schools reported a lower volunteer activity level by Somali parents (30%) than the level that the parents

(50%) themselves reported. This suggests there is a discrepancy between parent and teacher perceptions in that regard. However, where the primary incongruence between teachers and Somali parents appears to exist is in the stance that parents take when teachers report student misbehavior. Two parents described their misgivings about disciplinary approaches of some teachers this way:

This school has a lot going for it, but, I think the school should look into the excessive pushing out of students out of the classroom into the hallways for simple things. Calling parents constantly at work to come in for something like the child stood up or moved the chair out of its place or something simple like that is not good. This practice is detrimental to the self-worth and academic progress of children. What I worry about is if I keep coming to the school for minor misbehaviors and I keep punishing the child for that, [then the] school becomes this intolerable place for the child, and [that]causes constant bickering between parents and their children. “Waanu is nacaynaa ilmihii oo ma khasbi karo hadhaw markuu sii weynaado” [that will cause bad family relations to the point a child may no longer want to go to school and I won’t be able to force him [to go to school] when he gets older]. I plan to change schools for one of my sons and leave the other one at this school because this school is a good fit for one and not for the other. One is complaining all the time and [the other] one likes it a lot. (Halimo, BES, parent₅).

I think punishment in schools in general should be more fitting to the transgression. Excessive expulsion from class is harmful to the psyche of the child, and a child with a wounded self is not going to do well in school. I am puzzled by the fact that children, as young as elementary school-age, have to spend many hours of their school day in the school hallways or in somebody’s office [in punishment]. I know of a 2nd grader who got expelled because the child wandered off to go and get a drink from the water fountain and the parents wanted to know: “Where was the teacher?” I think we need to find better ways to meet the needs of children and teachers. Teachers who use intimidation by excessive discipline to get what they want are not very effective teachers. It is harder for parents to convince their children to respect such teachers. (Magan, BES, parent₅).

Despite Differences: Making it Work

Teachers view that they are more likely to shape their own strategies at the classroom level than they would at the school-level. Also, the teachers state that they stress their own expectations, regarding what families need to know about what is going on in their classrooms. For instance, teachers offered their perceptions of situations of disharmony with students that may improve only if teachers help parents have a better understanding of ways to integrate classroom expectations across school-home contexts for students. That idea is articulated well by one teacher as follows:

I know that one thing parents complained about a lot, at our school, is that parents do not know when children are not turning in their homework. So, kids will go home and say they don’t have homework. Parents are thinking that teachers aren’t assigning homework. Teachers are assigning homework and never getting it back. So we are thinking that the parents are not doing

their job to make sure their kids are getting their homework done. So there is a gap in communication for some families. So one of the things that I do, as part of and in the way of parental involvement, is to make sure information is going through. I ask the kids to call home every time they do not turn in their homework right away (Dianne, NHA, teacher₁).

In the area of discipline, in mainstream classrooms, which are more likely to serve families that have been in the country longer, teachers report that parental reactions to news of student missteps at school tend to be more mixed than the reactions of those who are new to the country. One teacher explicated in this fashion:

Newly arrived immigrants may not be able to help their children with homework, but, they are trying to do their best in what they can do. They value education very much. They are putting that value in there. My parents are supportive of me if I have a concern. Very much! I kind of feel so bad for the kids because their parents are horrified and are like, "I can't believe my child is shaming us this way. They are shaming our family. This is not how we taught our children to behave here." I don't know, I am not Somali, but this is kind of what I see from outside. It becomes something of a shame thing. It seems to be culturally wide-spread. That is parenting, taking it personally when students do not do what the teacher is saying. When I am sitting in parent-teacher conferences with students I am working with, in mainstream classes, it is a much more mixed bag in terms of how parents react. We still have quite a few parents who are shocked and horrified if their children, ever—or all at all—are disrespectful. But, then we also have parents who argue with the teacher and are defending their children. I think they are both valid responses. I feel like it will be very hard, as a parent, to let a teacher or anybody else to say bad things about your kid. And I can very much understand someone who is like thinking or saying, "What are you saying about my child? He did not do that. My child is a good kid! Or my child would not say that!" It does not make me angry. I know it upsets a lot of teachers because it is like, "You are calling me a liar? You don't see what your kid does in my room!"

Opportunities for Parental Involvement in Education: Administrators' View

Finally, there were similarities between the perceptions of the two administrators, with regard to opportunities for families to be actively involved in the education of their children at their schools. Those administrators attribute the attraction to their schools by Somali-American students and their families to the credibility and trust that their schools enjoyed among that particular population.

I think the trust level of parents in our school is higher than other schools that serve this population. So it is not just about policies and programming. I think that is crucial, because, the parents know that the decisions that we are making are based on the best interest of the student. They know even if we make poor or bad decisions unintentionally, we started with the intention of doing things in the best interest of the student, because, I am a parent myself. I have children who are going to this school. That means whatever the impact of the decisions we are making do impact my children and my life too (Administrator₁).

I believe I have the trust of parents. Some parents stop by not to complain, but, rather to check their understanding of the decisions made by other school staff. I can anticipate parental

questions from a cultural point of view and can work on ways to support both parents and teachers as they work through the complexity of resolving issues related to student learning or even how these adults relate to each other. In a way, I am more hands-on than many principals in mainstream schools that I have worked in (Administrator₂)

In terms of additional services for families at their respective schools, the administrators present it as a value-added menu of services that establish these two schools as niche schools as described below:

We are a small school, so we are able to have frequent discussions about our students, about our families and with our families. If the parent is bringing to me a grievance about a decision that the school already made, I have the linguistic skills to bring down technical decisions to a layman's language. Sometimes, my office goes to extra lengths to locate external resources (for families) that other schools don't, because, here, we try to advocate for families, and we are a one-stop place for families to get connected to organizations in the larger community, which is a great service for families new to the country (Administrator₁).

Our uniqueness is that we have one of the highest levels of parent-school partnership for this population in the district. The reasons, I think, are: (a) our language support makes a difference for students, teachers and families; (b) we understand how we can effectively reach out to our parents. Because we know our community's preference for verbal communication and personal invitation, we utilize that knowledge. For example, I send a letter to the parents 1-2 weeks in advance of our events. We have bilingual education assistants assigned as grade-level mentors. Each of these bilingual staff reaches out to the families that they are already in contact with by phone. These consecutive personal invitations usually get the attention of our parents. Teachers also call them to tell them they would love to see them if they want to discuss any concerns they may have about their child's grades. Teachers do that to ensure parents whose children are struggling get to meet the teachers, support staff and the administrator if they want to. Also, we find that many of the students who come to our school from other schools are 1-2 grades behind due to whether they are new to the country (less than 3 years in the country) or coming from schools where they were not performing at grade level. So when they come through the door here, it is crucial that we have a lot of supplemental or support mechanisms ready for such students so they can work on getting to grade level or at least start improving to get closer to that goal (Administrator₂).

However, these two administrators use two different approaches with regard to where to focus the resources of their schools, based on the type of student or type of family which they see need help most. The first school's focus (i.e. NHA) is on the academic and social support for students new to the country and their families (those in the country less than 3 years). In contrast, the second school's focus (BES) is also more about bringing up the capacity of struggling students who come from other schools to get up to grade level.

In the next section, parents and teachers describe their personal approach to deal with transitions for students (new schools, new grades and/or new teachers).

Managing Transitions

Somali parents' opinions are strong about what they consider needs to happen when they enroll their children in new schools or when their children enter new grades or progress through the same school (from elementary to middle school or from middle school to high school). For example, parents indicate that they rely on the information that the schools share with them as well as on information which they glean from their own research, including word-of-mouth information from trusted sources before they decide to bring their children to a non-neighborhood school. The vast majority of the Somali parents (12 out of 14 or 86%) mentioned that they view some parents' resort to changing their child's classrooms or teachers as an impractical approach to problem-solving student issues. They suggest instead that such an approach would damage the relationship between parents and teachers. Therefore, they report they would rather exit the school than to request an accommodation from the school to change classes or teachers.

In clarifying their views on managing transitions, parent interviewees' views range from those who think that it is important to protect the dignity of the teacher (i.e. the traditional Somali view) versus those who are more critical of teachers from a "fairness" point of view (i.e. the view of the younger or the more educated or more westernized) to the stance of parents who express their weariness of conflict and feel that sometimes parents have no choice but to change the child's teachers or classes or even school. All of these parents express a desire to customize the school experience of their children as best as they can as exemplified in the following comments:

I always try to be respectful of the teacher's dignity. I don't talk against teachers to other parents or tell the administration—because the state certified them and the administration hired them [on that basis]. I know parents can talk to the administration if there are issues related to student performance, but the [school] administration should lead that through the [formal] school process [not the parents] (Kayd, NHA, parent₂).

We try to avoid changing schools, classes or teachers if possible, and we do so only if we need to find a new environment that works better for our child. Also, if a teacher is not following the curriculum or leaves in the middle of the school year, I think, as a parent, I should be talking to the administrators about it. May be it was a bad hiring choice in the first place. In a way, if the teacher was not given enough information about what to expect at this school, it is unfair to them too. But, I think if they [teachers] accepted a position and then decide to leave in the middle of the school year, leaving students hanging just like that, then, I think that is unfair to the children as well. I think the stability of teachers in the classroom is a very important issue, and the administrators need to take it [into account] seriously when they are hiring teachers. So, I think the administrators should be held accountable for it by the parents (Marwo, NHA, parent₃).

Sometimes, I ask for a teacher change if it seems that the teacher keeps calling and calling [hadduu kusoo waco oo kusoo waco] about the student behavior; and my attempt to mediate is not

going anywhere and things just keep getting worse and worse. That is when I go to the principal and say, “macallinkan iyo cunugaan bal ha la kala wareejiyo” [It is time for class and teacher change for this child] (Murayo, BES, parent₂).

Interestingly, a parent who reported that she has very limited English proficiency and limited formal education is the only parent who reported that she regularly asks for teacher change if she notices that things are not improving despite her efforts. She also indicates that she made requests on behalf of all her older children to get spots in the school Post-Secondary Options (PSEO) programs at their schools. She highly endorses the schools that help parents like her get the supports they need to help their children to start college early. Furthermore, she is the only parent interviewee who reported that she actively seeks to network with a group of other Somali mothers who take turns to go to school events if they personally cannot attend for whatever the reason (other than teacher-parent conferences). She described her school social networking efforts as follows:

Sometimes, I talk to other parents to ask what they know about a program. “Bal maanta ciidan ma hayee bal tag carraddii oo soo fiiri wax ka socda” [we agree among ourselves, who would go today to check for the group and report back what is going on].

On the other end of parental education continuum, a college-educated parent (who held a BA and was in graduate school during the time of the study) stated that he supports his children by switching schools to find a better academic and social environment for the weaker student. But he did that only once. His comment below manifested the Somali cultural value of group interdependence:

When I decided to transfer my two boys to this school, I was thinking of the fit of the school for the needs of each child. One child is very dedicated to his school wherever he is, and listens well and is an A student. He was fine where he was but we want our two boys to be together so they can grow up together and keep an eye on each other. I think our younger son is academically gifted (he was in the gifted program in school as a little boy) but he gets easily bored if he is not kept busy and challenged. Also, he is very interested in socializing, so he sometimes gets into trouble. So we had a family talk with them before we switched them from a highly-rated school in [city xxx] to this smaller and less prestigious school. The main point in our discussion was that we are expecting them to be the best they can be academically and manners-wise; [and] that there is no reason why they should not take advantage of college prep classes [for post-secondary education] at this school including summer [enrichment] classes at the [name of a post-secondary institution].

On their part, teachers believe that transitions can be an opportunity to be managed for better results. This is another area of congruence between parent and teacher perspectives on parental involvement in education. For instance, teacher-parent misunderstandings may diminish

if teachers are given a chance to know the background of new students and their families before school starts or at the beginning of the school year. One teacher reasoned that it would be beneficial to her personally and professionally if parents introduced themselves in the Fall before the school starts, and before she gets too busy. She explained that would help her to prepare for better supporting new students and their families as she welcomes them into her classroom:

I mean some of our kids are here because they are moving, but, some of them are here because they had trouble at their old school. It would be nice to know that before they come to the classroom so [that] I have some understanding of how to approach the parents. If they were kicked out of their last school, that helps me, as a teacher, to know that as a process. So, I can make sure that my first few contacts [with the student] are positive, you know. If they had been kicked out before, there might be something that is negative. But if they are coming here because they have moved, it is kind of nice to meet them at where they are at. Understanding if the kid may be really scared about being at a brand new place, you know [or something else like that]. Unfortunately that rarely happens [getting to meet the family in the fall]. (Dianne, teacher₁, NHA).

Another teacher felt that there is a need to create more opportunities for more informal interactions that bring together the school personnel and the larger Somali community [outside of the school community]. This teacher elaborated on the value of cultural competency this way:

I think for me and for many other teachers, there is a big separation between the Western European teachers and the Somali community. You know, we don't know what their home life is like, I guess. Yeah, I think there is still kind of a shroud of mystery there. We kinda understand the cultural values. I encourage community schools to have American holidays like Thanksgiving, July 4th and the like with specific community flairs. I also encourage teachers to seek out to be invited to community events outside their comfort zone (Mark, BES, teacher₁).

Along with the perceptions of opportunities (possibilities) for parental involvement in education, described earlier in this chapter, the study participants also report barriers (limitations/constraints) which they see as impediments to effective parental involvement in the education of Somali children as described in the next section.

Sub-Research Questions #4 & #6 (Barriers): What do teachers and Somali parents view as barriers to parental involvement in the education of Somali children?

The four major barriers to parental involvement in education that teachers (60%) identified as chronic problems include: (1) lack of transportation or limited appropriate childcare, (2) language or cultural barrier for teachers and parents (3) parents' educational challenges; and (4) lack of time for parents to come to school events due to the inflexibility of parents' work schedules (depending on the profession they work in) in that order. Those four barriers are

supported in prior research as barriers to effective parental involvement in education (Crozier & Davis, 2007; Desforges & Aboucher, 2003; Reitsma, 2001; Kim, 2009).

In contrast to the teachers, five parents (36%) mentioned transportation as a barrier to parental involvement in education. Interestingly, these parents discuss this barrier as an issue primarily for large families (i.e. those with 4 or more children) or for families who have one car and multiple work schedules, which all complicate the planning logistics for parents who want to arrange for attending school events in the afternoons or early evenings. On the issue of child care, some parents (40%) explained how they are able to divide childcare duties among parents or other family members. That way, at least one parent is available to go to parent-teacher conferences or to transport several children to school events that their children really want to go to. Only four (4) parents (29%) reported that they received occasional baby-sitting support, either from their older children or from a grandparent/other relative who lived with the family or in a nearby location—to baby-sit younger children while the parents were busy.

Finally, in terms of academic challenges that they could not handle themselves, five parent interviewees indicate that if they cannot help their children with schoolwork, they deploy one or all of the following strategies: (1) they rely either on their older children or others outside their immediate family unit including extended family or friends or even paid tutors; (2) they make sure that their children are brought to the school premises before the school starts so they can ask their own teachers about what they do not understand about their lessons; and (3) they use formal after-school programs offered at schools, libraries or neighborhood centers to seek academic support for their children.

This suggests that Somali parents see homework as a collaborative effort which spans home-school-community contexts. This observation is supported by the fact that only two of those five parents, as described above, say that they are willing to use paid tutors on a regular basis if the child's grades are slipping and the strategies mentioned above are not working for the child's academic progress. Furthermore, one mother stresses that maternal low-education is no excuse for lack of engagement in the education of school children by sharing her mother's story of how her illiterate grandmother was engaged in the education of her children as narrated below:

My mother is educated but she was raised by an illiterate mother. I believe it is about what you value rather [than] what you can do or cannot do [literacy]. For example, my mother told me that, growing up, my grandmother would make all her children sit around her in the evening and ask those who were going to school to read to the family. She could tell by the "Uhummm", pauses, stops and [the] length of silences if the child was not on top of things [or not]. Then, she would

talk to others to help out her child. My mother said that made her pay extra attention in class so she could see the smile spreading on her mother's face when she did it with no pauses and stops. You know, as a human being you can sense when "qofku mistayk suubinaayo, halkaa, halkaa" (when someone is making a mistake [i.e. struggling], here [and] there [pointing to several places on a piece of paper in front of her] (Suuban, NHA, parent₄).

This college-educated mother follows in the footsteps of her grandmother by encouraging her children to do well in school through daily active conversations which she described as orientating the child to the future:

I try to motivate them [her children] by telling them they can become whatever professional they want to become when they grow up. We say, "dream your dream job". So "maddaxa ayaan ugu riddaa" [I put it in their heads [i.e. that they are capable or they have the potential to become somebody]. They are young, but they can understand that they have work to do to get there. So [you] talk to them and inspire them to become whatever they want to be in the future (Suuban, NHA, parent₄).

The next section covers the strategies that the study participants describe as useful for problem-solving when they have concerns about: (a) administrative matters; or (b) about student academic progress; and (c) about any issues related to the school's disciplinary approach to student behavioral problems. These three aspects of policy, process and practices present challenges that parents, teachers, and administrators must contend with as described below:

Addressing Administrative Issues

Somali parent interviewees, whose children attend the two participant schools, report that when they do have concerns or questions about school administrative matters, they go to specific individuals at each school. At NHA, most parents state that they first check in with the office manager (a Somali-speaking school staff) before they check in with other school staff. At BES, more parents said that they check in with the Principal than they do with the office manager (a non-Somali speaking staff member). Only two parents reported that they check with the Assistant Principal (1 parent) or with the Parent Liaison (1 parent) about administrative matters.

On their part, teachers in both schools report that they all (100%) utilize the school's formal process to communicate with families about their classroom curricular and behavioral expectations (e.g., Class Syllabus, School Newsletter, and Student Conduct Handbook), which are sent out to the student home addresses at the beginning of the school year. Teachers reported that they depend on the school Bilingual Parent Liaison or the school administrative office staff to deal with parents' concerns about administrative barriers.

Addressing Student Academic Progress Issues

Parents interviewees reported that, when they do have concerns or questions about student academic progress, they consult with specific individuals at each school [i.e. teachers, principal, assistant principal, other school staff]. At NHA, four (4) out of seven (7) parents (57%) reported that they check first in with the teachers as soon as possible when they have concerns or questions about their child's academic progress right away. Three (3) said that they first tried to collect as much information as they can, including sitting down with their own child to figure out where the issue originated; following that they check in with the teachers to seek resolution to school problems. At BES, parents reported that they too first check with teachers about any questions or concerns that had about the academic progress of their children. If they still have more questions that did not get resolved by the teachers, then, those parents approach the school administrator (principal) for a final resolution. One parent reported that he assumes that teachers to be always right unless the child is very young (i.e. elementary school age or younger).

This suggests that all Somali parents (100%), who participated in this study, attempt to consult with the teachers first in order to understand what is going on with their children academically. Where Somali parents differed from each other (in-group contrast) was that some parents do not go beyond checking in with the teachers and trying to work with their children to encourage students to do what their teachers want. On the other hand, others parents choose to escalate any lingering concerns about student academic progress to the school administrator (principal). Only one parent reported that she checks with the Assistant Principal for anything.

Interestingly, only one parent out of 14 parents says that he has no problem escalating his concerns to the school board if he feels the occasion warrants it (following earlier discussions with the teachers and or principal that happened not to be fruitful). It should be noted this is a parent who has children in three different schools (two of them non-neighborhood schools) who reported that he serves in some capacity on the school governance bodies where his children are enrolled (at all three schools).

In contrast to parents, there is less of a variation among the teachers at both schools in terms of the approach that they use when they have concerns about student academic progress. For instance, all the teacher interviewees (100%) indicate that when they notice chronic problems with students who are not turning in their homework or other school assignments on time or who may be failing to do so altogether, their preferred strategy is to attempt to get in touch with the

parents by phone. Half of those teachers say that they attempt to support students by attempting to call parents as a safety net before these students actually fail classes.

Interestingly, although the majority of the teachers said they use the language support that is available to them at their school, only two teachers mentioned that they save time by letting the Bilingual Parent Liaison or educational assistants keep trying to locate parents and pass this message along, “*Teacher XXX would like to talk to you as soon as possible.*” Those two teachers reported they find this strategy yields a higher rate of returned calls for hard-to-reach parents, and it works most of the time (unless the family phones are disconnected). Interestingly, one teacher suggests that her success to reach all of the families of the students in her class is due to her teamwork with her tenacious Educational Assistant (EA) whom many Somali parents seem to view as a second teacher in the classroom. This view of educational assistants as a valuable classroom support was pointed out by two other teachers who report that they first consult with other teachers and EAs before they contact families. Thus, 40% of the teacher interviewees report that they find the supportive role of teacher assistants as valuable for establishing and maintaining timely communication with the families of their students.

Addressing Student Disciplinary Issues

When asked whom they contact at their schools to address misbehavior or disciplinary concerns, Somali parents report that they consult with specific individuals at the schools where their children are enrolled. Those individuals are: teachers; behavior specialists, or the office manager. More specifically, seven (7) out of fourteen (14) parents (i.e. 50%) report that they first go to the teachers when they have concerns or questions about issues that are related to their child’s behavior at school. A fewer number of parents (5 out of 14 or 36%) first check in with the behavioral specialist at their school. Only three parents report that they take a mixed approach by first connecting with the teachers or the behavior specialist and then requesting to meet with the school administrator. These three parents are more vocal about their dissatisfaction with the disciplinary approach in any school if it emphasizes sending children out of classrooms into the hallways, which they describe as a complete waste of instructional time, and a disruption of the work life of parents. They also blame such approach for amplifying difficulties at home as parents confront their children at a time when they would rather do other things to support their children academically when they come home from school.

In contrast, most of the teachers at both schools feel they follow certain institutional disciplinary protocol. This formal process starts in situations of recurrent problem identification by teachers who report that they first attempt to redirect misbehaving students verbally. If that approach fails, the teachers then consult with other teachers to check what others are seeing or experiencing with a particular student; before they call the student's parents to alert them about student behavioral issues in the classroom. Alternatively, teachers refer the misbehaving student directly to the school's Behavior Specialist (without extensive consultation with other teachers). However, four teachers (40%) consider referrals to behavior specialists a last resort. These teachers believe that they would rather try to resolve student issues in their classrooms on their own as much as possible. Thus, the majority of teachers follow the school referral process to deal with a student's behavior problems at school (usually with some assistance from the office administrative staff and the Behavior Specialist or Dean of Students). Finally, this formal disciplinary process may culminate in a child study team meeting or a Response to Intervention Committee meeting (depending on the school).

To gauge the participants' endorsement of their schools' parental involvement programming, they were asked to share what they think worked (or did not work) at their schools, and their suggestions for future improvement. Their feedback and comments are presented in the next section.

Perspectives on Lessons Learned

What works?

There is a consensus among school personnel and parent interviewees that readily available language support is something that is working very well at these two schools. This resource is available to parents when they come to the school for any reason if they need it. It is also available for teachers any time they need to communicate with families.

What needs Improvement?

However, there is lesser degree of consensus among school personnel and parent interviewees with regard to what they consider needs an improvement at their schools.

Administrators' View: Both administrators mentioned that they see transportation for after school-programming at their schools as an issue of concern to which they did not have an immediate solution, due to budgetary constraints. Two other areas of concern, which these

leaders raised were related to the quality of teaching, and the relationship-building skills among inexperienced or newer teachers:

I would recommend that colleges and universities train their student teachers on ways to establish and maintain relationships with students and their families. The key to that is for teachers to show, not just tell, your students that you care about them not just as students but also as human beings. That is a challenge for new teachers. I have seen situations where students love and respect their teachers from day one, because, they know these teachers are able to show them they are there to support them as individuals. In other situations I have seen teachers, who are bright in the subjects they teach, but who have difficulty working with students and their families. Our students like to talk to their teachers so they can see when a teacher is uncomfortable. Another advice I have is for teachers to be given an opportunity during their formal training to gain specific skills to be able to differentiate and scaffold instruction. They need this skill to meet three different skill levels among students in their classes (advanced, medium, low/very low). As a teacher if you can't meet the needs of those advanced students and you don't have a plan for those struggling students, but, can only work with those in the middle, then your instruction is not adequate and it is not meeting the needs of all students. We find that is an area that universities could improve on in their teacher education programs (ARAD, Director, BES).

Teachers' View: The teachers at these two schools describe three types of barriers that they would like to see minimized, as much as feasible, at their schools. These barriers are challenges that can be categorized as administrative, logistical or relational (based on what the teachers described as helpful or desirable).

For instance, teachers suggest that in schools, like theirs where there is linguistic and cultural divide among teachers and parents, there is a need to develop a school-wide protocol for teachers on how to communicate consistently with parents—particularly those with limited proficiency in languages spoken by mainstream teachers, and parents who do not regularly come to meet with teachers during school planned events (administrative).

In addition, teachers recommend for schools to find ways to provide buses during Parent Nights and Parent-Teacher conferences for parents who do not have their own transportation so they can participate in school events (logistical). This recommendation suggests that teachers want schools to tackle the problem of parents who do not show up at school events due to lack of transportation (i.e. schools directly address the problem of invisibility for parents who want to come to school events if it were for transportation issues).

Furthermore, teachers suggest that there is a need to improve their schools' strategies to educate all parents about the function of different instructional tools,

including different types of homework (administrative/parenting). Thus, teachers want the school leadership to modify the school's enrollment process to include a step to encourage new families strongly to visit with the teachers early in the fall. That way teachers and families get to meet and learn more about the circumstances of families in more relaxed fashion (administrative). Teachers also view the function of the PTO as a place where more cross-cultural exchange between parents and teachers should take place. This is seen to be one way to facilitate more relationship- building opportunities between parents and teachers outside of the regular parent-teacher conferences (relational). Another relational area that teachers recommend for immediate attention is finding ways to improve the visibility of Somali fathers at their schools. In that regard, teachers are of the opinion that more intentional outreach directly targeting fathers may influence more fathers to attend the school events (relational).

Finally, two teachers want improving access to science resources such as buying science equipment for science labs, and/or subscribing to science web sites at no cost to students to excite students about science. One teacher strongly felt that there is room in the school budget to do both only if there is a will at the school board level (administrative).

Parents' View: On their part, Somali parents describe the challenges that they think the two schools need to overcome to address current issues which constrain teaching and learning in four areas (i.e. academic, administrative, skill-building, and enrichment/extra-curricular). Parents report that they think that : (1) Schools need to increase student competency in reading and provide more information to families on how to help with homework because that is needed for all classes (academic); (2) schools need to improve the competency of new teachers in meeting the needs of students who do not speak English well, those who are new to the school/country, and students who are timid/shy by nature (skill-building); (3) schools need to fix the “revolving door” phenomenon of teachers who seem to come only to get some experience in an urban setting, and who then tend to leave in the middle of the school year (administrative). Parents are concerned that such abrupt turnover confuses them and their children because parents do not know who to have a teacher-parent relationship with while some students get confused when they repeatedly deal with new teachers (relational); and finally (4) schools

need to work on providing more training for students and parents. For instance, schools could offer more extra-curricular activities that are age appropriate for middle school age children, including skills that are not necessarily academic; but rather provide hands-on skills (skill-building). Schools should also offer parent classes that teach parents how to hold productive conversations with adolescents, which is also seen as an area that would be useful in improving parent-child harmony (relational). and (5) schools need to provide more timely information on school board meeting decisions (administrative).

Perspectives on Effective Somali Parental Involvement in Education: Interrelationships between Emergent Themes

Indeed, a synthesis can be molded across the themes and across the study findings from participant responses to answer the first two research sub-questions of this study:

(a) Research sub-question #1: **What do Somali parents and teachers view as parental involvement in education?;** (b) Research sub-question #2: **How and to what extent do Somali parents and teachers differ or concur in their views of parental involvement in the education of Somali children?**

The study participants' responses to these two research sub-questions reveals rich details about the differences in the view points of Somali parents and teachers regarding their beliefs and understanding of effective Somali parental involvement in the education of Somali children. The crux of these differences revolves around when and how Somali parents respond to the educational and upbringing needs of their children as they go through American schools. The school personnel perceive parents as crucial agents who should motivate their children to acquire and maintain positive habits that foster educational and social success.

In the context of participant schools, the roles, responsibilities, and sanctions that are in use are by design intended to engage students and their families via multiple communication channels. The medium that the study participants find to be most productive in their interactions is via active conversations that aim for nurturing positive attitude, among various stakeholders, to foster meaningful collaboration. This collaboration is needed to support student success in school.

Integration of the Themes: Active Conversations, Positive Attitude, and Student Motivation

Active conversations span several types of verbal exchanges, i.e. conversations meant to motivate the child to do well in school, conversations to discipline the child, and conversations to

promote collaborative connection between the school-home social systems. Those conversations bring together combinations of stakeholders who are involved in the education of Somali children, i.e. dyads (parents-children; teachers-students, parents-teachers), and triads (parents-students-teachers, parents-administrators-other school staff, etc.). Thus, variations of active conversations depend on the context under which they are held, although the ultimate aim is to hold everyone accountable for their specific role and responsibilities to support the educational success and positive social adjustment of Somali students.

Furthermore, those conversations can be considered to be the catalyst for genuine collaborative relationships between schools and families. The caveat, though, is that the success of those conversations may be hampered by the degree of credibility or trust which exists already between those agents. Therefore, active conversations are about the right conversations at the right time with the right people based on cooperative and cordial relationships.

Study participants view active conversations to be necessary in shaping a student’s attitude towards his/her own learning, which in turn structures behavior across school-home contexts for the school children and the adults in their lives alike. This process is depicted in Figure 4 (below):

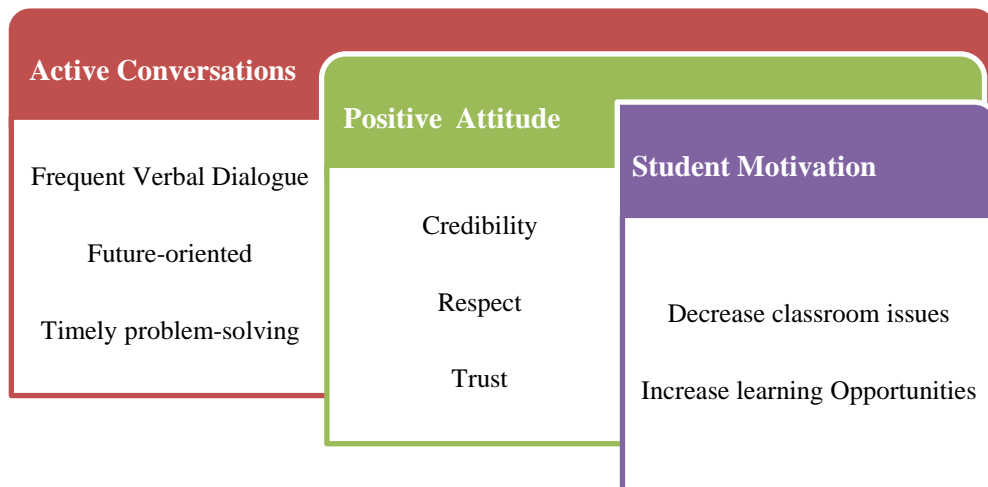


Figure 4: Integrating emergent themes

Therefore, a key insight from the study's interviewees is that the type of talk matters for the quality of interactions between and among students, teachers, and parents. However, these types of talk do vary, depending on the orientation and experience of the adults and the child's characteristics (which include the child's unique temperament and current attitude toward school). For instance, for parents, the type of talk they tend to have with their children varies with the situation. Some parents do state that they are more problem-solving-oriented and focus more on solving the issues at hand (present issue). Therefore, they work with teachers to deal on specific issues of concern to teachers, and then they are done. Other parents report that they are more future-oriented and are more worried about the future. For such parents, recurring student misbehavior or student difficulty with teachers, or others at school, is more emblematic of future problems down the road. From their perspective, a child who is emotionally impoverished is considered to be a child who is not going to grow up with a resilient and able character who can withstand adversity in the future, regardless of the richness of the curriculum offerings available at a specific school. Therefore, the stakes are higher for such parents and they tend to frame their conversations to orient their children to the future away from current problems, so as to help their children build up resilience against future adversity, conflicts with school personnel included.

For teachers, the type of talk that they have with parents is either meant to encourage them to monitor the child's homework (or other school assignments) or to reinforce the teachers' own efforts or towards bolstering the teacher's authority in the classroom with a difficult or struggling student. In both situations, the teachers are more interested in avoiding imminent student failure, which most teachers believe is a goal that parents should agree with promptly and completely. However, the register of the interaction between teachers and parents depends on the background that teachers and parents bring to the table (upbringing, education, training, and

personal traits, etc.). Details of such interaction are further elaborated on in the study findings discussion section in Chapter Five.

Chapter Five: Discussion, Implications, and Conclusions

Parents are instrumental in preparing their children to commit to every-day habits of being good students. Consistent parental interest in what their children are learning and asking about it [sic]. That is important. That indicates to children that their parents value education. Without the support of parents, schools cannot do their job of educating students. To do so, families can help their children to complete their schoolwork at home, talk to them about how their work for the day connects to high school, and to college and beyond (AKAD, Administrator, NHA).

This chapter presents, in three sections, the key findings of the study. Firstly, the Study Findings section summarizes the research findings on the perspectives of school personnel and Somali parents as to what they consider effective parental involvement in the education of Somali middle-school-age children. In this section, the study's findings are situated within the extensive body of literature on parental involvement in education (as described earlier in Chapter Two). Secondly, implications for educators and parents in terms of policy and practice are presented. Thirdly, the chapter concludes with (1) a recap of the primary factors that structure the views and practices of parents and school personnel as they implement what they consider to be effective parental involvement in the education of Somali children, (2) the implications and suggestions for practice and future research; and (3) the study delimitations, limitations, and conclusions.

Discussion of the Study Findings

The research question that guided this work is: “*What are the factors that shape how school personnel and Somali families view effective parental involvement in the education of Somali children?*”

To identify those factors, Epstein's conceptual framework of Overlapping Spheres of Influence (OSI) is used as a conceptual starting point to portray the perceptions of the school personnel (teachers and administrators) and Somali parents about the types of parental involvement in education that they view as typical at their schools . The findings of these case studies indicate that Somali parents, as a group, are engaged in the following four parental involvement types:

- (1) Parenting (to support student learning that is age-appropriate across grade levels);
- (2) Communicating (primarily in response to school-initiated contact with families, and less often to follow-up with teachers on parental concerns);

- (3) Learning at Home (paying attention to the child and monitoring the student's schoolwork at home); and
- (4) Collaborating with the Community (by enrolling their children in programs at public libraries or at neighborhood agencies for academic support, and occasionally for extra-curricular activities).

Thus, Somali parents are more likely to be involved in the home-based parental involvement domain rather than the school-based one. More details on the definitions of Epstein's six types of parental involvement are presented in the *Key Terms* section of Chapter 1 of this dissertation (pp. 7-9). Furthermore, four broad themes have emerged in the interview data analysis. These themes are categorized as follows:

- (a) ***Holding everyone accountable*** (parents, teachers and students) to get the job of parenting, teaching, and learning done.
- (b) ***Promoting attitudes that harness student success*** (across the various types of school-home settings) taking into account: the influence of the child's personality, the knowledge and skills of parents and teachers involved, family structure, and cultural norms/values—all of which shape the choices and consequences of teachers' and parents' actions.
- (c) ***Nurturing relationships*** that enhance formal school-based activities to engage families in the education of their children. These relationships also facilitate the timely interventions of teachers and parents to overcome barriers to effective student learning, teaching, and parenting; and
- (d) ***Family Process*** (which speaks to the need for families to ensure that they establish and maintain home processes which include specific features). Such features include: *Attention to the child* (i.e., providing time, sitting down with the child, talking to the child); *positive family relationships*; *affirmation of family high expectations for student academic and social success*, *prioritization of resources for learning at home*. The latter includes dedicated time, working space for schoolwork, as well as routines which focus student attention on appropriate schoolwork habits.

Further scrutiny of those four themes yielded three factors that shape the views and practices of how school personnel and Somali families approach what they consider effective

parental involvement in the education of Somali children. In turn, these three factors encompass the following additional nuances:

- (1) **Active conversations**, which are frequent and future-orientated to ensure that the attention of students, teachers, and parents is focused on their respective roles and responsibilities, but also intentional about moving forward together with solutions that ameliorate problems that impede student academic and social success;
- (2) **Positive attitude**, which is about the values and norms that foster *credibility and trust* among students, parents and school personnel in order to reinforce the value of education for school children to promote student persistence in education; and
- (3) **Student motivation to excel in school**. Such motivation arises through two specific mechanisms: (a) reducing students' classroom misbehavior and (b) maximizing family support at home for the teacher's instruction at school. It should be noted that the student motivation was seen by the study participants to be strengthened by the preceding factors, i.e., active conversations and positive attitude.

Details of the study findings are presented in the next four sections of this chapter.

Perceptions of Teachers and Parents of Effective Somali Parental Involvement in Education: (Beliefs & Understanding)

The study participants believe that there are important but separate roles for parents and teachers to assume in the school life of students. These roles are prescribed by the formal expectations of schools and by the personal approaches that the school personnel and parents assume (on their own) for practical reasons to support student learning. Furthermore, they see that effective communication (i.e., *active conversations*) is the pivotal factor for collaborative and effective parental involvement in the education of Somali children. This factor influences the quality and quantity of the interactions of students with the key individuals in their lives (i.e. teachers and parents/other guardians). That in turn affects the experience that parents and teachers enjoy (or not) as they interact to resolve issues that arise due to attitude discrepancies between adults and students—particularly attitudes that undermine student motivation toward their own learning, and toward submitting to the authority of teachers. This factor structures the limits of parents' and teachers' influence on student motivation to do well and/or “behave well” in school, as suggested by the study participants' comments (below):

“...*Ma khasbi karo...*” [*I can't force the child*] (Halimo, BES, parent₅).

“... *Really I can't make a student do better. Really, it is the student that needs to do the work...*” (Melissa, BES, teacher₂).

Finally, the dialogue aspect of effective communication is favorably shaped by the level of credibility that teachers and parents enjoy with each other. This in turn affects the extent to which the actors respect and trust each other as they interact with each other. This factor is further influenced by the personal early experiences of the teachers and parents, particularly when their attitudes about proper behavior or contextual barriers differ.

Similarities and Differences in Study Participants' Perceptions with Respect to Effective Somali Parental Involvement in Education

The majority of Somali parent interviewees (78%) see the education of their children *as a shared responsibility of families and schools*. This view is congruent with the school personnel's perception that family support for student learning and success in school is *a shared agenda* (Epstein et al, 2002, Epstein, 2005). Furthermore, ten (10) out of the fourteen (14) parent interviewees (71%) self-report that they completed some post-secondary education (either from four-year or 2-year higher education institutions). In addition, three parents (21%) reported that they have less than high-school education while only one (1) parent holds a high school diploma. Therefore, it is possible that many of these parents are already familiar with (or are in the process of learning) how the American education system works. This assertion is bolstered by the fact that many of them are quite aware of their ability to customize the school experience of their children by making transfer choices or by making teacher change requests. However, transfer choices or teacher change requests are considered with caution by these parents based on their perceptions of the quality of the relationships that their families and/or their children can establish and maintain with teachers and other school personnel. In situations when a conflict arises, parent interviewees reported that they seriously consider the fit of their child's personality and the school environment as they make decisions about whether they should change schools.

There is also congruence between the perspectives of parents and teachers in terms of aspects of *family process* that they deem necessary for supporting school children as students at home and at school. These processes include: (a) *parent attention* to the child to discuss high parental expectations for academic excellence and appropriate behavior, (b) *positive family relationships* (to minimize family conflict and increase family harmony), (c) *family routines*,

resources and time allocations to support their children as students (e.g. family provision of supplies/material and tools for schoolwork and responsiveness to school requests to attend events or intercede with their children as needed).

The value of these home processes in education is supported in the existing body of research on parental involvement in education; particularly, Epstein's *parenting* and *communicating* types of parental involvement in education (Becker & Epstein, 1982; Epstein et al, 2002). Furthermore, the notions of *academic socialization* (Hill & Tyson, 2009) as well as *subtle aspects* of parental involvement in education fall within the realm of family processes that support student academic success (Jeynes, 2010).

Despite the similarities presented above, there are also some differences in respondents' perspectives on how teachers and Somali parents view "active" Somali parental involvement in the education of their children. This difference in their viewpoints is due to either (or both) of two reasons: (a) Somali parents are not typically volunteering to help teachers with the tasks that teachers want or find most useful; and/or (b) teachers are not aware of all the volunteering and decision-making or other activities to which parents contribute. This finding suggests that teachers and Somali parents do differ in their beliefs and expectations about the importance of school-based parental involvement activities. It also supports one of the presumptions of this study which is based on one of Nderu's (2005) key finding, which underscored the existence of a separation between mainstream teachers and Somali parents.

It appears this difference revolves mostly around some discrepancy in how each group understands what effective parental involvement in education entails. In addition, in the wider parent involvement literature, this discrepancy in understanding is reflected as an intellectual, cultural, political, and practical debate about what "active" parental involvement should look like—e.g. parents who are highly visible at the school versus those parents who are very involved in their children's learning but who are not present in the schools (Bakker & Denessen, 2007; Chao, 2000; Crozier & Davis, 2007; Lopez et al 2001; Smit, Driessen, Sluiter, & Slegers, 2007).

The second area of difference between teachers and Somali parents is attitudinal in nature. For instance, some teachers (30%) report that they observe that Somali mothers tend to intercede excessively on behalf of their children during teacher-student conflict. Those teachers find Somali fathers to be more amenable to the idea of their children being incontinent or disruptive during times of conflict. This suggests that Somali fathers' perspective on student discipline is more congruent with the teachers' approach to discipline compared to Somali

mothers. In turn, this also suggests that there are some cultural considerations at issue—which are reflected in the negative interactions reported by teachers. For example, traditionally, Somali fathers tend to assume the role of child disciplinarians in contrast to Somali mothers, who normally tend to assume the role of nurturers and protectors of the “*bah* [spark]” of the child. In a sense, “*bah*” concerns parental duty to protect, for if the child’s *bah* is compromised, the child is seen to be at risk of losing the inner strength that will sustain the child in the future in the face of adversity during adulthood. This in turn is harmful to the family as a group.

One Somali parent alludes to the concept this way, saying, “A *child with a wounded self is not going to do well in school.*” This was from a parent who also views parental involvement in education as a parental duty to guide—one that prevents children from “straying”, which he views as a long-term setback for both the child and the family (i.e., “*waa dhibaato kugu soo noqonaysa*” [It is a problem that boomerangs back on you [on the child and the family]]).

A third area of difference between teachers and Somali parents is the level of information that parents expect from teachers in order to facilitate parental monitoring of the student’s schoolwork at home. Parent interviewees in this study expect teachers to provide more detailed homework instructions. A majority of parents in this study (79%) were educated in school systems where rote-learning was the norm—unlike the United States. Therefore, it is possible that such an expectation implies that parents want to secure supplementary academic material. Somali parents report wanting to assist their children by providing them with additional exposure to underlying concepts or address knowledge gaps—particularly for struggling students.

Finally, the fourth area of difference between Somali parent interviewees and the teachers is their perspectives on the characteristics of an *optimally-involved parent in education*. Respondents reported that the “ideal type” of parent is knowledgeable about what is going-on at school and at home, is in frequent contact with teachers and other school staff; and encourage his/her own children to work hard in order to do well in school and to be respectful of older individuals, including older siblings. In contrast, the school personnel interviewees believe that an *optimally-involved* parent monitors their child’s learning at home; communicates with the school personnel about how a parent may collaborate with the school to motivate his/her children to do well in school, and is also supportive of the school goals. In short, teachers are more interested in school-initiated communication and the extension of classroom instruction to the home and they want parents to be supportive of the school personnel’s judgment about student behavior.

From an organizational perspective, the school personnel interviewees in this study (i.e., teachers and administrators) see Somali family participation as presence in the school life of their children, which falls along a continuum of four levels of parental involvement behaviors: (1) “Invisibility” (i.e. failure to participate in school-based activities), (2) “Shallow Involvement” (i.e. attend only parent-teacher conferences), (3) “Adequate Involvement” (i.e. attend parent-teacher conferences and also maintain regular contact with school personnel), and (4) “Deep Involvement” (i.e. parental involvement that is both school-based and home-based activities that are augmented with parental endorsement of the school and advocacy on behalf of the school) [see Chapter Four for further details]. This insight into the participation of Somali parents in the education of their children is in stark contrast to the current characterization of Somali parents in the extant literature, which portrays them as a markedly invisible group in the schools that educate their children in many countries in the Western world (McLean & Lewis, 2007; Mahamed, 2010; Nderu, 2005; Roy & Roxas, 2011; Smit & Driessen, 2005).

Opportunities for Somali Parental Involvement in Education (including School-level and Classroom Expectations)

At the school-level, the school personnel’s expectations for a school-family partnership that supports student learning is implemented via an open-door parental involvement policy that manifests itself in specific expectations which are related to the roles that parents are expected to play in the education of their children. For instance, there are activities that families may participate in at school or at home, and which facilitate parental engagement in the educative process of their children. These expectations are communicated through newsletters or web-based information or bilingual Open House Parent Nights, or they are offered when welcoming new students and their families to the school community. More individualized, student-specific, reports are shared with families as report cards sent home or as teacher explanations of how a specific student’s performance in class aligns with the expectations of teachers during parent-teacher conferences. Families can also access student performance information via web-based reports that parents may review at their convenience from home. Most teachers confirm that they discuss details of student progress with parents at teacher-parent conferences—including interpretation of state assessment results. Thus, from the perspective of the school personnel, parents are afforded an opportunity to choose for themselves their level of support for: (a) student

learning; and (b) school-wide goals of improving the academic achievement gaps between sub-groups at their schools.

Furthermore, based on the findings of this study, there is congruence between Somali parents' and teachers' perspectives as it relates to what they see as school-level expectations for parental participation in the school life of Somali children. However, the primary incongruence between the teachers' and parents' expectations exists in the stance that Somali parents take when teachers report the misbehavior of the former's children. Evidently, some teachers strongly believe that parents should side with the teachers in situations of student-teacher conflict. They also see it as an imbalance of power in the classroom when an out-of-line student does not get immediate re-direction from parents (i.e. firm home instructions to the student to back down and heed the instructions of teachers). One teacher expresses that sentiment of displeasure as follows:

“That takes all the power away from me because that kid now knows that it doesn't matter what I say. He is just gonna tell mommy he did not do it and that is gonna be the end of it.” (NHA teacher).

In contrast to the teachers, some parents question whether schools (teachers, administrators and other school personnel) are too harsh in their approach to disciplining students. Parent comments suggest that there is a discrepancy between parent and teacher interviewees' perspectives on what constitutes disruptive behavior in the classroom versus effective classroom management. For instance, the practice of sending students out of the classroom brings this divergence in view into focus. When teachers send students out of the classroom, they are likely to be concerned with the immediate impact of the student's behavior on instructional time and on other students in the class. In contrast, some parents—who are not, of course, in the classroom (unless they are sitting in for observing the class that day)—take a long-term view of what student misbehavior means in the students' development. Interestingly, some parents delineate respect and reverence/love. Whereas respect is manifested by obedience (i.e. respect those older than you by being compliant to instructions), reverence/love is to be earned and is indicated by self-initiation to please adults. This was aptly put as:

I expect the child to defer to the teacher and listen to the teacher, so they get to understand each other and get along, but, I think the teacher earns the child's regard and love with [his/her] own effort (a Somali parent).

Additionally, parents report two approaches that they use to attempt to balance the needs of students and teachers. One group of parents indicates a strong preference for acting like a guide/referee who focuses on de-escalating the frustration of their children to align with the instructional goals of the school or with the teachers. Those parents also want to anticipate and address the teachers' frustration with deficiencies in student's academic performance or misbehaviors in the classroom. Such parents report that, in order to accomplish their de-escalation goal, they use conciliatory language (i.e. *active conversations*) with teachers and their children to show the parent is mindful of the issue and paying full attention. Such parents tend to attribute student-teacher conflicts to an internal struggle to deal with issues that undermine the student's learning. They believe that tense situations get exacerbated by the misalignment of the characteristics of the teacher and the child (including their personalities and social skills). Finally, such parents tend to be those with higher levels of education levels (i.e. post-secondary education) or those who have been educated in the U.S. or in other western countries or those who have been residing in those countries for a period of more than five years.

In contrast, the second group of parent interviewees is more likely to emphasize the external manifestations of desirable social skills for their children. Such parents consider students to be "ready to learn" when they are well-mannered and respectful of group norms, and such parents expect this behavior from their children at all times. Thus, this group of parents expects their children to be extremely compliant to the teachers' authority—and such a group of parents seems to take reports of their children's misbehavior at school as a parenting failure on their part, i.e. "*a shame thing*" as one teacher put it.

Perspectives on Constraints and Challenges to Somali Parental Involvement in Education:

With a lot of empathy, teacher interviewees share the nature of what they see as barriers to Somali parental involvement. The school personnel (teachers and administrators) believe that Somali parents' turnout for school events would improve if parents have access to reliable transportation and an appropriate childcare support. One teacher states that it takes some parents well over an hour on public transportation to come to school events because they need to change several buses to attend school events. In addition, all the teacher interviewees see a language barrier between teachers and parents who do not speak the same language.

Both schools offer in-house, language support for teachers to call parents or interpret for teachers during school events or to translate simple materials into Somali if a teacher requests

such help ahead of time. However, three non-Somali speaking teachers affirm their view that more personalized contacts with Somali families, through home visits or attending Somali community events, would increase teachers' cultural competency and Somali parents' comfort level with teachers outside the school setting. Finally, teachers expressed their understanding that working parents or large families have more barriers than smaller-size families, stay-at-home parents, or those who have more control of their time, depending on the professional nature of their work.

In sum, teacher interviewees, as a group, see non-school (logistical and/or socio-cultural) factors to be detrimental to the success of school-family partnerships. However, Somali parent interviewees tend to see non-school barriers as relevant for only specific *types* of Somali families. While some teachers see transportation as one of the major barriers for Somali parental involvement in school events, Somali parents bring up transportation as an issue only for specific family types who must contend with coordination difficulties for various reasons. For instance, parents describe how larger families (those with four children or more) with younger children at home and several school-age children may need to attend events at more than one school. In addition, such families may also need to simultaneously deal with the logistics of child care in addition to arranging for time off work. Somali parents also see transportation as a problem primarily for newcomers to the area (including those new to the country). Thus, Somali parents, view access to reliable transportation to be more easily available for longer-time residents of the state, and for those who enjoy the support of a strong social network (i.e. two-parent families, older children, extended family, numerous friends or even nice neighbors).

Likewise, Somali parents acknowledge childcare unavailability as a barrier to effective parental involvement. However, they see it as a problem largely for families in which both parents work outside of their home or for those parents who are socially isolated (e.g., single-moms with no or limited social network support). They describe situations where some families would have one parent to attend school events while the other stays behind to take care of younger children as a solution to child care duties (if there are no older siblings or extended family members, friends or neighbors whom they can depend on for taking care of younger children). This suggests that some parents try to address the childcare unavailability barrier by pulling in their social network (Hill & Taylor, 2004).

Summing it up, compared to teachers, Somali parents, as a group, are more interested in school-based solutions to school-related factors when it comes to facilitating effective parental

involvement. For instance, Somali parents express clearly their need for more guidance from teachers so that they can more effectively monitor student school assignments regardless of the English language proficiency of the parent. In addition, they are more worried about the psychological impact on their children of certain disciplinary approaches common in American schools (e.g. teachers sending children out of the classroom). They also express deep concern about revolving-door hiring practices in schools with high teacher turnover, which they think is disruptive to the stability of positive relationships between both 1) teachers and students; and 2) parents and teachers.

Surprisingly, while the literature (e.g., Kohl, Lengua & McMahon, 2000) suggests maternal educational attainment status predicts child educational success; this was not the perspective of several Somali parent interviewees and one Somali-speaking teacher. Those interviewees feel that the disadvantage of being a parent without (or with limited) education is a surmountable problem when one has the benefit of collaborative relationships with others (i.e. other contributors to the common goal of supporting the child as a student). Furthermore, as interdependence is a highly regarded cultural value in this community, Somali respondents conceive of education as a communal rather than individual possession. Since education is thought of in terms of shared benefit and shared striving, co-ethnics who have mastered literacy are expected to help others whose literacy is emergent or absent.

This understanding intersects with Lareau and Weininger's (2003) definitions of the technical dimension and a status dimension of education. Somali schemas of education include the technical dimension in that those with literacy and schooling share concrete knowledge with others in the community. However, the schema also includes the status dimension because the "literate person" accrues community prestige through their service. Thus, despite the communal flavor of Somali parents' conception of education, some benefits are also seen as individual—with status rewards being awarded to the "learned person" within the microcosm of the group.

One mother in the sample strongly believes that the primary issue in Somali students' success is intergenerational goodwill rather than parental educational attainment. She feels that success is possible for illiterate parents who signal to their children that they value education and act upon that value by drawing upon external communal resources. It is remarkable that this mother emulates her illiterate grandmother's example of valuing education by inspiring her own young children to "*dream their dream jobs*" and by "*putting it in their heads,*" encouraging them to stay engaged in school (see excerpts of this respondent's anecdote in Chapter Four). This

perspective of the child-parent dyad as members of a larger closely-knit group (rather than a unitary pair) is representative of a collectivist value system (Trumbull et al, 2003).

Finally, the problem of Somali parents who juggle two jobs to make a living was particularly illuminating with respect to the teacher interviewees' personal stance on the value of parenting time. For instance, five out of ten teacher interviewees (50%) see it as an issue for parental participation in school events. Of those teachers, three (i.e. one third of the total teacher interviewees) also feel the lack of time impedes the monitoring role of parents. Furthermore, they think that when parents are so busy, they are unable to communicate with their children enough to pass on their Somali language proficiency which is seen as crucial for the child's cognitive development—or so some respondents argue. For instance, an ESL teacher reports being a very strong advocate for children to first learn the language in which their parents are most proficient. Once children attain proficiency in that first language, they are more likely to make a successful transition to the mastery of a second language. She indicates that she actively advocates for Somali parents to speak Somali to their children at home, both for cognitive reasons and to give their children meaningful ties to their families and community. This view is supported in the literature as one of the dimensions of social and human capital which enhance intergenerational closeness and foster educational and occupational success (Coleman, 1988, 1991).

Study Implications

Educators, families, communities, and policy makers are interested in learning more about what works and what does not for subgroups of students in schools, including Somali children. As the size of the first- and second-generation migration of families from Somali background grows across the Western world, including the United States (whether directly from Africa or via relocating from elsewhere), their potential for social adaptation and school success may have long-term implications for the educational and social integration policies of their new homelands (Bigelow, 2010; Demie, McLean & Lewis, 2008; Maxamed, 2010; Nderu, 2005; Voyer, 2009; Zimmerman & Zetter, 2011).

This research is intended to provide insight into how teachers and Somali parents understand effective Somali parental involvement in education in terms of their own personal beliefs. Thus, this study reveals: (1) the similarities and discrepancies of the perspectives of teachers and parents as it relates to the existence (lack of) meaningful opportunities for collaboration to support student learning; and (2) the ways in which these actors problem-solve

when they encounter barriers that hamper effective parental involvement in the education of Somali-descent children. Therefore, the case study design approach helps with the discovery of not only what the actors know about effective Somali parental involvement in the education of their children. It also facilitates understanding the scope of what they actually do in their day-to-day lives. Furthermore, this approach allowed the researcher to tease out the particulars of how the administrative organizational structure affects the interpersonal interactions of parents and school personnel (Barnyak & McNelly, 2009; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Hill et al 2004; McNeal, 1999).

Based on the responses of parents and school personnel (teachers and administrators), it is evident there is a dense web of frequent verbal interactions between families and the staff at the two participating schools. The school personnel expressed their strong preference for pre-arranged formal face-to-face meetings or written communication to inform families of regular school affairs, and to alert parents about teacher concerns about specific student academic or behavioral issues. However, they find a verbal approach to communication, which includes spontaneous as well as formal components, to be the most effective way to reach Somali parents.. This acknowledgement indicates that teachers and school administrators at these schools are sensitive to the strong preferences of Somali families for a specific form of communication. This implication, in turn, supports Epstein's conceptual claim that schools need to support diverse families by recognizing effective communication strategies that work for those families (Epstein et al, 2002).

This recognition can be a starting point for parents and teachers to understand how they can reinforce each other, in their respective roles and responsibilities, to focus the attention of students on achievement norms and appropriate social skills. Furthermore, the findings of this study support Grolnick et al findings (1997), which identified child characteristics as one of the predictive factors of the effectiveness of parental involvement in the education of their children.

Implications for Educators

The findings of this study suggest that Somali parents are not as passive in the education of their children as portrayed in the extant literature. The level of their active involvement also does not necessarily exactly match the expectations of educators (in terms of school-based involvement), but schools can build on these findings to explore ways to strengthen their parental involvement programming through technology. For instance, YouTube videos are very popular

with this community, even with Somali adults who are not literate. Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that flipped classrooms would give parents an opportunity to sit down with their children as their children help each other to study for understanding subjects like mathematics. Furthermore, it is highly likely that the relatively less-educated would be assisted by a more educated family member. This pedagogical approach can augment other strategies like school-paid subscriptions to science websites that students and families can access 24/7 (in order to meet the scheduling needs of poor and/or working parents).

Both of these approaches are very likely to help with the socialization of students to academic excellence. As articulated by some teachers who participated in this study, effective parental involvement in the education of their children is not really dependent on physical visibility in schools. Rather, it is more about being present in the school life of their children. This idea was cogently elucidated by one teacher as follows:

In the four years that I taught the children of this family, I met that family probably twice but these children are never in trouble and always do their job. And even if something minimal happens, like missing an assignment, that parent is always calling the school to ask why there is missing work and asks, 'What can I do to help?' So I know this parent is involved and makes sure the kid gets the job done. (John, NHA, teacher₃).

An increased use of instructional technology may alleviate two issues which are identified in this study:

- (1) Time is a scarce commodity for teachers and parents alike. This scarcity weakens opportunities for physical parental visibility in schools. Therefore, if schools can maximize learning time outside the classroom, by using technology for example, then that will be beneficial for student learning. This is particularly true for struggling students and with regard to subjects like math and science. Maximization of learning time in turn improves the effectiveness of schools (Borman & Rachuba, 2001) – including those identified as “Focus Schools”.
- (2) If parents have more concrete instructional tools such as flipped classrooms or specific web sites for math and science that parents know about and can discuss with teachers, it may improve the quality of family time. This may be even more beneficial for parents who want to monitor their children’s study habits and homework completion but lack mastery of the content material. Such parents may be

more likely to seek the help of their older children to encourage their younger ones to finish their homework. Such cooperative family time is culturally compatible with excellence that is driven by the assistance of the group (and for the group's sake). Furthermore, in this situation, younger and older siblings are assisting each other and are thus learning the important lesson of interdependence. Thus, this instructional and pedagogical approach facilitates academic excellence and fosters family harmony, which supports parents in their attempt to rear educated bicultural (and/or bilingual) school children of various ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

In addition, administrators can facilitate smoother school-home communication if they establish consistent protocols for calling parents. This helps teachers to overcome the anxiety of calling parents in schools where teachers and the majority of parents do not speak the same language. Teachers can benefit from training modules that use those protocols through role-playing for instance during in-service training or as part of new teacher orientations. Such protocols can be validated by collecting annual feedback from teachers and other school personnel on what they find works and what does not work for them when those protocols are used. This strategy would help with continuous improvement of both the content and the tone of the protocols to fit the changing demographic needs of a particular school. This is needed to provide more support and guidance to teachers on how to effectively communicate with families from diverse socio-economic and socio-cultural backgrounds (Caspé, 2003).

Implications for Parents

This study demonstrates that, per existing research findings, teacher-parent relations can be improved by addressing feelings of unease due to differences in socioeconomic status, language and/or culture (Crozier & Davis, 2007; Domina, 2005; Roy & Roxas, 2011; Trumbull et al, 2003). That tension, therefore, requires that Somali parents address teacher concerns of orderly conduct at school in American contexts. For example, schools may consider adding to their parental involvement compacts that parents need to arrange for classroom drop-in visits ahead of time, preferably several days before the drop-in date. Also, in situations when parents are actually in the classroom, parents should not try to intervene if students start talking, stand up, borrow materials from one another, or try to help one another, etc., without the teacher's permission. Given the potential for instructional disruption, Somali parents should understand

that it is the teachers' responsibility to intervene on their own for their classrooms. Of course, if teachers ask for help, parents can then intervene. Otherwise, teachers may be forced to stop teaching because of classroom disciplining by a visiting parent.

Moreover, some Somali parents may see teachers waiting for a class to quiet down as a failure of classroom management on the teachers' part. Similarly, some teachers may perceive Somali parental attempts to discipline unruly students as failure to respect teacher authority in defining classroom management strategies. If this is not acknowledged or if it is ignored, this difference in perception has the potential to create resentment on both sides. This is, therefore, an area that needs to be considered as an unintended consequence of the open-door policy of schools like the ones that participated in this study. One way in which parents and educators may analyze this potentially challenging situation (from cross-cultural and pedagogical perspectives) is for the school leaders to consult with teachers, parents, classroom mentors, and school community members on strategies which can be used to resolve this issue to the satisfaction of all parties concerned. It should be expected that this suggestion requires a certain level of cross-cultural acumen from school leaders (as figurative elders who are key to minimizing conflicts between students and teachers, and between teachers and parents) as well as sensitivity to the need to protect as much instructional time as possible. Solutions may include holding training workshops at the beginning of the school year for parents on teacher expectations when they are visiting classrooms. It is an area that could also be included on the list of initial interview questions asked of new teacher candidates in order to gauge the teachers' comfort zone level with cultural differences in discipline, and to test their willingness to develop the necessary skills that address this issue, based on the needs of their specific classroom makeup.

Implications for Future Research

Drawing on the findings of these qualitative case studies, four possible aspects of Somali parental involvement in the education of their children are recommended for future research. One recommendation would be to examine if and to what extent a similar-size sample of Somali-descent parents, who grew up in the United States and attended schools not run by Somali-Americans, are different from those in this sample, with respect to their perceptions about effective Somali parental involvement in the education of their children.

Another recommendation would be to investigate the views of more school personnel, including teachers, teacher aides, and other school personnel in non-teaching functions (including

counselors, after-school program coordinators, administrative office staff, and parent liaisons) in order to determine their views on how schools may promote effective, school-family partnerships to support student learning and development.

A third recommendation for future research is to identify how and if Somali-American parent-teacher pairs find a common ground for dealing with disciplinary issues in mainstream schools—the objective being whether the divergence in disciplinary perspectives observed in this study hold true in other schools. In this vein, probing the similarities and differences between Somali parent and Somali children’s understanding of “misbehavior” and disciplinary action, could also be fertile research ground.

A fourth recommendation is to investigate how the experiences of teachers who leave teaching jobs in urban schools that educate multicultural and multiethnic children could offer educative insights for teacher-training courses; and whether those urban-school teachers’ experiences matter comparatively more for novice teachers versus more-experienced teachers (e.g. those with 4 or more years of teaching experience).

Study Delimitations and Limitations

This study is delimited to the determinants of effective Somali parental involvement in education from the vantage points of teachers and Somali parents as augmented by leadership perspective on effective partnership with families. It is also delimited by its focus on two urban public schools (a charter school and a non-charter school) in a metropolitan region of a Midwestern state in the United States of America.

The primary focus of these case studies is to examine the range of views that teachers and Somali parents hold about the topic under study in the case of those two public urban schools. The study was conducted at the participating schools at a time when school personnel working at these schools were from multiple ethnicities (European-American, Somali, other Africans of non-Somali descent, and Arab). Nevertheless, the study participants were limited to Somali-speaking foreign-born teachers and native-born European-American as those were the only two groups who volunteered to participate in the study. It is also limited by the extent to which the respondents are candid with their responses about their views of effective Somali parental involvement in education. The small sample size used in this study means that the study findings are not generalizable to other similar populations, including the larger population of parents or teachers who are responsible for student learning of Somali school children in other contexts.

Despite this lack of direct transferability to other contexts, the findings of this study may be of interest to many stakeholders, such as parents, teachers, school administrators, community leaders, and policy makers, who design or implement family engagement and support programs that aim to promote student motivation for learning or for reducing student behavioral problems.

Conclusions

Researchers across several disciplines, such as education and psychology and sociology, agree that effective communication, which is the hallmark of active conversations, supports a shared agenda between schools and families to foster positive student outcomes (Christenson, 2004; Fan & Williams, 2010; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; and Jeynes, 2003). Effective communication is also considered a necessary ingredient in stimulating collaborative and trusting relationships between children and key adults in their lives, and between families and schools as institutions (Adam & Christenson, 2000; Epstein, 1995, and Weiss et al, 2009).

According to Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1995), *verbal persuasion*, as a form of active conversations, is also crucial for encouraging students to believe in their capacity to succeed in school, particularly for those children who may be struggling to achieve or are confronted by temporary challenges in their academic progress (p. 322). In that regard, the participants in this study view effective communication as a purposeful dialogue (i.e. active conversations) among specific dyads—parent-child, parent-parent, parent-teacher, and triads of parent-student-teacher, parent-office-staff-administrator, etc.

In this study, three factors that shape how parents and school personnel view effective Somali parental involvement in the education of Somali-American children have emerged. Those factors constitute: *active conversations*; *positive attitude*; and *student motivation*. The former two factors facilitate the third—that is, *active conversations* and *positive attitude* promote the *student motivation* necessary to excel in education and behave appropriately at school. To elaborate, active conversations are verbal dialogues that favor flexibility and problem solving on the part of parents and teachers as they interact to help students take responsibility for their own learning and behavior. However, such conversations are perceived to be driven by preexisting credibility and trust between students, parents, and school personnel that foster reinforcement of the instructional, pedagogical and behavioral goals across the school-home settings.

The first key finding of these case studies is that active conversations are considered to be beneficial for two primary reasons:

(1) Active conversations are frequent and informal parental exchanges with their children about their school life. This allows parents to gently prompt children to complete their homework or to prepare them at home for subject tests and state assessments to avoid falling behind; and (2) These conversations are constructive when parents respond, on a timely basis, to issues of student misbehavior (at school), which hinder effective teaching and learning. In that sense, active conversations are ideally verbal expressions that bring together children, parents, and teachers to have an ongoing dialogue. These conversations most concern current and/or future opportunities for enriching the knowledge or skills of children, parents, and teachers so that they can all assume their respective roles in learning, parenting, and teaching with confidence.

From an institutional point of view, active conversations facilitate dynamic interactions at school and at home, and facilitate collaborative relationships between schools and families. However, these relationships are shaped by the degree of credibility and trust in interactions among teachers, students, parents, administrators and other school personnel; which in turn (if positive) reinforce desirable behaviors to facilitate student learning, and build structures for mutual respect for the actors. Thus, *active conversations* impact and are impacted by student attitude, which if positive, in turn shapes student behavior, as the positive attitude is seen as crucial by parents and by the school personnel alike. This process can be described as *active conversations for educational excellence* (ACE) to depict that collective dialogues cultivate *positive attitudes* that foster credible and trusting relationships, which promote successful partnerships between families and school personnel to support *student motivation* (see the ACE Model for Somali Parental Involvement in Education in Figure 5 (below):

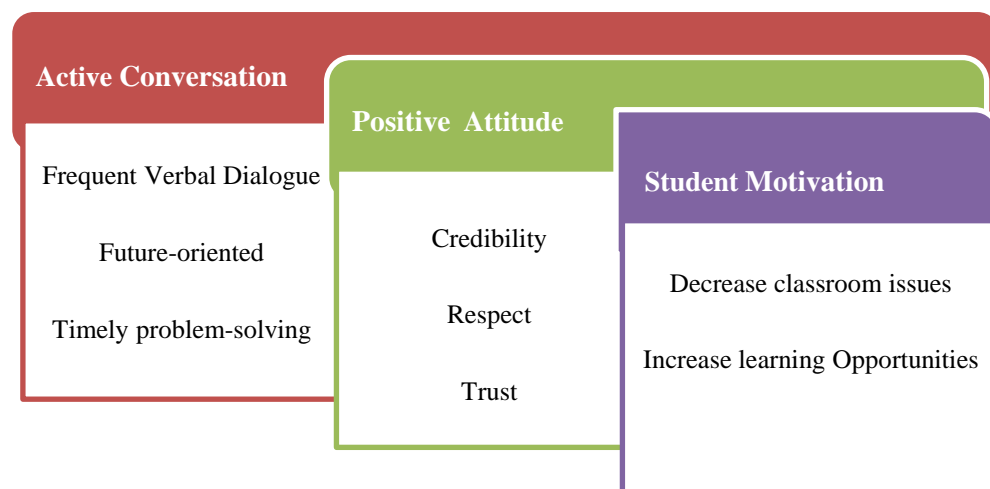


Figure 5: ACE Model: Factors that Influence Somali Parental Involvement in Education

This process model supports the idea that the nature of talks held matters for students, parents, teachers, and administrators seeking to establish and maintain collaborative relationships. Additionally, the frequency, type, intensity and the scope of talk is contingent on the worldviews, experiences and expectations of school personnel and parents. Empirical evidence demonstrates that a child’s competence in collaborating with others is positively correlated with academic performance and social success (Hill & Craft, 2003).

The second key finding of this study is that from an organizational perspective, Somali parents, at the two schools under study, engage in a range of activities that map onto four of Epstein’s six types of parental involvement (i.e., *Parenting, Communicating, Learning at Home, and Collaborating with the Community*).

The third key finding of this study, as described earlier in this chapter, is that from the perspective of teachers as well administrators, Somali family participation and presence in the school life of their children falls along a continuum of four levels of parental involvement behaviors. These range widely from: (a) “*invisibility*” (failure to participate in school-based activities), (b) “*shallow involvement*” (attend only parent-teacher conferences), (c) “*adequate involvement*” (attend parent-teacher conferences and also maintain contact with school personnel), to (d) “*deep involvement*” (parental involvement that is both school-based and home-based activities augmented with parental endorsement of the school and strong advocacy on

behalf of the school). More specifically, Somali parents were described to be mostly involved in the shallow or adequate involvement categories which are indicated in Figure 6 (below), in their levels relative to other types of parental involvement.

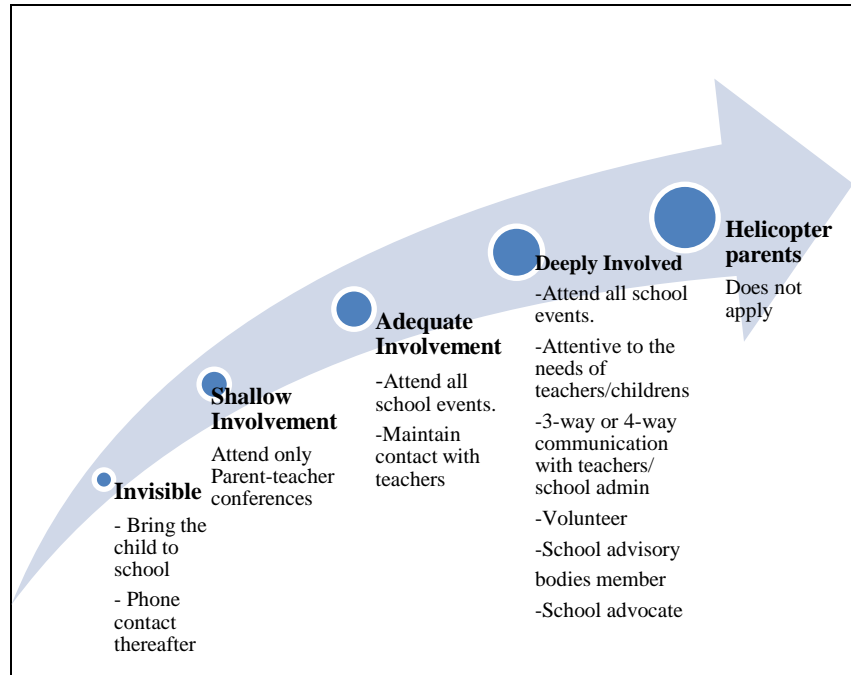


Figure 6: Continuum of Somali Parental Involvement in Education
 (Source: Created by the Researcher based on Interviews with teachers and school admin.)

Finally, compared to teachers, Somali parents believe that their children are learning well when they bring home their schoolwork, and when teachers and other school personnel offer school-based solutions that address barriers blocking effective parental support for students. This parental belief is strongest in relation to homework and discipline, without which student interest in school and attentiveness in class are weaker.

In conclusion, the findings of this study support the first of the two presumptions of this work:

1. The results of this research support the presumption that teachers and Somali parents do not agree on what they consider to be effective strategies for family participation in the education of Somali children in the United States, as described in the literature (Nderu, 2005; Roy & Roxas, 2011). This is particularly true of school-based parental involvement related to disciplinary issues. For instance, Somali parents and teachers

disagree about whether it is more important for parents to intercede on behalf of their children or to be in solidarity with the teacher authority without any questions.

2. However, study results complicate this presumption because Somali parents and teachers interviewed for this study reveal greater agreement on what constitutes appropriate parental involvement than what is present in the literature (Demi, Mclean and Lewis, 2007; Nderu, 2005; Roy & Roxas, 2011, Smit & Driessen, 2005). Congruence between parents and teachers was especially high with regard to home-based parental involvement (e.g. Somali parent interviewees and teachers agree that it is vital for families to monitor student homework and provide time and work space for doing school work).

This relatively less pronounced expression of disconnect than what was identified earlier in the literature can be understood as evidence for the second presumption of this study that was related to the non-traditional schools that participated in these case studies. These schools employ bilingual teacher aides and provide other language support at no cost to families and teachers, which are critical conduits for parents seeking to make their voices heard (e.g. parents with limited English leaving messages at the office for teachers, and liaisons assisting teachers to reach out to hard to reach parents on behalf of teachers).

In sum, the findings of these case studies suggest that there are both areas of congruence and incongruence between the perspectives of school personnel and Somali parents. There are also areas of wide discrepancy in perspectives between teachers and Somali parents, particularly as it relates to approaches to homework assignment and discipline-administering. Therefore, it would be prudent to examine ways to integrate those two specific areas in planning for curricular, pedagogical and communication plans of schools to provide teachers and parents the tools they need to structure more effective dialogue. This can be done either in college teacher training courses or through in-service teacher and parent workshops that include weekend programming. Planning for such training should take into consideration input from teachers with recent experience teaching Somali children, and who also have direct experience with the Somali community.

As the Somali saying goes, “*Markay ceelaalyado heshiiso ayey cidda cabta*”—Only when the scouts sent to prepare the watering wells are in agreement will the herd quench its thirst (Qalinle, BES teacher₄). This maxim alludes to four different contributors that support advancement of common goals, namely: process, responsibility, roles and collaboration. Just as securing a desert water supply is critical to pastoral life, so too is education for today’s youth (and their societies). To help students achieve success in school, teachers and parents must –like the nomads of old—pursue meaningful collaboration and be mindful of the process aspects of school-family systems. Only then can these actors reach transparency about their responsibilities and roles to promote favorable student outcomes. It is the hope of the researcher that this work will contribute knowledge that illuminates how school-family partnerships can support the success of students from diverse backgrounds, Somali-American included.

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Appendix A

Semi-Structured Parent Interview Protocol

Date: / /2014

Demographics:

Parent Code #/School Code#: _____ Gender (Male/Female): _____
No of children this parent has enrolled at this school now? : _____ Where was the child born: _____
Grade(s) of this parent's child(ren): _____ Is the child transferred? _____
How long child enrolled at this school?: _____ (MPLS/St. Paul/Suburb/other State)
Parent fluency in English (fluent/limited/none): _____ Parent Occupation: _____
Parent education level: _____ Earned at: USA/Africa/Other: _____

1. What do you perceive as effective parent involvement in the education of your children?

Probe: Do you think there are advantages to parent involvement in education? Why or why not?

Probe: How do you think schools want you, as a parent, to be involved in your child's education? Why or why not?

2. What opportunities do you think are available to you to help your children do well in school?

Probe: How do you encourage your children to do well in school?

Probe: How do you support teachers help your child to do well in school?

Probe: How do you support the school to help your child to do well in school?

Probe: Do you volunteer at this school?

Probe: What do you do when you enroll your children in a new school; when your children start a new grade; when your children change classrooms within the same school?

3. As a parent, what do you see as barriers to parent involvement in the education of your children?

Probe: If you have a question/problem regarding school administrative matters, who do you go to?

Probe: If you have a question or a concern about your child's academic progress, who do you go to?

Probe: If you have a question about after-school programs or enrichment programs at school or elsewhere, who do you go to?

Probe: If you have a question or concern about your child's behavioral issues, who do you go to?

Probe: In regard to parental involvement, what do you think is working best at this school?

Probe: What would you recommend to be improved to promote parental involvement in education?

4. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you for participating in this study!

Dhisma-u-yaal Wareysi Waalid

Astaamaha

Tariikh: / / 2014

1. **Siday kuula muuqaata in ay tahay sida ugu taya roon ee waalidku uga qayb gali karo waxbarashada carruurtiisa?**
 - a. Maxay kula tahay in ay yihiin faa'idooyinka in uu waalidku ka qayb qalo amaba tageero tacliinta ilmihisa? Waayo? Maxay kale?
 - b. Siday kula tahay inay dugsiyadu u rabaan in aad waalid ahaan uga qayb-qaadatid ama u tageerto waxbarashada ilmahaaga? Waayo? Maxay Kale?
2. **Waa maxay fursadaha kuu bannaan si aad u caawisid ilmahaagu inuu iskuulka ama dugsiga ku aflaxo?**
 - a. Sideebaad uugu dhiirri gelisaa ilmahaaga in uu ku fiicnaado waxbarashada ama aflaxo?
 - b. Sideebaad u taageertaa macallimiinta si ay u caawiyaan ilmaahagu in uu dugsiga ku aflaxo?
 - c. Sideebaad u taageertaa dugsiga ilmahaago dhigto sidii uu u noqon laha goob dhiirri gelisa in ilmaahaagu in uu ku aflaxo waxbarashada?
 - d. Maxaad u qabataa dugsigan xagga “volunteer” ahaan?
 - e. Maxaad samaysaa marka ilmahaaga aad geeeyso: iskuul cusub; ama uu ilmuhu bilaabo grade cusub; ama uu u wareego klaas cusub isla iskuulka uu ku jiro ku yeel?
3. **Waalid ahaan, maxaad u aragtaa inay yihiin carqaladah ama waxa is hor taagi kara waliidaka in uu ka qayb-qaato waxbarashada ilmihisa?**
 - a. Ayaad kala hadashaa ama u tagtaa haddii aad qabtid su'aal ama mushkilad xagga arrimaha hawl maamuleedka dugsiga?
 - b. Ayaad kala hadashaa ama u tagtaa haddii aad qabtid su'aal ama walaac ku saabsan xagga waxbarashada ilmahaaga?
 - c. Ayaad u tagtaa ama la hadashaa haddii aad su'aal ka qabtid barnaammijka *After School Program* ka ee dugsigu ugu tala galay aradeyda si ay ula socon karaan safkooda ee la qabto maalinti dugsiga ka dib? Sidoo kale ayaad u tagta ama la hadasha haddii aad su'aal ka qabtid barnaamijiyaa aqoon naxiiska *Enrichment Programs* ee loogu tala gelay wax barasho dheerad ah oo lagu qabto dugsiga laftisa ama meela kale oo dugsiga ka baxsan?
 - d. Ayaad u tagtaa ama la hadashaa haddii aad su'aal ka qabtid amma aad ka warwato dhaqanka/akhlaaqda ilmahaaga arrimo la xiriira?
 - e. Maxay kuula muuqaata inuu aad ugu fiican yihay dugsigani xagga kaalinta waalidku ka qaato waxbarashada ilmihisa?
 - f. Maxaad ku talin lahayd in la sii wanaajiyo ama kor loosu qaado oo la dhaafiyo heerka hadda uu taagan yahay si uu waalidku uga qayb-qaato waxbarashada ilmihisa?
4. **Ma jiraa wax kale ood jeceshahay in aad ku dartid waxa aan ka hadallay?**

Waad ku mahadsan tahay ka qayb qadashaddaada cilimi baadhistan!

Appendix B

Semi-Structured Teacher Interview Protocol

Demographics

Teacher Code/School: _____ Gender (Male/Female): _____
of years as a teacher (which grades?): _____ Grade(s) currently teaching: _____
Length of Service at this school: _____ Teacher fluency in Somali: _____
Teacher Education Level (Bachelor/MS/Earned from): _____ Subject(s) taught: _____
Prior training in cross-cultural interaction (Such interaction may include participation in formal or informal programs)

Questions

- 1. What does effective parental involvement in education mean to you?**
- 2. What do you see as opportunities for parent involvement in the education of their children?**
 - Probe:* What are your school's expectations of parental role in the education of their children?
 - Probe:* What are your personal expectations of parents to support their children at home to do well in your classes?
 - Probe:* What are the activities and experiences that your school provides to encourage active parental involvement in education?
 - Probe:* What do you do, as a teacher, to facilitate parental involvement in your classes?
 - Probe:* What do you do, as a teacher, to support new students and their families' to transition smoothly into your classroom?
- 3. As a teacher, what do you see as barriers to parental involvement in the education of their children at your school?**
 - Probe:* How do you communicate to families your curricular and behavioral expectations regarding support for student learning?
 - Probe:* If you have a concern about a student's academic progress, how do you work with families to address those concerns?
 - Probe:* If you have information about after-school programs or other enrichment programs, how do you provide that information to families?
 - Probe:* If you have a concern about a student's behavioral issues at school, who do you go to in order to problem-solve?
 - Probe:* In regard to parental involvement, what do you think is working best at your school? What do you think needs improvement? Why or why not?
 - Probe:* In regard to professional development, what skills do you think teachers need to be trained on, so they can be as effective as possible, to work with students who come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds? Why?
- 4. Is there anything else you would like to add?**

Thank you for participating in this study!

Appendix C

University of Minnesota Consent Form

Teacher and Parent Perspectives on Somali Parental Involvement in Education

You are invited to participate in a research study of Somali family involvement in schools that educate Somali children. You are selected to participate in this study because you are either a parent or a teacher responsible for supporting students so that they can succeed in school. This study examines the views of teachers and parents about effective family involvement in the education of students in middle grades in Minnesota. My interview will take about 45 minutes.

There are no known risks to you because of your participation in this study. Your participation benefits families and teachers who are interested in understanding better how schools and Somali families may work together to collaborate and support middle-school-age students across school-home contexts.

Your participation in this interview opportunity is voluntary. Our interview will be kept confidential. There will be no information available to others that will specifically identify you as a participant in this study. All research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to these records which will be used only for educational purposes.

Your decision about whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your current or future relations with me or with your school or with the University of Minnesota. If you decide to participate, you can choose not to answer any question or to withdraw from participation in this study at any time during this interview.

The researcher who is conducting this study is Leila Farah. Please know that you may ask any questions you may have now. If you have any questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact me at 5670 7th Street N.E., Fridley, MN 55432 or by phone at 763-572-2019 or via e-mail at fara0026@umn.edu. You can also contact my advisor, Dr. Deanne Magnusson, who can be reached at 612-626-9647 or at magnu002@umn.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Research Subjects' Advocate Line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware St. Southeast, Minneapolis, MN 55455-0392, (612) 626-5654.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Jaamacadda Minnesota (Oggolaanshaha Ka Qayb Galka Cilmi-Baadhis)

Aragtida ay u leehyeen maclinku iyo waalidku howl-galka uu kuu leeyahey goyska Somaaliyeed wax-barashada

Waxa lagugu marti-qaadey ka soo qayb-galka kulan wareysi Cilmi-Baadhis ah oo ku saabsan goyska Somaliyeed howl-galka uu ku leeyahey dugsiyada ubadkooda wax-bara. Sababta laguugu doortey inaad ka qayb-qasho werysaygan waxa weeye ahaanta aad tahey waalid ammase macallin xil ka saaranyahay guulaysashada ardeydu ay tahay inay ku guulaystaan wax-barashadooda marka ay dhiganayaan dugsiyada dhexe. Cilmi-baadhkanu waxa uu darsayaa sida ay u arkaan macallimiintu iyo waalidiintu waxa ay tahey fikradda lagu magacaabo “Howl-gal Waalid oo Meel-mar ah” amase tayo leh oo ay kaga qayb-qaataan wax-barashada ardeyda dugsiyada dexe ee Minnesota. Kulankeenu waxa uu qaadanayaa waqti lagu qiyaasey 45 daqiiqadood. Cilmi-Baadhkani waxyeello la ogyahey oo kaasoo gaadhaysaa ma ay jirto. Kasoo qayb-qaadashadaaduna waxa ay kaalmeynaysaa waalidiinta iyo macallimiinta oo jecel inay gartaan oo fahmaan sida ay dugsiyado iyo qoysaska Somaliyeed u wada shaqayn karaan si ay u taageeraan aflaxaadda waxbarashada ardeyda Somaaliyeed ee heerka dugsiyada dhexe. Fursaddan ka soo qayb-galka wareysigan ma aha mid lagugu khasbayo adoon ka aheyn raalli. Waxaanad ogaataa in uu kulankani yahey mid innoo gaar ah labadeena oo aan la shaac-bixin doonin. Wixii qoraal ah ee kasoo baxaana ay yihiin wax uun loogu tala galey in loo isticmaalo si ay uga fiidaysoo waxabarshada aradayda oo kaliya.

Tala-goosigaaga inaad ka qayb-gasho amma inaanad ka qayb-gelin waa mid aan saameyn doonin cilaaqadda joogtada ah ammase mustaqbalka ee u dhexeysa adiga iyo aniga, ammase adiga iyo dugsiyada ama adiga iyo jaamacadda Minnesota. Haddii aad goosatay inaad ka qayb-gasho Cilmi-Baadhkan, waxa aad dow u leedahey inaanad ka jawaabin su’aalaha aanad rabin inaad ka jawaabto; waxa kale oo aad dow u leedahey, kulankan dhexdiisa goorta aad doonto, inaad ka noqon karto ka qayb-qaadashada Cilmi-Baadhkan. Qofka Cilmi-Baadhka sameynaya daraasdan waa anigoo ah Layla Faarax (Leila Farah), waxa aan kuu sheegayaa in aad i weyddiin karto haddii ay jiraan su’aal ah aad rabto in lagaaga jawaabo hadda. Haddi kale oo aad mar dambe rabto in lagaaga jawaabo su’aalahaaga, **waxa aan kugu dhiirrin gelinayaa** inaad igala soo xidhiidhi cinwaankan, 5670 7th Street, N.E., Fridley amaba telifoonkan (763-572-2019) ama emailkan fara0026@umn.edu . Waxa kale oo aad la xidhiidhi kartaa La-Taliyaheyga Jaamacada Minnesota, Dr. Deanne Magnusson, oo aad kala xidhiidhi karto (612) 626-9647 ammase emailkan magnu002@umn.edu. Haddii aad ka walaacsan tahay ammase aad xiisaynayso faahfaahin cilmi-baadhkanay uu ku siiyo qof aan ahayn Cilmi-Baadhaha wada dirasadan, **waxa aan kugu goobaabinayaa** in aad la xidhiidho Research Subjects’ Advocate Line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware St, Southeast, Minneapolis, MN 55455; Tel.:612-626-5654.

Saxiix: _____

Taariikh: _____

Appendix D

EVENT OBSERVATION CHECK LIST

Date: _____ Time: _____
Event Title: _____ School/Location: _____
Grade levels represented (circle as appropriate): Grade 5; Grade 6; Grade 7, Grade 8

Question: What mechanisms for interaction between parents and school staff currently exist at this school as demonstrated by its parental involvement policy, program, procedures and activities?

Type of meeting (check as applicable)

- Open house /Back-to-School Night _____
- Parent Night _____
- Parent Teacher Association Meeting _____
- Child-pride event (play, sports event, or science fair, recognition/award, etc.) _____
- Community celebration event _____
- Other (please specify) _____

Student Learning Support

- Teachers help parents understand how to organize student time
 - o for completing school assignments at home _____
 - o for handing homework on time _____
 - o for minimizing student absences or tardiness _____
 - o for extra reading outside the school time _____
 - o for ways to bring up student academic performance to grade level _____
- Teachers help parents know how to help students by
 - o arranging for taking struggling students to get tutoring help _____
 - o teaching their children to adapt to the teaching style of many teachers _____
 - o inquiring about after school enrichment or tutorial support resources _____
 - o asking for consultation with the school to raise parent concerns about academic/ behavioral issues the child is complaining about _____
 - o Other (please specify) _____

Volunteering

- Parents help the school
 - o fundraise for specific issue events or general school events _____
 - o serve on school advisory board _____
 - o serves as a chaperone on school bus or on field trips _____
 - o serves with setting up or cleaning up at school events _____
 - o donates food or supplies for school events _____
 - o Other (please specify) _____

School-wide written displays:

School state report cards: _____ Staffed by: _____
School expectations for the year: _____ Staffed by: _____
School annual report: _____ Staffed by: _____
School assessment, standards information: _____ Staffed by: _____
Informational resources from school community: _____ Staffed by: _____

Appendix E

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS CHECKLIST

Question: What federal and state parental involvement policy at this school guide parental involvement programs, procedures and activities? *(This checklist was intended to provide contextual information by highlighting the policy structure under which parents/teachers interactions operate under at the school participating in this study).*

1. Federal and Minnesota parental involvement policy that govern school district approaches to promote active parental involvement in the education of school age children.
2. School-level implementation of Title I parental involvement policy and capacity building to promote active parental involvement.
3. School parental involvement program, activities and procedures implemented in a school, as it relates to the expectations it creates on parents and teachers to interact through various formats: face-to-face, e-mail, regular mail, robo calls and voice-messaging, etc.
4. School homework policy that is intended to structure student time outside of the classroom.
5. School strategy for helping families to understand state academic standards.
6. School strategy for outreach to let parents know about after school tutoring and enrichment opportunities.
7. School volunteer strategy, including classroom visit policy and access to school leadership.
8. Samples of publications used in school parental involvement outreach efforts, including flyers sent to families to attend school events or to volunteer in the school building or on buses or to help school staff at student field trips.

Appendix F

MEMO TO PRINCIPALS OF THE PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

January xx, 2014

Dear Principal XXXX,

The intent of this memo is to formally request your school's participation in a research study of Somali family involvement in schools that educate Somali children. Teachers and parents in your school are invited to participate in this study because they play an important role in the collaborative partnership between schools and families that is needed to support students to do well in school. With your permission, I will interview parents and teachers who agree to participate in this study for about 45 minutes.

Questions presented in this interview, when answered, are expected to offer insights into the opportunities and barriers that parents and teachers negotiate, collectively or individually, to assist Somali students to succeed academically and socially. Transcripts of the interviews of those willing to participate will be kept anonymous and confidential. Moreover, access to the research records is limited to the researcher and will be used only for educational purposes. That way, no disclosure of the identity of interviewees will be made.

I will be following up with you by phone by XXX 2014 to begin planning for the interviews. If you have any questions, please contact me at 763-572-2019 or e-mail me at fara0026@umn.edu.

Thank you very much in advance for your help in your school's participation in this study.

Sincerely,

Leila Farah
Doctoral Candidate
Organizational Leadership, Policy & Development
College of Education & Human Development
University of Minnesota

Appendix G

TEACHER PERMISSION LETTER

February XX, 2014

Dear XXXX,

I am currently pursuing my doctoral degree, at the Organizational Leadership, Policy & Development Department of the College of Education at the University of Minnesota, under the committee leadership of Dr. Deanne Magnusson. The intent of this memo is to formally request your participation in a research study of Somali family involvement in schools that educate Somali children. Middle school teachers, like yourself, are invited to participate in this study because they play a very important role in promoting collaborative partnership between schools and families which is necessary to build networks of support around students to do well at school at a delicate juncture of their physical, social, and cognitive development. Your participation benefits families and teachers who are interested in understanding better how schools and Somali families may work together to collaborate and support middle-school-age students across school-home contexts.

With your voluntary permission, I will interview you either at your school facility or any other venue that is convenient for you during the month of XXX for about 30-45 minutes. Questions presented in this interview, when answered, are expected to offer insights into the opportunities and barriers that parents and teachers negotiate, collectively or individually, to assist Somali students to succeed academically and socially. Transcript of the interview will be kept anonymous and confidential. Moreover, access to the research records is limited to the researcher and will be used only for educational purposes. There will be no information available to others that will specifically identify you as a participant in the study. There are no known risks to you associated with participation in this study. Your decision about whether or not to answer questions or to withdraw from participation in this study at any time will not affect your current or future relations with me or with your school or with the University of Minnesota.

I will be following up with you by e-mail by XXX to confirm which day of the week and time that works best for you. If you have any questions, please contact me at 763-572-2019 or e-mail me at fara0026@umn.edu .

I am looking forward to your willingness and consent to participate in this study.

Sincerely,

Leila Farah
Organization Leadership, Policy & Development
College of Education & Human Development
University of Minnesota

Appendix H

Final Coding Schema-- Themes, Categories and Sub-categories

Theme	Categories	Sub-categories
Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Communicating (effective communication) ○ Expectations (formal) ○ Roles (schools/families) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Academic/behavior expectations - Goals (curricular/instructional/ classroom management/rewards/punishment/interventions) - It is your job - Leadership (roles in planning/decision-making) - Manage change/transitions to higher grades - Morale (students/teachers/parents) -Parental involvement programming (volunteers, community building) - School events : conferences, parent nights, etc. - School Newsletter/School Conduct Handbook - School climate
Attitude towards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Authority ○ Culture ○ Credibility/Trust ○ Knowledge (formal versus practical) ○ Responsibility (students, parents, teachers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Beliefs about (child development/student learning) - Choices and consequences - Culture on: Roles/homework/textbook use/ affirmation - Effort/persistence/independence - Manners (Akhlāaq/upbringing) - Education as a priority (value education) - Reputation (school, teacher, parent, community) - Respect -Skills/competence -Values
Relationship-building Interactions and Experiences (Possibilities and/or Limitations)	<p>Opportunities for parental involvement in education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Agreement on what is best for the student ○ Know what is going on ○ Show, do not just tell <p>Barriers to parental involvement in education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cultural divide ○ Linguistic divide ○ Socio-economic divide ○ Other constraints <p>Lessons learned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>What works?</i> ○ <i>What needs improvement?</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agreement about what is best for the student - Connection with/visit with/sit down with/link - Collaboration/cooperation/same page/ teamwork - Cheer on the child/encourage the child - Convince the child versus deny the child - Endorsement (satisfaction/dissatisfaction) - Experience (professional/personal) - Shared goals - Show them -- Know who I am (as an individual)/Do I know you? - Know what is going on (on being informed) - Reinforce me/back me up (Believe me!) - Shamed versus Embarrassed - Respect versus appreciation - Room for improvement - Timely communication
Family Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Parent Attention to the child (A) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Active conversations - Problem-solving approach ○ Family Relationships (FR) ○ Family Expectations for Behavior (FE) ○ Family Routines, Resources, and Time Allocation to support children as students (R) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (A) Talk to the child (school day talk/future talk/sit down with children to support them or to encourage them academically/emotionally or have fun as a family) - (A) Invest time in education (parents) - (A)Anticipate/Address concerns(child/ teachers/school) - (A) Praise/reward good grades or good behavior - (A) Working with/know child's temperament - (A) Teach the child boundaries - (A) Customizing educational environment to child - (A) Protecting child against negative peer effect - (FR) Agreement between parents on child rearing - (FR) Child helping with chores - (FR) Children helping parents/younger siblings - (FR) Child relations with extended family - (FE) Child/parent asking for help when needed - (FE) Child following directions - (FE) Child knowing/ practicing taking turns for attention - (FE) Child reading for pleasure (at home/school/library) - (FE) Child getting into the habit of timely work - (FE)Staying on task until completed - (R)Time, space, resources for schoolwork