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Parent Involvement Training: An Educational Participatory Action
Research Study

Tanisha D. Carter

PARENT INVOLVEMENT TRAINING: AN EDUCATIONAL PARTICIPATORY
ACTION RESEARCH STUDY

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
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in the Adrian Dominican School of Education of

Barry University

by

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* * * * *

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ABSTRACT

PARENT INVOLVEMENT TRAINING: AN EDUCATIONAL PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH STUDY

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Barry University, 2009

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Purpose

Parental involvement in children's education as a means to increase children's academic achievement has received national attention. Parents from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, however, are generally not as involved as middle income parents. The purpose of the research is to present a series of workshops using the Participatory Action Research method whereby the investigator and a group of low-income parents worked together to gain a better understanding of the areas that the participant parents may not be familiar (i.e., FCAT reporting procedures, homework, mandatory reading, and monitoring academic progress).

Method

Parents of students enrolled in the College Reach Out Program (CROP) at a community college in Central Florida participated in this study. Parent Involvement Training workshops were conducted to help improve parental home and school

participation, knowledge of important academic and behavioral issues, parents' attitudes toward parenting and toward their children, and overall family functioning. Parents completed a researcher developed demographic questionnaire, the Parent-Child Relationship Inventory (PCRI; Gerard, 1994), and the McMaster Family Assessment Device (FAD; Epstein et al., 1983). The CROP students also completed the FAD. The Parent-Child Relationship Inventory was intended to assess parents' attitudes toward parenting and their children. The McMaster Family Assessment Device (FAD) was used to assess the dimensions of the McMaster model according to family members' perception. Lastly, individual parent interviews were conducted following the post-session to collect data on parental involvement at home and school and parents' perception of the students' academic achievement and educational goals

Major Findings

The first hypothesis was tested using a paired samples *t*-test analysis. For the seven subscales on the Parent-Child Relationship Inventory, only one subscale had a statistically significant difference (Roles $t(17)=2.78, p =.006$). Hypothesis 1 was not accepted. The second hypothesis was also tested using a paired samples *t*-test analysis. The mean pretest score ($M = 1.891, S = 0.305$) on the Family Assessment Device was slightly higher than the mean posttest score ($M = 1.846, S = .218$) with a mean difference of 0.045. There was no significant statistical difference between the pre and post test of the Family Assessment Device. Hypothesis 2 was not accepted.

Although the quantitative assessments did not yield significant statistical data the qualitative data collected indicated that parents in this study were already highly involved in their children's educational activities.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my grandmother Jacquilyne N. Holley, whose Encouragement, Support, and Love I greatly treasure. I know that I am because of you. I pray that I have made you proud.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my many friends, and church family who have prayed for, and supported me throughout the process. I will be forever grateful.

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Parental involvement is increasingly becoming an integral part of student academic success in schools throughout the country. Students' whose parents are involved and are supportive of their children's school activities outperform students of similar aptitude and family background as compared to those whose parents are not involved (National Association of State Boards of Education, 1995). Parental involvement has been shown to have a positive effect on students' academic achievement (Finn, 1998; Griffith, 1996; Ma, 1999; Shumow & Miller, 2001). Yet, research has shown that parental involvement varies based on family income, ethnicity, and parental education which impacts variations in students' achievement (Okpala, Okpala & Smith, 2001). What the research has failed to demonstrate is what type of parental involvement is most effective in helping to improve academic outcomes (Desimone, 1999; Griffith, 1996; Lawson, 2003; Nye, Turner, & Schwartz, 2006). In fact, there is a lack of consensus as to what constitutes parental involvement. This lack of consensus within the parent involvement literature makes it unclear as to which types of parent involvement (i.e., home involvement or school involvement) are most associated with student's academic outcomes which can lead to inaccurate conclusions being drawn about the effectiveness of parent involvement.

Studies exploring the association between parent involvement and student outcomes differ in their findings of the strength of the association (Ney et al., 2006). This

is most likely a result of the variability due to the differences in the conceptualization of parent involvement. Because home and school involvement have been shown to be associated with student's academic outcomes (Desimone, 1999; Sheldon & Epstein, 2005; Sy & Schulenberg, 2005), it is essential to utilize a broader definition of parental involvement that includes home and school based activities. For this study, parental involvement will be defined by the number of times a parent participates in both home and school activities (i.e., school meetings, parent conferences, Parent Teacher Association (PTA), sporting events, and reading at home) to help their children succeed academically. Home and school involvement encompasses many ambiguous activities. Mavis and Epstein (1998) identified six levels of involvement opportunities for parents including: (1) efforts to assist parents with child rearing skills; (2) communicating with families; (3) providing school volunteer opportunities; (4) involving parents in home-based learning; (5) involving parents in school decision making; and (6) involving parents in school-community collaborations. The National Parent Teacher Association (2008) has adopted this typology as national standards for parental involvement. This model divides parental involvement into activities parents can do at school and at home to support learning. Efforts to increase parent involvement generally fall into one or more of these areas.

Parents who have an in depth understanding of the various types of home and school involvement and are able to apply them, have a greater advantage over parents who have limited or no understanding of the importance of being involved (Heiss, 1996). The possibilities are limitless for parents who understand the importance of education and the benefits it provides. According to the National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education, the benefits of family-school partnerships are: (1) students do better in school

and in life and are more likely to earn higher grades and test scores, graduate from high school and go on to higher education; (2) parents become more empowered and develop confidence by helping their child at home; many also go on to become more active; and (3) teacher morale improves. As a result of their work with families teachers expect more from and feel a stronger connection to and support from the community (NCPIE, 2001). The pride and esteem that is present as a result of the parent being involved is an additional benefit to the child. Any improvement that a child makes as a result of parent and family involvement (i.e., higher grades, better attendance and homework completion, more positive attitude, higher graduation rate, and greater enrollment in college) should be encouraged by all who have a vested interest in the child's education.

The need to effectively understand parental involvement is of considerable importance in the practice of good parenting especially for parents from low-socioeconomic backgrounds who may not be familiar with the education system or those who place low value on education. Understanding the barriers that these families face will influence teachers, administrators, and governance agencies ability to help all students have greater academic success; parents and family members can be invaluable in helping to provide the necessary support that students need to succeed and reach their educational goals. To be certain that children are getting the proper support they deserve parents may need additional support and training (James & Etheridge, 1983).

According to the literature (Jackson, & Brown, 1986; Kroth, & Kroth, 1976; Mattingly, Prislín, McKenzie, Rodriguez, & Kayzar, 2002), successful parent-training programs include specific components. First, successful training begins with high parent attendance (Mattingly, et al., 2002). Recruitment strategies that include personal contact

and use of former program participants are most effective in increasing attendance (Balli, Demo, & Wedman, 1998). Second, the needs of parents should be considered in developing training programs (Mattingly, et al., 2002). Thomas Edison Elementary in Port Chester, New York made great use of this concept when they worked with school, and community members to create the La Segunda Taza de Café (A second cup of coffee, Santiago, Ferrara, & Blank, 2008). This group was formed to help parents understand state standards for testing and assessment; discover strategies to help their children academically, and to help parents develop their leadership skills. Third, parents do not need to replicate school at home but instead, enrich a child's life through experiences, exploration, and exposure to high quality media and books, and academic support tools (Boulay & Fairchild, 2003). This involves schools going beyond the traditional models of operations and making meaningful connections that will have long term impacts. At Hillsmere Elementary School in Annapolis, Maryland the school has taken a different approach by going beyond the school house walls and into the community to reach parents. The school established partnerships and mentoring programs with corporate organizations, and the teachers who are mostly white and middle class formed study groups to gain a better understanding of the specific needs of students living in poverty (Wooleyhand, Swietlik, Winter, Mitchell, 2008). Understanding the fundamental principles of successful parent involvement programs will assist in the design of parental involvement training programs for future studies.

Background

A perpetual part of the conventional wisdom is the belief that non-mainstream family structures (i.e., female led households or mother-only households) are at the root

of many contemporary American problems, particularly as they are manifested in minority communities. It seems every urban disturbance and most examples of individual failure are attributed to family disintegration (Heiss, 1996). The changing family structure has resulted in fifteen million American children growing up today without fathers (United States Census, 2004). The absence of the fathers in the household is at the root of the epidemics of crime and drug use and is deeply implicated in the decline of educational attainment. Often times minority females head many of these households and are often blamed for the actions of their children. Due to socioeconomic issues single-mothers are not able to provide a home environment that prepares their children for future success, including success in school and in the community (Kunjufu, 2006).

Heiss (1996) contends that it is difficult for parents to establish a parent-teacher relationship when some educators believe that minority families are dysfunctional and that the children who are products of these families are also dysfunctional, intrinsically and inherently deficient in intellectual skills and cannot learn. This belief results in a self-fulfilling prophecy that negatively impacts the student's academic success (Haynes, 1989). If educators are serious about effecting positive change and growth among minority students, they must believe that minority students, regardless of their socioeconomic backgrounds, have the potential to succeed at the level of other students. Minority students coming from impoverished backgrounds are struggling daily with issues that impact their access to a quality education. Many of the issues that families face have been handed down from generation to generation. The continued negative impact of poverty handed down through generations should be an area of great concern for school officials. There are distinct elements that contribute to low-parental

involvement. Rothstein (2008) identified poverty, parent socioeconomic status, and parent education level as barriers to quality education.

Poverty

Poverty is defined as the extent to which a person does without resources; yet, it can be further broken down into two categories: situational poverty and generational poverty. Situational poverty is characterized as being shorter in duration and is usually caused by circumstance (i.e., death, illness, etc.), whereas generational poverty is defined as two or more generations living in poverty (Payne, 1996). Generational poverty can affect a student's access to quality education. Parents from poverty who are unable to grasp the importance of being actively involved in their child's education will have to contend with higher retention rates, lower grades and test scores, lower esteem, increased behavioral problems and higher dropout rates, all of which have the potential to impact the family and community in which the child is raised (Trotman, 2001).

Parent Socioeconomic Status

Research on parental involvement and socioeconomic status has brought new attention to the issues that impede students' academic success. The benefits of parental involvement are well documented (Jeynes, 2005) which gives credence to the belief that the high levels of parental participation will ultimately help the child. Still many parents lack the time or the energy necessary to devote to helping their child. Because of socioeconomic constraints, parents may not be able to participate at the level they would like. This is of particular concern for single parents and poor families who, in an effort to survive, are more likely to be faced with under employment, long work hours and multiple jobs. Jeynes found that single parents who were poor worked significantly more

hours each week than two parent families. The extra long hours, and the lack of a spouse in the home reduces the level of parental participation in the child's education. This lack of involvement may be perceived as a lack of interest by the school when in fact low socioeconomic parents have the same high expectations for their children as other families (Trotman, 2001). These parents want their children to perform well regardless of the mitigating circumstances. However, there are some parents who may not value education and have no respect for the education process. Families from poverty, particularly generational poverty, do not have high regards for education. Research by Payne (1998) indicated that families from generational poverty may value education abstractly, but not in reality. For example, they may see others who have graduated from college; but they do not believe that they can attend college, let alone graduate. Students coming from generationally impoverished backgrounds are not aware that education is crucial for climbing the success ladder and becoming financially stable. Rather, their families are focused on the present and having their immediate needs met instead of focusing on future or long term goals.

Parents Education Level

Extensive research has also shown that the education level of the primary care taker can greatly impact the level of academic and parental involvement (Stevenson & Baker, 1987). Students who are being raised by a single mother are more so impacted. Mothers are usually the primary care taker and are involved in the day to day school activities. Stevenson and Baker reported that more educated mothers knew more about their child's school performance and had more contact with teachers, and they were more likely to take action in managing their child's academic progress. For parents to

effectively assist their child in his or her efforts to meet the demands of school, parents must have knowledge about their child's school and access to appropriate help and resources.

At Ralph Waldo Emerson Elementary School in Rosemead, California, administrators believe the keys to parent involvement are appropriate recognition and constant communication (Davis, 1989). Their program uses all available resources to keep parents involved and connected with what is taking place in the school. Schools that do not readily use all of their resources to actively engage parents can negatively impact their students. The school, principals, teachers and parents have to assume responsibility instead of delegating blame, and identify serious problems and develop solutions aimed at fixing the problems (Soloman-Nichols, 2001).

Public, private and charter schools that have taken on the responsibility of parenting students (Trotman, 2001) must now shift the focus back to parents. The responsibility of parenting has to be with the parent while the schools support parents by offering workshops and parenting classes to effect positive change. Having a supportive adult can help students learn new skills, even if the adult has no training. When adults are provided training, the time they spend working with their children yields more positive results (Bracy, 2001). Further research indicates that when low income parents are taught how to teach their children to read, their children test significantly better (Thurston & Dasta, 1990). Because many of these low income students may be classified as having a learning disability this form of parental involvement is extremely helpful (Vinograd, Bausell, Proctor, & Chandler, 1986). Heymann (2000) further suggested that parents of children who suffer from learning disabilities who are taught ways to assist their children

have shown better performance on standardized reading test than comparable children. This specialized training is invaluable to the schools and students. Schools that provide training to enhance the effectiveness of parent involvement maximize the efforts put forth by families (Cotton, & Wikelund, 1989). Training parents takes many forms. Cotton & Wikelund-Reed (2001) suggests providing written directions with send home instructions, providing workshops, and extensive demonstration activities for parents.

Parents need to feel empowered; schools and teachers can aid in this parental empowerment by asking parents for assistance and suggestions as a means to better prepare their child and ensure academic success (Trotman, 2001). Schools wanting to make the most of their efforts are encouraged to use all available resources. The use of phone calls, letters and electronic mail may not be enough. Cotton & Wikelund-Reed (2001) provided these guidelines to help schools have the most effective parental involvement: (1) communicate to parents that their involvement and support makes a great deal of difference in their children's school performance, and that they need not be highly educated or have large amounts of free time for their involvement to be beneficial; (2) encourage parent involvement from the time children first enter school; (3) teach parents that activities such as modeling reading behavior and reading to their children increase children's interest in learning; (4) develop a parent involvement program that includes a focus on parent involvement instruction; (5) provide orientation and short-term training; because long lasting training is not necessary nor feasible; (6) make special efforts to engage the involvement of parents of disadvantaged students who stand to benefit the most from parent participation in their learning; and (7) emphasize that parents are partners of the school and that their involvement is needed and valued.

The combination of training parents and orienting them to the various tools necessary for academic improvement, as well as addressing childhood developmental issues has the potential to greatly influence the level of parent participation and students' academic success. To further understand how training parents in areas that will improve parental involvement, it is crucial to have a research base that is grounded in theory and can provide the framework for the study. The current study will explore the use of Participatory Action Research (PAR) and Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory to guide this study on parental involvement.

Participatory Action Research

Action Research was a term first used by Kurt Lewin in the late 1940's. Lewin (1946) is generally considered the father of action research. As a social and experimental psychologist, and one of the founders of the Gestalt School, he focused on social problems, and on participative group process for addressing conflict, crises, and change within organization. Participatory Action Research (PAR) was used to bridge theory and practice and solve problems through planning, action, and investigating the results of action (Gardner, 2004). It was reported (Gardner, 2004) that Lewin rejected the belief that researchers study an objective world separate from the meaning understood by participants. Hence, action research linked action and research and assumed an educational mission as part of the problem-solving process. PAR removes the distance between the objective observer and subjective subject and includes the community or group being studied as an active participant in the research, with an end goal of empowering the group members.

PAR's main purpose is to advance the social conditions of parents and the community at large. PAR is based on three key elements: research, education, and action. PAR is a process whereby the researcher and constituents together identify the problem to be investigated and collaborate throughout the entire data gathering, dissemination and utilization process (Bruyere, 1993; McTaggart, 1991; Whyte, 1991). The collaboration between researcher and constituents has two anticipated outcomes: (a) identifying and solving high-priority problems, and (b) ensuring that solutions are not only useful, but will be used by constituents. PAR recognizes the value of including practitioners, community members, citizens, employees, and volunteers as essential to the generation of useful knowledge regarding major social, political, economic, cultural, and organizational problems (Conde-Frazier, 2006). The knowledge that is generated using the PAR method comes from the people. According to Conde-Frazier (2006) action indicates that the research is intended to contribute directly to change efforts on the part of the participants. The major goal is to focus the knowledge generated on changes that better the quality of life for those who will be impacted the most. This is generally accomplished by following the principles that guide Action Research.

Principles of Action Research

Richard Winter (1989) provided an overview of the six principles that guide Action Research:

Reflective Critique- ensures people reflect on issues and process and make explicit the interpretations, biases, assumptions, and concerns upon which judgments are made.

Dialectical Critique- reality, particularly social reality is consensually validated; it is shared through language. Phenomena are conceptualized in dialogue; there is a dialectical

critique required to understand the set of relationships between the phenomenon and its context, and between the elements constituting the phenomenon.

Collaborative Resource- participants in an action research study are co-researchers. The principle of collaborative resource presupposes that each person's idea are equally significant as potential resources for creating interpretive categories of analysis, negotiated among the participants. It strives to avoid the skewing of credibility stemming from the prior status of an idea-holder.

Risk- the change process potentially threatens all previously established ways of doing things, thus creating fear among the participants. The fear comes from the risk to ego stemming from open discussion of one's interpretations, idea, and judgments.

Plural Structure- the plural structural and inquiry requires a plural text for reporting. This means that there will be many accounts made explicit, with commentaries on their contradictions, and a range of options for action presented.

Theory, Practice, Transformation- in action research theory informs practice, practice refines theory, in a continuous transformation. People's actions are based on implicitly held assumptions, theories, and hypotheses, and with every observed result, theoretical knowledge is enhanced.

These principles and others are often used in the four area of Action Research. The first, Traditional Action Research stemmed from Lewin's (1946) work within organizations and includes the concepts and practices of Field Theory, Group Dynamics, T-Groups, and Clinical Models .This approach tends toward the conservative, maintaining the status quo with regards to organizational power structures. The second type, Contextual Action Research (CAR) also called Action Learning entails

reconstituting the structural relations among individuals in a social environment.

According to Trist (1979) CAR tries to involve all affected parties and stakeholders, as each participant understands the working of the whole; and it stresses that participants act as project designers and co-researchers. The third type, often referred to as Radial Action Research has its roots in Marxian orientations. This method strives for social transformation via advocacy process to strengthen peripheral groups in society (Trist, 1979). The final type, Educational Action Research is based on the foundations of John Dewey the American educational philosopher. Dewey & Dewey (1915) believed that professional educators should become involved in community problem-solving. Individuals engaged in this approach operate mainly out of educational institutions, and focus on development of curricula, professional development, and applying learning in a social context. The role of the researcher is important in making sure the goals of the institution or program are being adequately met.

Role of Researcher

Chisholm and Elden (1993) posit that the researcher's role in Participatory Action Research is to produce mutually agreeable outcomes for all participants, with the process being maintained by them afterwards. To accomplish this, the researcher has to learn to adapt and adopt different roles at various stages of the process. Some of the roles include: (1) planner/ leaders; (2) catalysis; (3) teacher; (4) listener; (5) synthesizer; (6) facilitator; (7) designer; (8) observer; and (9) reporter. All of these are crucial for the participants to be able to carry on after the researcher departs. Although the PAR process is collaborative in nature, it is vital that participants have some level of investments in the study to bring about any meaningful social change at a local level (Cockburn &

Trentham, 2002). Lewin (1946) further argued that people are more likely to test out new practices when they participate actively in developing agreed upon strategies. He went on to say that early sessions between the researcher and participants should focus on: getting to know each other, exploring the PAR method, and encouraging the development of collective decision making. This process involves working to create an environment where openness can be expressed and trust can be expected. Using these strategies makes the practice of PAR run smoothly.

Practice of Participatory Action Research

Research and evaluation based on the PAR method involves parents in the design, implementation, interpretation, and dissemination of data; keeps the locus of the research with families in the community not universities or colleges; studies problems identified by the community; not the researcher; disseminates knowledge and information widely in the community; recognizes there are multiple ways of knowing and acquiring knowledge; and acknowledges that community members are most knowledgeable about their community needs and conditions (Gardner, 2004). In this process the community's (i.e. parents) interests are defined rather than the researcher's. The researcher stands alongside the parents and not outside and an objective observer or external consultant. The researcher's role is that of facilitator and/or catalysts. It allows the parents to analyze their situations and the change what they want. The researcher helps parents to locate resources within the community to analyze issues. In this model (PAR) knowledge acquisition is a collective process that emerges from parents who are attempting to improve their child's quality of life. Yeich & Levine (1992) suggest that the success of PAR inquiry depends on joint ownership, commitment and responsibility.

Focusing on the agenda of participants

Strategies used during the inquiry need to enable the participants to feel supported, valued, and respected throughout the process (Savin-Baden & Wimpenny, 2007). Methods to demonstrate commitments to such values include encouraging full participatory involvement, and the effects of the research process should include: consideration of the participants sense of pride and belief in themselves; recognition of the importance of validating individuals' social identities involving participants in the control of resources, in making decisions, and deciding on actions and activities; affirmation of the participants' feelings of autonomy and competence and, with that, their ability to be accountable for their actions; and generations of loyalty amongst participants, and consideration of the participants environments and places where they feel at ease.

The use of self-reflective cycles

Heron & Reason, 2001; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005 highlighted strategies employed within a PAR process to achieve meaningful social change involve engaging with a group or groups of participants in a series of self-reflective cycles that include: planning a change with community (i.e. parents); acting and observing the process and consequences of change; reflecting on these processes and consequences; and further cycles of planning and reflecting. The measure of success of this method is not about following the steps but whether participants have a sense of how their practice and understanding of their practice have developed.

Developing shared quality criteria to ensure validity

Stringer (1996) states that the established criteria to measure the quality of PAR research using qualitative methods are trustworthiness and authenticity. This is measured by sustained contact (i.e. interventions, tape-recording of sessions, written reflection, reflective write-ups) which allows participants to have more opportunities to develop ownership of the study and share through open discussion. Shared criteria require that Participatory Action Research: (1) pledges a high degree of personal involvement from the primary researcher. As such, the researcher needs to maintain a critical awareness during the inquiry process; (2) produce data that place the participant experience in context and provides thick descriptions of the participants and their roles, contributions, and emergent knowledge and action.

Generation of knowledge and understanding

Knowledge is created and/or understood, interpretivism has an extended epistemology that embraces three forms of knowing (Heron, 1981; Reason, 1994): (1) propositional knowledge (the use of propositions, ideas, and theories); (2) practical knowing (the use of skills and abilities); and (3) experiential knowing or knowing by encounter (sustained face to face contact and the use of tacit and intuitive knowledge). Guba (1990) acknowledges the importance within the inquiry process of democratic dialogue and the use of time and sustained effort to identify and share experiential knowledge. PAR inquiry helps participants gain a sense of ownership in the research, however it comes with many unique opportunities and challenges for its continued use and efficacy.

Opportunities and Challenges

Kloos, et.al. 1997; and Nabors, Ramos, & Weist, 2001, suggest that community members develop knowledge, skills, and confidence to solve their own problems. The anticipated benefits of PAR within underserved communities are relevant and effective interventions designed to enhance the community being served. This presents opportunities for parents within these communities to be proactive in helping their children. Reason, 1994; and Cockburn & Trentham, 2002, identified these areas: the empowerment offered to silent groups; collective support; facilitating change in a practical sense; development of a sense of agency and voice, and becoming critical and reflective of their own practice as opportunities arise through the use of PAR that helps communities have greater outcomes. Although the opportunities have been well documented there are also challenges and limitation to the PAR inquiry process.

Reason, 1994; and Cockburn & Trentham, 2002, identified a number of key issues within the PAR process that can present challenges for the researcher and the participants they are: sharing processes; ensuring all voices are heard; issues of power and control; and shared ownership of findings. These struggles can lead to less definitive and interpretable data regarding program efficacy (Weissberg & Greenberg, 1998). Furthermore, community members and the researcher may have biases that lead to exaggerated claims of the benefits of interventions that they co-constructed. Additionally, variations in program implementation are often not assessed and controls for factors other than the intervention that might account for outcomes are absent and the observed improvements cannot be attributed to the program.

The PAR process involves a shift from a business as usual mind set. Researchers and participants in underserved communities on PAR teams must come to the PAR experience with a willingness to acknowledge their respective histories but not let past histories predetermine the outcome. Empowerment will be gained by all who withstand the inevitable critique from others outside the group and allow the focus on the partnership between researcher and participants to aide students in being the best that they can be with the resources that they have.

Theoretical Framework

This study will also put into practice Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; 1989), which has been used to investigate the effects of parents and schools on student's academic achievement because it explains how parents and schools can independently and interactively affect student outcomes.

Urie Bronfenbrenner was a co-founder of Head Start. His theory looks at child development within the context of the system of relationships that form his or her environment. The theory defines complex layers of environment, each having an effect on a child's development. The theory emphasizes that a child's own biology is the primary environment that fuels his immediate family and community environment, and the societal landscape. Any changes or conflict in any one layer will manifest throughout other layers (Addison, 1992). This is important to the parental involvement literature because it gives meaning to fragmented ideas on what constitutes parent involvement and provides a framework for understanding concepts that will help children improve academically. To accurately understand how the bioecological systems theory is useful in helping the field better understand the influence parents have on children's academic

achievement in schools, Bronfenbrenner's structure of the environment needs to be addressed. Bronfenbrenner's structure consists of the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem.

Microsystem

The microsystem is the layer closest to the child and contains the structures with which the child has direct contact. This encompasses the relationships and interactions a child has with his immediate surroundings (Berk, 2000). Structures in the microsystem include family, school, neighborhood, or child care environments.

Mesosystem

The mesosystem layer provides the connection between the structures of the child's microsystem (i.e., connections between the child's teacher and her parents) (Berk, 2000).

Exosystem

The exosystem defines the larger social system in which the child does not function directly. Examples within the exosystem include the parent's workplace schedules or community based family resources (Berk, 2000). The child may not be directly involved at this level but he does feel the positive or negative force involved with the interaction in regards to his own system.

Macrosystem

The macrosystem is the outermost layer in the child's environment. This layer is comprised of cultural values, customs, and laws (Berk, 2000). For example, if it is the belief of the culture that parents should be solely responsible for raising their children, that culture is less likely to provide resources to help parents.

Chronosystem

The chronosystem includes the dimension of time as it relates to the child's environments. Elements within this system can be either external (i.e., timing of parent's death) or internal (i.e., physiological changes that occur with the aging of a child). As children grow older they may react differently to environmental changes and may be more able to determine how that change will influence them.

Statement of Problem

The research on parental involvement and students' academic experience has been shown to have a positive effect on academic outcomes (Finn, 1998; Griffith, 1996; Ma, 1999; Shumow & Miller, 2001). The research has supported the idea that parent involvement varies based on income, ethnicity, and parental education; all areas that effect the overall development of the child. Bronfenbrenner's theory suggests that these areas can be addressed by looking at the child's immediate environment, and developing strategies that will generate solutions which impact the larger environment.

Bronfenbrenner (1990) believed the first step in addressing the issues that prevent adequate parental involvement starts with the deficit model. The deficit model is based on the premise that the powerful blame the innocent or poor for their current situation (Kunjufu, 2006). Parents are expected to work a schedule that is based on an outdated industrial model which does not address the current technological advances that would make parental involvement easier for low-income families. Parents from poverty must declare themselves deficient in some way in order to qualify for help in solving their problems. The second area of concern is building relationships. The ecological theory states that children who do not have meaningful relations with the parent or another

significant adult, will look for affirmations in inappropriate places (i.e., gangs, drugs). The final area for addressing the barriers to parental involvement is putting forth practices (i.e., parent trainings) that will help the child academically, and in life (Addison, 1992). Using the key principles of PAR (i.e., reflective critique, dialectical critique, collaborative resources, etc.) while training parents in the areas of education/academics, social/emotional, and biological/physiological components may have a positive outcome on the parent, and student perceptions of what constitutes meaningful parental involvement.

Purpose of the Study

This research explored the relationship between Parent Involvement Training (PIT) and increased home and school involvement, attitude toward parenting, and the overall family functioning of economically disadvantaged families. Using Participatory Action Research (PAR) and Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory as a framework for the study, the parents' income levels, and home and school involvement activities were explored to determine how training in the areas of education/academics, social/emotional, biological/physiological, and family functioning can improve parent perception of home and school involvement. This study explored the impact of Parent Involvement Training using Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory along with the Participatory Action Research (PAR) method. PAR is a method of conducting research that involves the researcher and the constituents working together to identify the problem to be investigated and collaborate throughout the entire data gathering, dissemination, and utilization process (Bruyere, 1993; McTaggart, 1991; & White, 1991). Simply stated, this method of research is about a group of people who are affected by some problem or issue

and decide to get together to work out how they want to tackle the problem, and then do something about it (Kidd & Kral, 2005). Action research is guided by six key principles: (1) reflective critique, (2) dialectical critique, (3) collaborative resource, (4) risk, (5) plural structure, and (6) theory, practice, and transformation. The key principles are guidelines to be used in real situations devoted to solving real problems with an overarching theme of empowerment (Savin-Baden & Whimpenny, 2007).

Like the current study many of the early forms of action research combined qualitative and quantitative approaches focused on clear goals and steps (Turnbull, Friesen, & Ramirez, 1995). The implementation of the PIT workshops were a direct result of CROP parents coming together to share experiences through a dynamic process of action, reflection, and collective investigation. The goals of the study were to: (a) provide economically disadvantaged families with strategies to improve home and school involvement; (b) introduce concepts to help parents alter their attitude toward parenting; (c) put into practice innovative and clinically sound techniques designed to improve family functioning.

Quantitative Research Questions

This study was based on the following research questions:

1. What effect will Parent Involvement Training (PIT) have on parents' attitude toward parenting?
2. What effect will Parent Involvement Training (PIT) have on overall family functioning for CROP families?

Hypothesis

It is hypothesized that:

1. ^{H1} Parents who are given training consisting of practical tips on enriching their relationships with their children will be more likely to improve their attitude toward parenting as measured by the Parent-Child Relationship Inventory.
2. ^{H2} Parent training programs that provide comprehensive, and clinically sound techniques (i.e., Communication, Roles, and Behavior Control, etc.) will help to increase overall family functioning for CROP families, as measured by the McMaster Family Assessment Device.

Qualitative Phase: Individual Parent Interviews

The qualitative phase of the study, individual parent interviews were utilized to give meaning to the experience of participating in the Parent Involvement Training workshops. According to Creswell (1998) the analysis of interviews via open-ended questions highlighting participant perceptions about the meaning of an experience or event is commonly referred to as a phenomenological tradition. The qualitative phase of the study used a purposive sample. The parents in this study were available and expecting to participate. The individual parent interviews were guided by these questions:

1. Tell me about your participation at your child's school prior to attending the PIT workshops.
2. Tell me what you enjoy most about the opportunity to meet with personnel from your child's school.

3. What has the experience of participating in the Parent Involvement Training workshops meant for you?
4. What do you believe it has meant to your child?

Definition of Terms

Economically Disadvantaged- Economically disadvantaged individuals are those socially disadvantaged individuals whose ability to compete in society has been impaired due to diminished financial and credit opportunities as compared to others in the dominant group who are not socially disadvantaged. Individuals in this category typically include Black Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian-Pacific Americans and Subcontinent Asian Americans, and Native Americans including Native Hawaiians, Eskimos, Aleuts, and American Indians (Illinois Center for Specialized Professional Support, 2002).

Family- For the purposes of this study, family is defined as a group of persons closely related by blood, as parents, children, uncles, aunts, grandparents, and cousins; all the members of a household under one roof (APA, 2009).

Minority- For the purposes of this study, minority is defined as a culturally, ethnically, or racially distinct group that coexists with but is subordinate to a more dominant group. As the term is used within the social sciences, this subordinancy is the chief defining characteristics of a minority group (APA, 2009).

Participatory Action Research (PAR) - is a method of conducting research that involves the researcher and the constituents working together to identify the problem to be investigated and collaborate throughout the entire data gathering, dissemination, and utilization process (Bruyere, 1993; McTaggart, 1991; & White, 1991)

Parental Involvement -Comes in a number of forms. It can occur from parents' developing and using skills to support effective learning; engaging in home-to-school communication about student progress; volunteering at school; assisting with homework; becoming involved in school governance issues and decisions; and coordinating and integrating community services that will enhance the learning experience (Bracey, 2001).

Poverty – The extent to which an individual is without these resources Poverty or wealth only exists in relationship to known quantities or expectations. Poverty occurs in all races and in all countries (Payne, 1996).

Summary

In summary, parents were asked to complete three quantitative inventories. First, parents completed a researcher developed demographic survey. The second inventory administered was the Parent-Child Relationship Inventory (PCRI), and the final inventory used was the Family Assessment Device (FAD). Additionally, individual interviews were conducted to collect data on parental involvement at home and school and parents' perception of their home and school involvement. Data collected was utilized to determine the impact that Participatory Action Research and Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory has had on parent home and school involvement, parenting attitude, and family functioning of parents participating in the College Reach-Out Program. The information gathered may provide schools, teachers, community groups, and program coordinators with useful information for creating and maintaining more effective and comprehensive interventions for improving home and school involvement, parenting attitude, and family functioning.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Review of Related Literature Overview

Research has indicated that when parents are involved in their children's school (i.e., helping with homework and attending school events), children score higher on achievement tests, get better grades in school, have more positive attitudes about school, and have better behavioral outcomes (Comer & Haynes, 1991; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Kohl, Lengua, & McMahon., 2000; Ritblatt, Beatty, Cronan, & Ochoa, 2002; Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman, & Hemphill, 1991; Zellman & Waterman, 1998). Parent involvement in school and home is beneficial for parents, children, and teachers because of the interactions that occur between them. Parents can serve as a support system by reinforcing the learning that occurs in the classroom and emphasizing the importance of school. This literature review will begin by examining the theories used within the parent involvement field, including the bioecological and family systems theory which provide the framework for the study. Next, a review of the literature related to the bioecological theories and its influence on parental involvement, increasing parental involvement, and various types of parental involvement, and barriers that prevent parental involvement. Then family systems will be explored using the McMaster Model as it relates to family functioning. Lastly, parent education training programs will be explored to determine which programs are best suited for working with economically disadvantaged populations.

The research on parent involvement is limited (Desimone, 1999; Griffith, 1996; Lawson, 2003; Nye et al., 2006); however several theories and models have been used to

provide a framework for what constitutes appropriate and meaningful involvement. The model that is most often used was developed by Mavis and Epstein (1998), yet other theories such as the Capital theory (Coleman, 1988), Resource theory (Haveman & Wolfe, 1995), and the Bioecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 1989) have also been highlighted in the literature.

Mavis and Epstein's model outlines six types of involvement within a school-family partnership that all parents can use regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status (Brandt, 1989; Epstein, 1995). The first type of involvement includes the responsibilities of families to ensure children's health and safety, and the need to build positive home conditions that support school learning and behavior appropriate for each grade level (i.e., supervision, discipline, and child rearing skills). The second type refers to the communication from school to home that includes discussions of the student's progress and school events and programs. Schools can vary the form of communication by using memos, emails, report cards, and parent conferences. The third type of involvement makes mention of the use of volunteers who assist teachers, administrators and children in classrooms or other areas of the school (i.e., music, art, and reading groups). It also includes parents who come to school to support student performances, sporting events, or to attend workshops or other programs for their education and training. The fourth type of parent involvement refers to learning activities that take place at home. These activities can be initiated by the parent or child, and includes assisting with homework, or learning new activities that are in line with children's class work. The fifth type is participation in school governance issues. This involves parents serving on advisory councils, committees, and in the PTA (Parent Teacher Association), PTO

(Parent Teacher Organization), or groups at the school, district, or state level. The sixth and final type of parent involvement refers to the collaboration with the community. This involves reaching out to businesses, and other organizations in the community who are interested in creating partnerships to help students achieve academically (i.e. mentoring, monetary donations).

The Social Capital Theory developed by James Coleman (1988) infers that parental assets (i.e., education, income) become capital when they are invested because they will yield positive returns on social outcomes (i.e., academic success for their children). According to Coleman families can provide or possess three types of capital: financial, human, and social. Financial capital is the income or wealth that a family has accumulated. In families with low levels of financial capital or income, parents still have high educational aspirations for their children and support their educational pursuits. In a case study conducted at an Indochinese refugee camp it was discovered that even among financially poor families, high levels of social capital could be attained, as determined by the high values parents placed on education, and academic expectations (Caplan, Choy, & Whitmore, 1992). Human capital is equivalent to parental education, while social capital is more closely tied to social networks and the relationships between parents and children. When parents invest their resources in their children, children are more prepared to have resources available to them to do well academically and socially in school. Simply stated, the social capital theory predicts that parents with more human capital and financial capital will invest more time and resources (parent involvement) in their children. Parents who are able to provide more resources generally produce children who do better academically and in life (Payne, 1996).

Another theory being used to address parent involvement is the Resource Theory (Haveman & Wolfe, 1995). The Resource Theory posits that parents invest their resources (i.e., income and education) in their children in order to generate positive outcomes (i.e., better grades, or higher graduation rates) that have the potential to impact the entire family. Consequently, the amount and type of resources that are given to the child and the amount of time that is given will affect a child's academic achievement. Although, the Parent Involvement Model, and the Capital and Resource theories are useful in understanding how parent's income and education impact children's success in school through their involvement, they do not independently address the effects over time of parent involvement activities on children's academic outcomes. Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory (1979; 1989) encompasses all the aforementioned models and theories used within the parent involvement literature as it focuses on the biological and environmental factors that influence children's academic outcomes.

The premise of the bioecological theory states that an individual's development is affected by his biological characteristics (i.e., gender, and age) and environment (i.e., family, school, and community; Addison, 1992). According to Bronfenbrenner (1989), an individual's environment is divided into a set of interconnected systems (i.e., microsystem, mesosystem, macrosystem, exosystem, chronosystem) that produce a change in the individual over time.

Bronfenbrenner's theory postulates that each system of the environment plays a part in shaping the individual through an interconnected series of relationships affected by the five components mentioned above. The theory further states that an individual is part of an environment composed of numerous people and institutions; such as schools,

immediate and extended family members, child care centers, etc. These various systems in turn work together to produce change in the individual. Change in any one system will result in change in another system (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; 1979). The five main systems that exist within an individual's environment are strongly correlated with variables (i.e., socioeconomics, ethnicity, and parent education to name a few) that effect student achievement and parent involvement.

Microsystem

In the microsystem, a child has direct contact with structures that are closest to them and these people in the microsystem have the most immediate effect on the child. Bronfenbrenner (1990) used the term bi-directional to describe the influential interactions that take place between mother, and child, father and child, and teacher and child; understanding that the influences go both directions. Bi-directional influences take place when individuals and groups of individuals interact and directly affect others who exist within the same layer, or system as well as those who are in the layers on either side of them (Henderson, 1995). As a child grows to school age, their microsystem expands to include their daycare center and elementary school because the child spends much of the day there. How these groups or organizations interact with the child will have an effect on how the child grows; the more encouraging and nurturing these relationships and places are, the child will have a greater opportunity for growth. Furthermore, if the child does not have direct contact or interaction with these environments, no substantial impact will be made regardless of socioeconomic status. If the relationship between the child and these structures is weak, there is the potential that the family's socioeconomic status can effect academic achievement. For children coming from low socioeconomic

backgrounds the effects can be harmful. Low-income families may lack the resources and skills to help their children. In regards to academics and resources low socioeconomic families may not be able to afford books, and other materials (Lareau, 1989), yet they still want their children to learn and compete with other students who have resources and other support available to them. However, many of these parents themselves may lack the skills necessary to guide their children in school work that will produce the desired outcomes (Finn, 1998).

Mesosystem

The mesosystem provides the connection between the child's microsystem (i.e. parents and teachers; Berk, 2000). The family is the closest, most intense, most durable, and influential part of the mesosystem (Henderson, 1995). The influences of the family extend to all aspects of the child's development; language, nutrition, security, health, and beliefs are all developed through input and behavior related feedback within the family. In today's society, the family is less frequently the archetypical combination of stay-at-home mother, working father, and siblings. Single parent families, generation skipping families, and other non-traditional groupings are more common today than the traditional family (Frost, 1989). The changing family structure impacts the type and amount of involvement that these families are able to give. For example, if a child's caregiver takes an active role in a child's school, such as going to parent-teacher conferences, or watching their child's soccer games, this will help the child's overall growth. Additionally, a common interaction between microsystem and the mesosystem is parent involvement such as parents' communication with a child's teacher both formal (i.e., parent-teacher conference), and informal (i.e., talking after school). This level of

communication may be nonexistent for low socioeconomic parents. Parent conferences are highly recommended for all students, but due to work schedules, and childcare concerns, parents from low socioeconomic backgrounds may be unable to attend, thereby missing out on valuable information that has the potential to positively or negatively impact the child. Parents of high economic status are well aware of the importance of home-school communication and are more involved in their children's education and are therefore more likely to benefit from the positive effects of parental involvement on academic achievement (Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996). Positive effects of parental involvement include enhanced academic performance, good homework habits, decreased likelihood of dropping out behavior, and a more positive attitude toward school (Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996). Sui-Chu & Willms were able to determine that a relationship exists between family socioeconomic status and parental involvement which was moderately correlated with home discussion, school communication, and school participation.

Ethnicity has also been shown to determine the degree of parental involvement (Balli, 1996; Singh, Bickley, Trivette, Keith, Keith, & Anderson, 1995). In a study conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (1994), it was reported that African American parents are more likely to visit the classroom, while Asian American parents appear to have higher aspirations for their children's educational success and are more involved in their children's academic activities. These findings contradict the typical perception that some educators have related to minority parents and parental involvement. It is often implied that poor parents are uninvolved in their children's learning, largely because they do not value education when in fact they hold the same attitudes about education as do wealthy parents (Gorski, 2008). Poor parents are less

likely to attend school functions and help in the classroom because they have less access to school involvement than wealthier parents. Parents from poverty are more likely to work multiple jobs, have jobs without paid leave, and be unable to afford child care and public transportation (Kunjufu, 2006). Bronfenbrenner (1990) believes the instability of the economy and workforce has created an unpredictable family life that is destructive to a child's development which more often impacts minority parents. Any breakdown in one system ultimately affects the other systems. Parents who are struggling to maintain the connections between home and school because of poverty are greatly disadvantaged in comparison with other families who do not have poverty to contend with on an everyday basis.

Exosystem

The exosystem defines the larger system in which the child doesn't function yet the child may feel the positive or negative force involved with the interaction with his own system such as parents' workplace, extended family members, and neighborhood (Bronfenbrenner, 1989). For example, if a parent receives a promotion and a raise at work, this may have a positive effect on the child because her parents will be better able to meet her physical needs; however, if a child's parent gets laid off from work, that may have negative effects on the child if her parents are unable to pay rent or buy groceries. The effect of socioeconomic status on student achievement has been documented; high poverty level predicts low educational attainment (Cooney, 2001; Ma, 2000; Portes & MacLeod, 1996; Yzaguirre, 2001). For school age children, poverty is determined by their free or reduced lunch status. Okpala et al. (2001) found a significant negative correlation between the percentage of students in free or reduced price lunch programs

and math achievement. This may suggest that socioeconomic status correlates with academic achievement, which impacts the schools, neighborhoods, and childcare centers that make up the child's environment. The effects of poverty can prevent the parent from taking part in school, and community activities that would ultimately benefit the child. Cotton and Wiklund (1989) found several reasons for low parental involvement among minority and low income parents. They discovered that lack of linguistic ability, embarrassment of their own educational level, lack of an understanding of the educational system, perceived detachment by teachers and school staff, and teachers perceptions that these parents are uninterested or unable to help with their children's education impede school involvement. The education level of the parent also has an effect on the exosystem. Parents' level of education is an indicator of parents' level of participation in their children's education. Shumow and Miller (2001) reported that the higher the parents' educational degree the greater their involvement with their children's education. They further reported that high school graduates were more likely to help their children with homework than were none high school graduates. Education level is also a predictor of the student's level of achievement. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2001) students whose parents did not attend college tend to express lower educational expectations that manifest as early as the eighth grade. These students struggle to reach their education goals. Only when the student has access to the appropriate resources is he able to overcome the obstacles that have been placed before him.

Macrosystem

The macrosystem is the outermost layer of the bioecological model which consists of cultural values, law, and customs which affect the inner levels of the environment and in the individual. Cultural beliefs have real power in affecting all Bronfenbrenner's systems. These beliefs are deeply held and become a basis for a child's sense of self (Seifert, 1999). Children are affected by their culture through the communication of beliefs and customs parents receive from other structures in the mesosystem and exosystem. Our culture dictates beliefs concerning religion, school, family, and community life. Generations pass on cultural values via these structures, and the developing child receives them in return. For example, the dominant culture values independence. Because of this value people believe a necessary component of success in our society is individuality or separateness. This belief is responsible for fostering a competitive model in our educational and economic systems, rather than a cooperative one. This cultural message, highly valued in the dominant culture, can be one of cultural disapproval for families of minority cultures (Seifert, 1999). These cultural values also dictate the area in which families reside. For instance, children living in poverty who live in areas with inadequate schools or don't have access to high quality education are less likely to have better grades, school experiences, and exposure to resources that will allow them to compete with their peers. Bronfenbrenner's theory has dire implications for educators. Bronfenbrenner (1990) believed that the child's primary relationship needs to be with someone who can provide a sense of caring that is meant to last a lifetime. Schools and educators should work to support the primary relationship and create an environment that welcomes and nurtures families and their diverse cultures. This can be

accomplished by training parents in areas such as human growth and development, educational techniques, diversity training, and various models of family systems theories that are designed to produce positive change and growth in the child.

Chronosystem

The chronosystem involves the temporal changes in children's environment which produce new conditions that affect development. These changes can be imposed externally or arise from within the organism, since children select, modify, and create many of their own settings and experiences (Berk, 2000). These changes can take place on a daily or frequent basis. In a child's life there will be events, such as death of a family member, a teacher's mid-year retirement or a change in the family structure that can change the conditions of that child's life. Bronfenbrenner believed these new conditions can affect a child's development. If the environmental conditions are off it will affect the development of the child. There are two environmental conditions that are necessary for human development: (1) loving a child unconditionally, and (2) spending time with the child. If these two things do not occur the ecology breaks down, resulting in dire consequences for the child. Bronfenbrenner suggested some causes to stop this break down of ecology: (1) many American families do not live close enough to rely on one another for the necessary support needed to nurture a family. Families need help supporting children even after they reach the age of 18. This is important for teaching children values and culture and also provides support for young parents; (2) many neighborhoods are not safe, particularly where poor, minorities reside, there is a need to have extended families living together again and a community where everyone knows their neighbors; (3) families are experiencing stress trying to balance work and family;

and (4) all families do not benefit from certain laws that are presently in place, laws that have adverse affects on poor and minority families (Berk, 2000). Finally, Bronfenbrenner stated that bridges between home and school should be constructed to ensure the greatest advantages to the child's growth and development.

In summary, Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory allows for the examination of multiple variables (i.e., parents education levels, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity) within the environment that affect a child's academic achievement. There are limitations of the theory due to the fact that it tries to address large aspects of an individual's environment; no single study could possibly address all areas, however it remains the most comprehensive theory in explaining and predicting parental impact on children's academic achievement. While other theories and models may provide more guidance within the parent involvement literature, they lack a more comprehensive approach to exploring the impact of parents on children's academic outcomes.

Family Systems

To further understand how the bioecological theory is useful in the examination of parental involvement in the minority family system, and to circumvent the limitations of the theory it is important to have a framework that addresses the needs of the entire family system. Bronfenbrenner (1989) has often made reference to Gregory Bateson's family systems theory to help validate his own theory. Bateson's family systems theory is based on the work of biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy. Von Bertalanffy developed the General Systems Theory. General Systems Theory is a general science of wholeness which states that there is a general tendency toward integration in the various sciences, particularly natural and social (Ashby, 1964). This theory postulates that the whole is

more than the sum of its parts and to fully understand the system the parts must be analyzed with the whole in mind. From this work, social scientists began to develop theories of family interaction and interdependence (Stevens, 2001). As Von Bertalanffy stated about living systems, family systems theorists believed that change in anyone part of the system changes all parts of the system (Kerr, 1981).

The second movement in the field of family systems took place after the Second World War. Mental health workers who previously dealt with individual problems or with extreme psychopathology were not expected to work with family-related issues (Stevens, 2001). This work led to the research and study of cybernetic theory. Cybernetics is the study of feedback loops in communication. Gregory Bateson, an anthropologist who studied communication theory and worked with communication patterns in schizophrenic families during the 1950's, worked extensively to apply cybernetic theory to family communication patterns (Ruesch & Bateson, 1951; Watzlawick, 1967). Bateson along with many others provided the foundation that resulted in the general systemic concepts of functioning families. The basic framework of family systems theory includes Homeostasis, Feedback loops, Hierarchy, Roles, Rules, Subsystems, and Boundaries, Wholeness, and Change.

Homeostasis

Jackson (1957) used the term family homeostasis to define the natural tendency of families to behave in such manners as to maintain a sense of balance, structure, and stability in the face of change. Families from poverty are often faced with daily struggles that disrupt the balance of the family. According to Kunjufu (2006) single African American females may be forced to work two and three part time jobs, while struggling

to maintain a functional household for their children. During these times, families will need to renegotiate their roles, rules, and boundaries to fashion a new, more functionally balanced structure to manage these changes (Bowen, 1966).

Feedback Loops

Feedback loops are essential to the functioning of the family system, providing the communication that enables the system to continue functioning and maintain homeostasis. In simpler terms, feedback loops are the communication between members of the family. According to O'Conner & McDermott, (1997) feedback has two purposes: (1) to move the system toward change and (2) to bring the system back to balance.

Families that lack the ability to communicate effectively internally, also lack the ability to communicate externally. This can be problematic in dealing with schools, and other helping agencies. The relationships a child develops in school become critical to their development. Because of the amount of time children spend in school, the relationships fostered there carry real weight. Children may for the first time be developing relationships with adults outside their immediate family. These connections help a child develop cognitively and emotionally. Bronfenbrenner (1990) highlighted the importance of these bi-directional interactions with caring adults in the child's life. He outlines five propositions that describe how relationships developed at home and at school work together for positive development.

Proposition 1: The child must have on-going, long term, mutual interaction with an adult (or adults) who have a stake in the development of the child. These interactions should be accompanied by a strong tie to the child that is ideally meant to last a life time. It is important for this attachment to be one of unconditional love and support. This

person must believe the child is the best, and the child must know that the adult has this belief.

Proposition 2: This strong tie and the pattern of interpersonal interaction it provides will help the child relate to features of his or her mesosystem. The skills and confidence encouraged by the initial relationships will increase the child's ability to effectively explore and grow from outside activities.

Proposition 3: Attachments and interactions with other adults will help the child progress to more complex relationships with his or her primary adults. The child will gain affirmation from a third party relationship, and will bring those new skills to the primary relationship.

Proposition 4: The relationships between the child and his primary adults will progress only with repeated two-way interchanges and mutual compromise. Children need these interactions at home and at school or childcare centers, while parents need these interchanges in their neighborhoods and workplaces.

Proposition 5: The relationships between the child and adults in his or her life require a public attitude of support and affirmation of the importance of these roles. This includes the work of parents and teachers, but also the efforts of extended family, friends, co-workers, and neighbors.

These five propositions have implications for practice in schools today. Bronfenbrenner sees the instability and unpredictability of modern family life as the most destructive force to a child's development (Addison, 1992). According to the bioecological theory, if the relationships in the immediate family breakdown, the child

will not have the tools to explore other parts of the system which are necessary if the child is to have continued success in school and in other areas of his or her life.

Hierarchy, Roles, Rules, Subsystems, and Boundaries

Hierarchy refers to the structure of the family. Hierarchy is defined by the structure of the family and how family members are classified according to ability or by rules and role definitions within their cultural perspectives (Gladding, 1998). Roles are determined by an individual's behavior in performing rights and privileges, and obligations associated with certain positions within families. Rules are the mutual assumptions of the family as to how members should behave toward each other, and the outside world. Subsystems are the smaller systems within each system; a family is made up of multiple subsystems. Subsystems exist to help the family carry out its day-to-day functions (Fisher & Harrison, 1997). Boundaries define the subsystem, and are designed to keep things out. Boundaries in the family can be either rigid or enmeshed. The goal is to not be too much of either in order to have a healthy balance.

Wholeness

Systems theorists believe that one cannot understand the system by breaking it down into its individual parts. The only way one can fully understand the family is by observing the whole system. This also includes observing the family within the community in which they reside. Wholeness of the family correlates with the mesosystem within Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory. Increasingly, there has been a breakdown in the structure of a child's mesosystem. For example, in 1999 at least 25% of children were living with a single parent. For African American children this figure rose to 55 % (Dean & Huitt, 1999). It was further reported that 20% of all children in this country live

in a household whose annual income falls below the poverty level, this rate doubles among African American and Latino families (Dean & Huitt, 1999). Increasing numbers of hours worked outside the home by both mothers and fathers means they have less time to spend being involved in their child's development. These families are reaching out to their communities to gain access to people with similar concerns that can function as resources and emotional support. Communities provide childcare, parent employment, and programs designed to encourage interaction among families. Lewis and Morris (1998) research on families provided a list of five basic needs for positive development in children: (1) a personal relationship with a caring adult, (2) a safe place to live, (3) a healthy start toward their future, (4) marketable skills to use after graduation from high school, and (5) an opportunity to contribute to their community. Partnerships within the community can help provide for these needs and give families a sense of wholeness.

Change in the System

Change in the family system means that change is never only one interaction or behavior; rather it is the systemic response to one behavior change (Stevens, 2001). Many times this change within the system is related to the values of the family. Family values are the composite of the rules, roles, boundaries, and subsystems in the nuclear family as well as those same concepts passed down from the family of origin.

According to Bronfenbrenner (1990) the family is the closest, most intense, most durable, and influential part of the mesosystem. The influences of the family extend to all aspects of the child's development. Language, nutrition, security, health, and beliefs are all developed through the input and behavior related feedback within the family. In today's society the family is less frequently the archetypical combination of stay-at-home

mother, working father, and sibling children. Single parent families, generation skipping families, and other non-traditional groupings are more common today than the traditional family (Addison, 1992). Another common force that has changed the family structure in society is divorce. In her book *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*, Ruby Payne (1996) stated that one in every two marriages in the United States currently ends in divorce. She goes on to say that each year more than 1.5 million children, nearly 2.5 percent of all U.S. children, undergo the painful experience of seeing their parents separate or divorce. Children of divorced parents often have a split family life (i.e. at a father's for the weekend, mother during the week, etc.). Divorce is an example of the type of interaction between systems that Bronfenbrenner described. A divorce is a product of society, decided by a judge, and enforced by social services. In turn, the divorced family affects the community and society because the large number of divorces social attitudes change and the social perception of the family are modified. The divorce arrangement can have a profound effect on the family and the development of the child, just as the homeostasis, communication feedback loops, and rules, roles, and boundaries can impact the family.

Strength and Weaknesses

Although systemically oriented therapy provides the clinician with a view of family problems that is often not available through any other means (Stevens, 2001), it still does not address the issue that interconnectedness of the world has created. We live in a world of systems that is far broader than the theories presented here. Family system has three main weaknesses. The first weakness is that early traditional theories focused only on the family system and its interactions without accounting for the larger system in

which the families existed. The second weakness is that early family therapy tended to focus on working with white middle-class families, which is not a true multicultural perspective. The third criticism of systemic family therapy is the pathologizing of the woman, wife, and mother (Stevens, 2001). Many of the early theories blamed the mother for the dysfunction in the family and used techniques that devalued and demeaned the role of the woman in the family. Today's therapists use a more gender and culturally sensitive perspective with their therapy. This integrative approach addresses the impact of systems outside of the family on the family system itself. One theory that uses this concept of total integration is the McMaster Approach to Families.

McMaster Approach to Families

The McMaster's Approach to Families is a comprehensive model of family assessment and treatment. The method of treatment was developed to be readily teachable, transferable to different settings, applicable to a variety of clinical family problems, and capable of empirical verification and validation (Miller, Ryan, Keither, Bishop, & Epstein, 2000). It is a model that is based on systems theory. The assumptions which underlie the model are: (1) all parts of the family are interrelated; (2) one part of the family cannot be understood in isolation from the rest of the family; (3) family functioning cannot be fully understood by simply understanding each of the individual family members or subgroups; (4) a family's structure and organization are important factors that strongly influence and determine the behavior of family members; and (5) the transactional patterns of the family system strongly shape the behavior of family members (Epstein, et al., 1978, 1982, 1993).

Although the McMaster's model takes into consideration numerous functions of the family it does not cover all aspects of family functioning. It does, however, identify several dimensions that have been found important when dealing with at-risk families. To adequately assess the family structures, organizations, and transactional patterns associated with the family. Epstein et al. (1982) identified six dimensions of family life. (1) The problem-solving dimension is a family's ability to resolve problems at a level that maintains effective family functioning. A family problem is seen as an issue for which the family has trouble finding a solution, and the presence of which threatens the integrity and functional capacity and the family. Problems are subdivided conceptually into instrumental and affective types. Instrumental problems are the mechanical problems of everyday life, such as money management or deciding on a place to live. Affective problems are those related to feelings and emotional experience. (2) Communication is how information is exchanged within a family. The focus is on verbal exchange.

Communication is also subdivided into instrumental and affective areas. (3) Family roles are the recurrent patterns of behavior by which individuals fulfill family functions. These are routine family tasks, such as cooking or taking out the garbage. The functions of the family are further divided into necessary family functions and other family functions. Necessary family functions include those which the family must be repeatedly concerned with if the family is to function well. Other family functions are those that are not necessary for effective family functioning but arise, to a varying degree in the life of every family. (4) Affective responsiveness is the ability of the family to respond to a range of stimuli with the appropriate quality and quantity of feelings and for an effective affective family life there is a need to find the full range of affective

experiences that are appropriate in quality and quantity of responses. (5) The dimension of affective involvement is the degree by which the family as a whole shows interest in and values the activities and interests of individual family members. The focus is on how much, and in what way family members show an interest and invest themselves in each other. (6) Behavior control dimension is the pattern a family adopts for handling behavior in three types of situations. First, there are physically dangerous situations where the family will have to monitor and control the behavior of its members. Second, there are situations which involve meeting and expressing psychobiological needs or drives such as eating, drinking, sleeping, sex, and aggression. Lastly, there are situations involving interpersonal socializing behaviors among family members and with people outside the family.

The McMasters model does not just focus one aspect of family life, it encompasses areas that are strongly correlated with understanding the entire family structure. It has also been used to conceptualize family functioning. Family functioning not only is related to behaviors among family members but it also has consequences for child development outcomes, which are divided into other domains. The domains include child temperament, child behavior problems, school failure, home environment, attachment, adolescent adjustment, social relationships, and marital satisfaction (Hayden, Schiller, Dickstein, Siefer, Sameroff, Miller, Keitner, & Ramussen, 1998). All of these dimensions can be measured by the Family Assessment Device (FAD), the McMaster Clinical Rating Scale (MCRS), or the McMaster Structured Interview of Family Functioning. The Family Assessment Device (Epstein, Baldwin, & Bishop, 1983) was designed to assess the dimensions of the McMaster Model according to family members'

perceptions. It consists of subscales assessing the six dimensions of the McMaster Model as well as a general functioning scale which assess the overall level of family functioning. The MCRS is a seven-item rating scale which includes ratings of each of the six dimensions of the McMaster Model as well as an overall health pathology rating. The MCRS is designed to be completed by either a rater who observes a suitable in-depth family interview or by the clinician who carries out such an interview (Miller, Kabacoff, Bishop, Epstein, & Keitner, 1994). The McMaster Structured Interview of Family Functioning (McSIFF) (Bishop, Epstein, Keitner, Miller, & Zlotnick, 1980) was developed to provide structured interviews that clinicians and researchers could use to conduct reliable and valid family interviews based on the McMaster Model.

Various studies have utilized the McMaster Approach and its assessment instruments to study family functioning and children. The studies have focused on a wide range of issues and populations. Several studies report data indicating that the FAD can be used to identify families which are dysfunctional and where children might be at risk for maladjustment, particularly in distressed economically disadvantaged families (Akister & Stevenson-Hinde, 1991; Saayman & Saayman, 1988; Sawyer, Sarris, Baghurst, Cross, & Kalucy, 1988). Joffe, Offord, & Boyle, (1988) used the general functioning scale from the FAD and found that it predicted subsequent adjustment and suicidal behavior in a large epidemiological study of children. Other studies have indicated that the FAD has been used with children who were psychiatric inpatients (McKay, Murphy, Rivinus, & Maisto, 1991), children with ADHD (Cunningham, Benness, & Siegel, 1988) and outpatients at a child psychiatric clinic (Goodyear, Nicol, Eavis, & Pollinger, 1982).

Although the McMaster's theory has been shown to be useful with many families and sub-populations of the family, it does not address the problems of all families. Miller and colleagues (2000) identified a huge limitation that cannot be ignored. The FAD has been used with large numbers of families; these families have been largely Caucasian and middle class. Greater ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic variability among non-clinical groups would be helpful in verifying the utility of the McMaster Model with these populations.

Parental Involvement

Advocacy for parent involvement in education is tied to numerous federal initiatives, beginning in the 1960's with Head Start, and reflected today in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). Head Start provided educational interventions during the preschool years for economically disadvantaged children that included a broad parent component (Fishel & Ramirez, 2005). Other federal projects promoting parent participation followed, including Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and Project Follow Through in 1968 (Doernberger & Zigler, 1993). Title I broadened parental roles by mandating increased consultation and collaboration with parents (Arroyo & Zigler, 1993). Project Follow Through was effective in increasing parent participation in tutoring, volunteering, school governance, and parent education, and like other worthwhile education initiatives lack of funding undermined its success (Zigler & Styfco, 1993). More recently, there has been a consensus in policies on the local, state, and federal levels regarding the benefits of parent participation in education (Chrispeels, 1996; Mattingly, Prislun, McKenzie, Rodriguez, & Kayzar, 2002). The reauthorization of Title I by Congress in 1994 makes

clear that parent involvement at the state, district, and school level is now viewed as crucial to student success. Most recently, Section 1118 of the NCLB Act of 2001 (U.S. Department of Education, 2002) requires each school district that receives Title I funds to implement programs, activities, and procedures for the involvement of parents with participating children, including those with limited English proficiency, disabilities, and migrant children. Indeed, numerous federal legislative initiatives, based on the assumption that parents are an important contributor to children's academic success and social well-being at school, have mandated the implementation of parent involvement programs and procedures (Christenson, Rounds, & Gorney, 1992; Wolfendale, 1983).

Numerous studies have documented the importance of parental involvement for children's success at school (Balli, 1996; Balli, Demo, & Wedman., 1998; Bracy, 2001; Carter & Wojtkiewicz, 2000; Epstein, 1985, Epstein & Dauber, 1991, Epstein, 1995; Fan, 2001; Fan & Chen, 2001; Griffith, 1996). Whether measured by school records or parent reports, parents' active participation in their children's education makes an enormous difference at all grade levels (Heymann, 2000). Parental involvement comes in a number of forms, from parents' developing and using skills to support effective learning, engaging in home-to-school communication about student progress, volunteering at school, assisting children with homework, becoming involved in school governance issues and decisions, and coordinating and integrating community services that will enhance learning (Bracey, 2001). Parent involvement is linked to children's school readiness. Research shows that greater parent involvement in children's learning positively affects the child's school performance, including higher academic achievement (McNeal, 1999; Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996) and greater social and emotional development

(Smith, Connel, Wright, Sizer, Norman, Hurley, & Waller, 1997). Parental involvement has been correlated with greater achievement in language and mathematics, improved behavior, and academic persistence (Christenson, Rounds, & Gorney, 1992; Fantuzzo, Davis, & Ginsburg, 1995; Miller & Kelly, 1991; Reynolds, 1992). The research overwhelmingly demonstrates that parent involvement in children's learning is positively related to achievement. Further, the research shows that the more intensively parents are involved in their children's learning; the more beneficial are the achievement effects (Cotton & Wikelund, 1989). When parents are more involved in their children's education, children have higher achievement in elementary school, junior high school (Keith, Keith, Troutman, Bickley, Trivette, & Singh, 1993), and high school (Fehrmann, Keith, & Reimer, 1987). Parental involvement has been associated with increases in children's achievement test scores and grades, higher school attendance and lower drop-out rates, as well as improvements in student motivation, attitudes, classroom behavior, and self esteem (Sheldon & Epstein, 2005). In addition, parental involvement is correlated with greater achievement in language and mathematics, improved behavior, and academic persistence (Christenson et al., 1992; Fantuzzo et al., 1995; Miller & Kelly, 1991; Reynolds, 1992). Being involved in children's education includes helping with homework, but it can go beyond that. It also includes parent participation in classroom programs, school events and meetings, which is not only important to the parent's own children but to the quality of the education of all children within the school (Comer & Haynes, 1991; Griffith, 2001; Reynolds, Weissberg, & Kapsrow, 1992).

Research has shown that the most effective forms of parent involvement are those which engage parents in working directly with their children on learning activities in the

home. Programs which involve parents in reading with their children, supporting their work on homework assignments, or tutoring them using materials and instructions provided by teachers, show particularly impressive results (Cotton & Wikelund, 1989). Additionally, researchers have found that the more active forms of parent involvement produce greater achievement benefit than the more passive ones. That is, if parents receive phone calls, read and sign written communication from the school, and attends and listens during parent teacher conferences, greater achievement benefits accrue than would be the case with no parent involvement (Epstein, 1987, 1992). Research has also shown that schools with the most successful parent involvement programs are those which offer a variety of ways parents can participate, recognizing that parents differ greatly in their willingness, ability, and available time for involvement in school activities; these schools provide a wide range of opportunities to promote or encourage parent participation.

In general, active parent involvement is more beneficial than passive involvement, but passive forms of involvement are better than no involvement at all (Astone, & McLanahan, 1991) As for which specific kinds of involvement in children's learning have the greatest affective benefits, no clear answer emerges from the research (McNeal, 2001). Because researchers differ in how they operationalize parental involvement, findings are inconclusive concerning the type or amount of involvement that makes a difference. What is clear is that parents who take an active role in their child's education yield greater results than those who do not.

Increasing Parental Involvement

Increased parental involvement has been linked to increases in student achievement yet there is no definitive model in place that has been shown to be more successful than other models for improving parental involvement. According to Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 1989) parent involvement in school impacts children directly through relations between parents and children, and indirectly through social interactions between parents and schools, it is important to consider family systems and the importance of the community in helping families to positively impact their children. These relations have been shown to have either a positive or negative effect depending on the type of interaction and the characteristics of the people and contexts in which the interaction occurs. Parent involvement is expected to have positive effects on children's academic outcomes; as children see their parents interacting positively with the school; this conveys the importance of academics to the child. This positive home-school interaction is often times not present in African American families.

Lareau and Horvat (1999) and McKay, Atkins, Hawkins, Brown, & Lynn (2003) reported that African American parents often feel unwelcome at school, and feel that the school does not understand their cultural background which may make it difficult to be actively involved. This negative interaction leads to negative home-school relationships and decreased involvement. To assess parents feelings Lareau & Horvat (1999) conducted 24 interviews with 12 European American and 12 African American parents and found that due to the overall racial context within the community, many of the African American parents felt a lack of trust and confidence in the school system which

they perceived as insensitive to their needs. McKay and others (2003) also found that racial socialization processes (i.e., cultural pride, religion) among African American parents were related to less parent involvement in their children's education. When parents take an active role in the school and the classroom, and form a relationship with the teacher, there is less likely to be academic and behavior problems. This is particularly important for minority students who have been disproportionately disciplined and suspended from schools across the country (Koonce & Harper, 2005). The research also suggests that when parents are (a) involved in the discipline process, (b) informed of their roles in the educational process, and (c) encouraged to participate in their children's academic and social development, students' suspensions and inappropriate school behaviors decrease (Nweze, 1993). This provides support to the position that parents who participate in decision making experience greater feelings of ownership and are more committed to supporting the school's mission (Jackson, 1978). This differs greatly from previous years when it was thought that public schools were not making the most of the assets of engaging African American parents as partners to address the needs of their children (Obgu, 1978). Parents often felt they were not welcome, and reported a high degree of alienation and felt the teachers related to them in hostile manners (Calabrese, 1990). Additionally, other studies have shown that some Black parents report negative school experiences, intimidation by school personnel, poor understanding of how to navigate the educational system, and requests for meeting at inconvenient times, as barriers contributing to low parental involvement (Koonce & Harper, 2005). These barriers are often overcome when parents have a better understanding of roles and

relationships between and among the parent-student-school triad (Epstein, Sanders, Simon, Salinas, Jansorn, & Van Voorhis, 2002) thus making them feel empowered.

Empowerment is defined as the perception that parents have the necessary capability and skill to make a significant difference in their child's life (Trotman, 2001). Thompson, Lobb, Elling, Herman, Jurkiewicz, & Hulleza (1997) defines empowerment as a relationship to a personal perception as individuals that are confident they have the information and problem solving skills necessary to deal with challenging situations. Moreover, teachers can aide in this parental empowerment by asking parents for their assistance, views, and suggestions as a means to better prepare their child and ensure academic success. Furthermore, when parental presence is extended to the classroom, it permits other students to enjoy the proximity and experiences of interacting with adults from a variety of backgrounds (Flood, Lapp, Nagel, & Tinajero, 1995).

Parents make a difference in the school-based lives of their children, but only when their role is meaningful, empowered, and sustained. (Reed & Sautter, 1990). There are support systems available to empower parents and aide them in the participation of their child's educational career. For example, The Accelerated School Program, conducted in both California and Missouri is a program designed to increase parents' awareness of how they can support their children (Reed & Sautter, 1990). The goal of this particular program is to enable parents to become more active in their children's education, and it supports parents by providing them with academic training and knowledge of their child's educational environment. It also supports efforts to increase involvement.

Efforts to increase involvement generally fit into one of two areas, home-involvement or school-involvement. Involvement in school is just one way in which parents can assist with a child's education. Several studies have shown that supporting children at home is also vitally important. Low-income minority parents, especially African American and Latinos are more likely to be involved in home-based activities than school-based activities (Anderson & Minke, 2007) in comparison to their White peers. These parents are more likely to help their children with basic math, and spelling, and some reading activities if they are able to comprehend objectives. African American and Latino parents generally face barriers that white parents do not have to contend with to ensure their children are being properly educated.

Using Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory these findings suggest that depending on the strength of the relationship between people (i.e., parents) and context (i.e., schools and culture) in the child's environment the relationship between the two will lead to either favorable or unfavorable conditions for development (Bronfenbrenner, 1989; Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994). Hence, if parents perceive their children's school environment as not accepting of their ethnicity and culture, it will lead to unfavorable conditions in which parents and schools interact (i.e., feelings of being unwelcome) which leads to lower levels of parent involvement in school. African American children can ill afford to have unfavorable conditions between the home and school since this type of interaction is counterproductive and has the potential to hurt the child academically. To bridge the gap between home and school a dialogue must take place. When parents of fifth grade students were better informed about what was happening in school, and informed as to how they might support students at home, parents felt they were better

equipped to assist students at home (Cameron & Lee, 1997). This supports the position that when parents are given the necessary tools and support they are more likely to help their child regardless of family background and socioeconomic status. Empowered parents are motivated parents. Hoover-Dempsey (1995; 2001) reviewed over fifty studies related to parent motivation and student outcomes. It was noted that parents believed that they should be involved, in homework and other school activities, and that their involvement would make a difference. Once the parents have made the commitment to be involved the type and amount of involvement has to be specified to yield the best results.

Types of Parental Involvement

Parent involvement takes many forms; Mavis and Epstein (1998) identified six levels of school related involvement opportunities for parents.

Parenting. The first type, parenting, includes activities designed to help families understand young adolescent development, acquire developmentally appropriate parenting skills, set home conditions to support learning at each grade level, and help schools obtain information about students. It also involves parents being responsible for their children's health and safety and the continual need to supervise, discipline, and guide children at each age level, as well as building positive home conditions that support school learning and behaviors appropriate for each grade level. To maximize the benefits of parenting, it is important to disseminate information to all parents, not just those who might attend an open house, parent-teacher conference, or workshop. According to the National PTA (2008) any information that is provided to parents should be clear, understandable, easily accessible, developmentally appropriate, and linked to the child's success.

Communication. The second type, communication, focuses on keeping parents informed through such things as notices, memos, report cards, conferences about student work, and school functions. These areas greatly affect whether the information about school programs and children's progress can be understood by all parents. According to the National Network of Partnership School, (2008) communicating with parents requires the use of a variety of media to inform parents clearly and simply about school programs, student progress, and teaching practices. Additionally, communicating with parents builds a foundation to support student progress, deal effectively with problems, and avoid problems before they begin. Reaching out to parents at open house and parent-teacher conferences are the most common form of communication, yet other possibilities exist, such as periodic reports to parents, information sessions that open the door to further discussions, phone conversations, newsletters, or small discussion groups. Technology is also opening up ways to improve communication to and from parents, email and classroom web-sites offer new opportunities to enhance interactions with parents; however all students may not have access and some may need correspondences written in the language that is primarily used in the home.

Volunteering. The third type, volunteering, focuses on ways to improve recruitment, training activities, and schedules to involve families as volunteers and audiences. In addition, it refers to parents who come to school to support students performances, sports, and other events, or to attend workshops or other programs for their own education or training. This enables educators to work with regular and occasional volunteers who assist and support students and the school. This is an important area for engaging hard to reach parents. Generally, parent involvement is much higher at the pre-

school and primary levels, than middle or secondary level. In recent years, more research has been conducted with middle school and secondary students and their families. It is clear that parent involvement is effective in fostering achievement and academic gains at all levels, and schools are encouraged to engage and maintain this involvement throughout the middle school and secondary years. Nowhere is this more important than in African American families, who often have a difficult time volunteering at schools because of work schedules, lack of transportation, or sibling child care issues. Chavkin (1989) recommends the following for schools working with families from a multicultural perspective: (1) Educators must challenge the myth that minority parents don't care about their children's education because the research has documented that minority parents do care about their children's education as much as white parents; (2) Educators need to collaborate with parents to develop a clear statement about the goals of parent involvement in their school, based on the premise that parents are as important to children's academic success as educators; (3) Every school should develop written policies about working with parents from a multicultural perspective to encourage more involvement activities and foster enthusiasm for them; (4) Teachers and administrators should provide, not only with practical training in the proper ways of working with minority parents, but also they need to be taught about minority cultures; (5) Minority role models should be present in the schools and should participate actively in home-school partnership efforts in order to increase the presence of key persons in the community who can provide linkage between families and schools ; (6) Minority parents should be asked how they would like to be involved with their children's education, and a variety of involvement opportunities should be provided.

In sum, it is important that educators understand that parents of disadvantaged and minority children can and do make a positive contribution to their children's achievement in school if they receive adequate training and encouragement in the types of parent involvement that can make a difference.

Learning at home. The fourth type, learning at home, is recommended so as to involve families with their children in academic learning activities at home, including homework, goal-setting, and other curriculum-related activities. In addition it encourages students to share and discuss interesting work and ideas with family members. Smar, (2002) recommends that schools provide suggestions to parents about how they can share in the education experience with their children. These might include going to the public library, attending local concerts, watching educational television shows, and working together on computer research assignments.

Decision making. The fifth type, decision making, includes activities designed to include families as participants in school decisions, governance, and advocacy activities through school councils or improvement teams, committees, PTA/PTO, and other parent organizations. According to Smar, (2002) involving parents in meaningful decisions, as well as encouraging parental leadership and representation on important issues, is at the heart of decision making. This area of parent involvement is one of the most controversial. Research by *Early Childhood Digest* has shown that most parents would like to play a more active role in this type of involvement, whereas most school administrators and teachers exhibit great reluctance to encourage parents to become partners in governance. Smith, and others agree that parents should be involved with the schools in a variety of ways and that school personnel should spend time encouraging

parent involvement, yet they disapprove of parents getting involved in administrative areas such as teacher and principal selection and evaluation, and in other activities such as the selection of text books, and budget issues (1997).

Although, this research indicates that parents should be involved in decision-making there has been no relationship found between parent participation in decision making and student achievement (Smar, 2002). The lack of evidence linking parent involvement in governance and student achievement does not mean parents should not be included in decision making. However, the National Education Association (NEA) has identified benefits other than student achievement which have been found to emerge from involving parents in governance. The first identified benefit is the elimination of mistaken assumptions that parents and school people may have about one another's motives, attitudes, intentions, and abilities. The second benefit is the growth of parents' ability to serve as resources for the academic, social and psychological development of their children, with the potential for more long term influences. The third, benefit is the increase in parents' own skills and confidence, sometimes advancing their own education and upgrading their jobs, thus providing improved role models for their children. The final benefit of parents being involved in governance issues is the increase in parents serving as advocates for the schools throughout the community. In the final analysis these activities enable parents to understand something of the school's structure and its instructional programs and provide basic experience in working with school personnel (National Education Association, 2008).

Collaborating with the community. The sixth type of involvement is collaborating with the community. This type of involvement consists of coordinating resources and

services for families, students, and the school with community businesses, agencies, cultural and civic organizations, colleges and universities, and other community groups and enables students, staff, and families to contribute their service to the community. The impact the community has on the education of the child is as important as that of the classroom teacher, and school staff. In African American communities families rely on one another to help support their children in the pursuit of better access to health care, recreational facilities, and quality education which is often times not up to par with more affluent neighborhoods (Kunjufu, 2006). African American parents tend to lean on each other when they have been slighted by school officials. Calabrese (1990) found that parents of color believed that they were not welcome, and were unaware of how to navigate the educational system which further impedes their active participation in their child's schooling. For these parents to become knowledgeable about their rights and understand the context in which to exercise them, a neutral mechanism is required to involve those who are disengaged. Witty (1982) described one such mechanism in which African American parents and community organizations collaborated with the school to attain their goals. Community-based organizations are a valuable mechanism to bring educators and families together to improve interactions between minority families and the public schools.

In recent years, the development of school-community partnerships designed to connect with parents who are socially and economically disadvantaged has been strongly recommended by general and special educators at all levels as an essential element in any strategic model or framework designed to promote equitable quality educational opportunities (Koonce & Harper, 2005). A review of the literature provides some rich

examples of home-school collaboration programs that have been successful in involving groups of parents historically disenfranchised from the educational system (Comer & Hayes, 1991; Gavin & Greenfield, 1998; Morris, 1999). The fundamental belief underlying these programs is that schools, parents, and students must adopt an ecological approach and commit to a plan that promotes change in the system.

From an ecological perspective Rafaelle and Knoff (1999) have suggested that home-school collaboration should include the efforts of parents and school personnel, as well as the efforts of institutions in the community (i.e., businesses, social service agencies, religious institutions, civic organizations). They suggested that these components are all important in fostering, facilitating, and institutionalizing the values, norms, and interactions for positive relations between home and school. To understand how research on partnerships is applied in practice Epstein & Salinas (2004) illustrates how schools in urban, suburban, and rural locations are working to create effective programs of family and community involvement to strengthen their learning communities. The first school the authors highlighted was Roosevelt Elementary School in St. Paul Minnesota, which organized the Second Cup of Coffee program, a monthly morning activity during which parents have the opportunity to meet with teachers, administrators, and other parents, and discuss such school activities such as testing, homework, and reading programs. The second school highlighted had a focus on achievement in reading. Clara E. Westropp School in Cleveland, Ohio conducted monthly family reading nights. The school librarian identified age-appropriate books for students from kindergarten through grade four. Parents came to school with their children, selected books from the library, asked teachers questions about reading, and

learned strategies to increase children's reading at home. A third program featured at Good Shepherd School in Peace River, Alberta used community instructors in tai chi, taekwon do, and hip hop dance to volunteer their time to conduct fitness classes for students during the lunch hour. The program, known as Try It at Lunch, enrolled many students, increasing interest in the community programs. One of the last programs featured in the study focused on planning for college and work. The Mother-Daughter College Preparation Program in District B in Los Angeles helps 5th grade Latinas and their mothers think about post-secondary education. The program served 17 schools and approximately 425 mother-daughter teams. The goal of the program is to introduce post-secondary pathways early in students' educational career so that families can plan more effectively for their futures both educationally and financially.

All in all schools that have a vested interest in becoming true learning communities are working with parents and other entities to systematically strengthen and maintain the family and community connection. The combined use of all types of parent involvement by schools and communities provides the framework that result in positive parent involvement outcomes. Yet, the barriers that impede this type of involvement cannot be overlooked.

Barriers to Parental Involvement

Trotman (2001) identified several factors that affect low parental involvement. These include family structure/socioeconomic status, parents' schedules, educational levels, and the expectations of the school administration and teachers.

Family Structure/Socioeconomic Status (SES)

A substantial amount of evidence supports the existence of a positive relationship between SES and parental involvement (Coleman, 1991; Horn & West, 1992). The most common measure of SES, parental education and family income, has been shown to be strong predictors of children's educational success (Desimone, 1999). This has resulted in many teachers believing that parents with low incomes do not value education highly and have little to contribute to the education of their children (Davies, 1988). These parents have been described as difficult to reach because phones were often disconnected or not present in the home (Weitock, 1991). They may be unable to attend meetings, conferences; plays, sporting events, and other school activities because they do not own a car. Their absence may lead school officials to make incorrect judgments that parents do not care about their children's education. Yet, contrary to popular belief, many urban parents are just as interested in their children's education as parents from any other socioeconomic class but they do not have the family structure or social capital in place to actively participate. Research confirms that social capital and family structure are related (Blake, 1985; DiMaggio & Mohr, 1985; Horn & West, 1992; Pong, 1998). The mother and the father provide a child with a certain amount of social capital. When there is only one parent present in the home, that child receives less parental contact and does not have access to the same amount of social capital as others.

Parent Schedules

Parents with greater formal educational training have been found to provide home environments that support and encourage educational and related activities. Whereas, children from working-class, or poor families typically cannot afford to participate in formal out of school activities and they rely on the television to occupy their children's

time (Families and Work Institute, 1994). These parents care deeply about their children's education, but their involvement can be limited for various reasons including: (a) busy schedules, (b) they have younger children to attend to at home, (c) both parents work, and (d) the belief that teaching is the teacher's responsibility (Flood, et al., 1995). In order to help the working class and the working poor families, educators must realize that the familial life is very busy and although education may be on top of the educator's list, many parents prioritize things differently. Usually survival and the needs of the home take precedence over other things.

Educational Level

The educational level of the parent also inhibits parental involvement. Research suggests that poor minority parents, in particular, are often less knowledgeable and involved in their children's educational programs than are parents of European American students in the same programs (Lareau, 1989). Perceptions of educational expectations have been shown to differ among ethnic groups, with Asian American children perceiving their parents as having higher expectations for their children's education than African American, Hispanic American, Native American, or European American children (Peng & Lee, 1991). According to the 1998 U.S. Census, approximately 84% of the White American population and 76% of the African American population over the age of 25 completed all four years of high school. Yet, in the African American community, it was reported that those living in poverty are twice as likely to drop out of high school. This is the population that school officials often see in poor communities and make judgments about a child's ability to succeed. Some teachers and school administrators equate the parents' level of education to the amount of time parents will invest in their

child's educational careers and do not give low-income and less educated parents the opportunity to participate. Thus, creating an environment predicated on low-achievement and low expectations.

Expectations of School Administrators and Teachers

The low participation rates of urban, minority parents at formally sanctioned activities has often led educators to conclude that parents are uninterested in their children's academic performance (Chavkin, 1993). Teachers' attitudes, as well as a hostile insensitive school environment, also contribute to the amount of parent involvement that takes place within the classroom and school building. Additionally, teachers who hold low expectations or believe that parents do not care about their children and do not want to be involved in their education may lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy and directly contribute to the lack of parental involvement and to student failure (Trotman, 2001). Parent involvement is an important factor in teacher expectations. It has been reported (Oakes, 1988), that some teachers lower their expectations based on the race of the child, the income of the child's family, the gender of the child, and the child's appearance. If this is how schools and teachers think, parents must become involved in order to ensure that the teacher's expectations remain high so the child has the potential to achieve high academic standards that are in line with other children of higher socioeconomic means.

Jeynes (2005a) explored the relation between parent involvement in school and children's academic achievement in urban samples of elementary school-aged children. Forty-one studies were examined, and he discovered that parent involvement, defined as parent participation in the educational processes and experiences of their children (i.e.

homework, communication with child about school, general activities, parent expectations) was positively associated with children's academic outcomes regardless of the child's race, gender, or cultural background. The study also concluded that parent involvement programs (i.e., trainings) that were designed to enhance parent involvement in school and encourage participation were effective in improving child outcomes. In spite of these findings, the strongest predictor of academic achievement was pre-existing positive expectations and beliefs about their involvement (Jeynes, 2005b). If a parent held on to the notion that they were a good parent, and they were doing all that they could to help their child academically and the child was able to recognize it, that child performed better (e.g., self-fulfilling prophecies). Parents' perception of their children as well as their own abilities shapes their behavior toward their children, which can have an impact on children's self-efficacy and their performance (Eccles, 1992; Frome & Eccles, 1998; Pomerantz & Dong, 2006). For example, parents who believe their children are doing well academically convey this message to their children, which leads children to have better self-perceptions and perform better in school (Eccles, 1992; Frome & Eccles, 1998).

Parent Perception

The bioecological theory takes into account both the individual and the context in which they live dismissing stereotypes that have been used to label and stigmatize low-income families (Bronfenbrenner, 1989). Parent beliefs, which may be a result of previous or current experiences, are expected to have an effect on involvement by influencing a parent to interact favorably or unfavorably with their environment (i.e. school). This belief is an important predictor of parent involvement during the early

elementary school years. Parent beliefs about their children's academic abilities, beliefs about their own abilities to help their children succeed (i.e. self-efficacy), and about school (i.e. perception of the school, beliefs about barriers to involvement) are areas for further study. Research has indicated that low-income, less-educated parents typically have lower self-efficacy about their abilities to help their children academically and are less involved in school activities than middle-income, more educated parents (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1992; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). However, if these parents have a positive perception of their child's school and do not perceive themselves as having many barriers to being involved at school; are generally more active in school-based activities (NCES, 1996; Overstreet, Devine, Bevans, & Effreom, 2005; Dauber & Epstein, 1993).

Research has clearly shown that strong parent-teacher relationships lead to increased parental involvement (Knopf & Swick, 2006) which has been shown to have significant and lasting impact on children's academic achievement. The key factor in developing these meaningful relationships with families is determined by how teachers go about establishing partnerships that are perceived positively by parents and that lead to increased school involvement. Parents who want to become involved, and make a meaningful impact, are often not consulted on important issues regarding their child's schooling (Epstein, 1992; Lawson, 2003; Swick, 2004b). A recent study (Knopf & Swick, 2006) reported that parents do indeed have different understandings of involvement in their children's education suggesting that teachers acknowledge the need to communicate with parents regarding their perceptions of involvements so that teachers can use this knowledge when constructing avenues for parents to be involved and recognizing and valuing the ways that the parents are involved.

To establish the cooperative agreement between home and school, the lines of communication must be open and clear so that events that affect the child's education are communicated properly to both parties. Several researchers have found that trust and communication in the teacher or caregiver significantly influences parents' perceptions of the quality of care their child is receiving (Mensing, French, Fuller, & Kagan, 2000). The establishment of trust is dependent on the maintenance of a positive relationship and is only built through consistent positive interactions between the parents and caregivers (Swick, 2004a). Teachers who project a positive attitude toward the parent and the child and who are responsive to parent and child needs, seem to create a respectful relationship with the parent (Olson & Hyson, 2005). Positive parent-teacher interactions seem to promote a recursive pattern of teacher-parent interactions that empower the teacher and the parent Swick; (2004b). Parental perceptions are influenced by how they are treated. Swick (2004c) found the following to be important in parent beliefs about their role in their children's lives: (1) parents want someone who cares about them and their children; (2) parents want respect and to be seen as an effective member of their child's education team; (3) parents want to have a part in shaping the agenda that impacts them; (4) they want to see their ideas respected and used in creating quality care environments; (5) and finally parents want to be a part of a relationship that is collaborative and communicative. Nowhere is this more important than in low-income families. Often times the perception is that these parents don't care to be involved in their child's schooling, which is generally another cultural stereotype that has been used repeatedly to define these families. Swick; (2004b) identified three stereotypes that teachers hold to be true that are unfounded: (1) *Parents do not care*. This stereotype rooted in teachers' perceptions of

what caring parents do to support their child's education and classroom functioning. Teachers often perceive the failure of families to participate in parent/family involvement programs or in other school functions as supporting the idea that parents don't care (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003); (2) *Parents do not have the time or motivation*. However, Epstein (1995) notes that when parents and families feel connected to the school they take the time to be involved. In fact, Rich (1992) found that when parents were asked to give input on ways they could be involved, their participation in home learning activities increased; (3) *Parents are not interested in leadership roles*. On the contrary, Epstein (1995) found that when parents had opportunities for training and involvement in leadership areas, their participation increased.

In a study with low-income African American parents, Overstreet and colleagues (2005) examined predictors of parent involvement in school (i.e., demographic characteristics, parent's educational aspirations for their children, perceptions of their children's school and school involvement) among parents of school-age children. The sample included 159 African American mothers or female caretakers who were living in poverty and had low levels of education (96% had less than a high school education). Participants were interviewed using a community survey that was part of a larger community based project. The survey included questions about the parents' age, education level, current employment status, community involvement, and educational aspirations for both themselves and for their children. Parents were asked about their perceptions of their children's school (i.e., if the school listens to them, if the school sponsors activities for parents) and about their involvement in school activities (i.e. visited the child's classroom, member of the PTA, and number of times they visited the

school). The results from the study indicated that parents' educational aspirations for themselves and their children and parents' perceptions of the school were significantly correlated with parent involvement in school for school-age children. Parental perception was by far the most powerful predictor of school involvement. These findings suggest that parent beliefs about their child's school and its reception of them are very influential in the parent's decision to be involved at school which is consistent with previous studies that have been conducted. To help low-income parents improve their self-efficacy strategies for relationship building and developing positive perceptions are necessary. Swick (2004c) recommends the following: (1) decide to actively pursue meaningful relationships with all of the families through the school, (2) make sure the initial contact with parents is positive and early, (3) communicate with parents consistently through a variety of means, (4) learn individual parents needs and communicate how these needs are being met, (5) and finally listen to parents' concerns and respond to them. These strategies and other meaningful constructs can also be used to understand the parent/child relationship within a family systems perspective.

Parent/Child Relationship within Family Systems

Research shows that both overall family system functioning and parental behaviors are positively related to adolescent well-being (Grotevant, 1998). Overall family system functioning describes the invisible web of complex interactions patterns that regulate the day to day interactions among family members (Minuchin, 1974). Olson and Gorall also noted (2003) that effective (or balanced) overall family system functioning includes moderate levels of cohesion and flexibility, a balance between closeness and individuality, egalitarian leadership, democratic approaches to discipline,

and uses positive communication skills. Olson, McCubbin, Barnes, Larsen, Muxem, & Wilson (1992) identified four types of overall family functioning: (1) balanced families which tend to report moderate levels of both cohesion and adaptability, (2) moderately balanced families who report slightly higher or slightly lower than moderate levels of both cohesion and adaptability, (3) mid-range families that tend to report a slightly higher slightly lower than moderate level of either cohesion or adaptability with an extreme score on the remaining dimension, and (4) extreme families who report extremely high or extremely low levels of both cohesion and adaptability. Larsen and Olson (1990) believes that each individual in the family constructs his or her own understanding of overall family and subsystems whereby showing support to one another.

Parental support refers to nurturing adolescents through behaviors of parents such as encouragement, praise, general support, or physical affection (Peterson, & Hann, 1999). Parental support tends to be positively related to aspects of adolescent well-being such as general competence (Amato, 1989), identity achievement (Sartor & Youniss, 2002), academic achievement and self esteem (Bean, Bush, McKenry, & Wilson, 2003), family life satisfaction (Henry, 1994), and career self-efficacy (Turner & Lapan, 2002). When adolescents perceive their parents as more supportive, overall family functioning may also be higher (Barber & Buehler, 1996). A positive perception of family has an effect on home and school involvement.

The influence of home and family factors on children's educational outcomes has been widely recognized (Grolnick & Slowiaczeki, 1994; Reynolds, 1989; Cameron & Lee, 1997; Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). In the United States, the homes in which young people grow up are

changing. Only 15% of American children are raised in a typical family with a father, mother and two children (Rawlings & Hernandez, 1990). Increasingly, children in two-parent homes are growing up in families in which both parents are employed outside of the home; in 67% of households mothers are working at least part time, and in 27% of homes the mothers work full-time year round (House Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Family, 1987). The stresses of working outside the home, and providing for the family have taken a toll on the structure of the family system. Up to 27% of children are expected to spend at least some time in single-parent, often female-headed homes, and another 11% are expected to spend part of their lives with a stepparent (Bianchi, 1995; Norton & Glick, 1986). With an increased proportion of working and single-parent families represented in the population parents have little time or energy to be involved in their children's schooling either at home or at school (Smith et al., 1997), thus throwing off the family dynamics. Family dynamics have been consistently identified in the research as important factors in the academic and behavioral adjustment of children and adolescents.

Milner (1951) was one of the first to make the connection between early reading success and family interaction patterns such as direct and frequent verbal communication, open expression of positive affect, parental discipline style, and home training in responsibility and cooperation. Numerous studies have found a relationship between parenting style and preschool adjustment, elementary-age children's achievement and parent-child relationship patterns, as well as the academic adjustment of adolescents (Baumrind, 1975; Bluementhal 1985; Martinez, 1981; Olson 1984; Portes, Franke, & Alsop, 1984). Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, and Fraleigh (1987) demonstrated

autocratic and permissive parenting styles to be negatively correlated, and authoritative parenting positively correlated, with the academic achievement of high school students. Parents who are not as involved in their child's academics and are only called to the school when something is wrong tends to engage in punitive forms of punishment. Punitive parental control is where parents use or threaten to use force to gain adolescent compliance (Peterson & Hann, 1999). Punitive forms of punishment may result in short-term control over adolescents but it may encourage long term resistance of parental control. In general, punishment is negatively associated with family life satisfaction (Henry, 1994), general social competence, moral development, self-esteem; and increased risk of substance abuse and delinquency (Peterson & Hann, 1999). These negative behaviors can be corrected by introducing parents to training programs that have shown promise in building family dynamics, as well using family counseling interventions that have been shown to be effective in bringing about improved academic and behavioral performance. Parent involvement in counseling and consultation positively affects student motivation, academic achievement, self-esteem, and classroom behavior (Bertoldi, 1975; Esters & Levant, 1983; Hayes, Cunningham & Robinson, 1977; Hudgins & Stoudt, 1977; James and Etheridge, 1983). Parenting education training programs are designed to help parents discover the strengths and knowledge that they possess and build on that knowledge to empower their children to have greater success.

Parent Education Training Programs

The American family has experienced major changes over the past few decades (Korbin & Waite, 1984). Risk factors, such as single parenting, alcohol, and drug use, low-socio-economic level, and distressed parents, increase the chances of children

experiencing poor developmental outcomes (Dumka, Roosa, Michaels & Suh, 1995). The bulk of the changes have caused parents to question their own knowledge about child rearing techniques (Weiss, 1995) particularly in poverty stricken families. Taylor and Roberts (1995) described how poverty and economic distress make it difficult for youngsters to accomplish developmental tasks. Parents of these children often have less time to spend caring for their children because of external stresses related to poverty (Hewlett & West, 1998) and are in need of intensive, short term training to help their child overcome these developmental delays. Because low-income, minority families are faced with greater difficulties, parent education interventions should be employed to help them cope with stressors (Canning, 1994).

Croake and Glover (1977) defined parent education as the purposive learning activity of parents who are attempting to change their method of interaction with their children for the purpose of encouraging positive behavior. Although much has been written about parent education, evidence as to its outcomes is still limited. Powell (1986) contends that there is no convincing evidence that one particular program is significantly more effective than others. However, parent education programs that are integrated into children's early childhood programs may provide seamless child and family support in an ecologically valid context that supports both child and family functions. McIntyre & Phaneuf (2008) further state that parent education programs should be flexible, and various formats should be considered in dealing with at-risk families. The first format that is often used with at-risk families is the Self Administered Programs. Self-Administered parent training offers accessible interventions for many families, especially those that have difficulty participating through traditional means. Their programs

generally provide parents with literature, audiovisual material, or computer-delivered information. According to Markie-Dadds & Sanders (2006) and Nicholson & Sanders (1999), the self-administered intervention has been shown to be as effective as therapist directed programs. Whereas, Webster-Stratton, Kolpacoff, and Hollinsworth (1988) have found the self-administered mode of intervention delivery to be less effective when compared to a group discussion program. These studies suggest self-administered interventions may be helpful for some families; others may not respond to this form of intervention and may need additional support. The second, format of Parent Education programs is the Group-Based Programs. This format uses small group format (8-12) participants and allows families to receive more therapist attention in comparison to a self-administered format.

Group-based programs require more resources to implement, yet they are still more cost effective than individually delivered intervention. According to Dumas & Wahler (1983) a collateral benefit of group programs is the support and kinship available from other participants and increasing parental engagement with the intervention and the child's education program. Greater parental engagement is an important benefit of group formats, especially for those who may be socially isolated (e.g., low-income single mothers) with little support and few friendships. Although group-based parent education programs have proven to be successful, not every family benefits from this approach (Webster-Stratton & Hammon, 1997). This final mode of delivery for Parent Education training is the Individually Administered Programs. According to McIntyre and Phaneuf (2008), individually-administered programs offer many advantages over self-administered or group-based programs. In individually administered programs, there is

increased flexibility in scheduling sessions and individualizing the context. The researchers' further state that therapists who provide individualized sessions can give parents feedback specific to their situations and address parents' questions and concerns in a more individualized, tailored fashion.

However, the primary disadvantage of individually administered programs is the cost. Webster-Stratton (1984) argued that group-based programs were more efficient and effective for many families. Yet, parents were more likely to accept and participate in individually based intervention than in group interventions (Chadwick, Momciloric, Rossiter, Stumbles & Taylor, 2001). In addition Lundahal, Risser, & Lovejoy (2006) found individually delivered interventions to be superior to group-delivered interventions for financially disadvantaged groups. Families with low-socioeconomic status participated in individually delivered parent programs were shown to have greater treatment effects than those that participated in group-delivered programs. Whipple and Wilson (1996) cited research findings supporting the effectiveness of parent-focused interventions with well-specified training components aimed at improving child rearing competence and stress management.

There have been numerous Parent Training programs cited in the research that have been proven useful for working with at-risk families. One such program is Nobody's Perfect (NP) which is a national education and support program developed by Health Canada in the Maritimes in 1987 (Chislett & Kennett, 2006). The program is designed for parents who are young, single, socially isolated, geographically isolated, or who have limited formal education or income. NP helps parents of children up to five years of age to increase their parenting knowledge and skills, and promote the healthy

development of their children. Parents also learn life-skills such as budgeting, and stress and anger management and are referred to community resources. Another evidenced-based program being highlighted in the research is the Families and Schools Together (FAST) program. FAST is an after-school, multifamily support group to increase parent involvement in schools and improve children's well-being (McDonald, Coe-Braddish, Billingham, Dibble & Rice, 1991; McDonald, Billingham, Conrad, Morgan & Payton, 1997). This is accomplished by using a collaborative, culturally representative, team of parents and professionals who facilitate the multifamily group to engage parents into building social networks through the schools. These relationships act as protective factors at several levels of a child's social ecology (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

The FAST program has no formal curriculum or instruction, a team leads a structured package of interactive processes at the group sessions to enhance relationships. The activities presented in the FAST sessions are based on theory and research particularly family stress theory (Boyd-Franklin & Bry, 2000; McCubbin, Thompson, Thompson & Former, 1998), parent-led play therapy (Kogan, 1978; Kumpfer, Molgaard & Spoth, 1996; Webster-Stratton, 1985), and adult education and community involvement (Alinksky, 1971; Freire, 1997). This program has been implemented with on-site training and evaluation of child and family outcomes by a national, nonprofit organization at more than 800 schools in 45 states and 5 countries (McDonald, Moberg, Brown, Rodriguez-Espiricueta, Flores, Burke, & Coover, 2006). An additional program highlighted in the research is the District Parent-Training Program (DPTP; Cooper & Christie, 2005). The DPTP is a curriculum-based parent education program sponsored by UCLA that strives to inform urban, school parents about curriculum content, instruction,

subject matter frameworks, academic standards, and assessment. The DPTP aims to inform parents about the impact of school reform in their district, to foster positive teacher-parent interactions, and encourage parents to become school volunteers and community leaders whereby they advocate for all children, not just their own. The program is designed to implement tasks that empower parents, and exemplify a parent education program that other schools and districts will want to model (Cooper & Christie, 2005).

A final review of the research yielded another program that is often modeled in schools and hospitals. The Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP) program is intended for use in parent study groups to help parents learn effective ways to relate to their children (Kroth & Kroth, 1976). The step program included concepts associated with two popular parent education programs; Adlerian study groups based on Dreikurs and Soltz's *Children: The Challenge*, and the Rogerian principles found within Gordon's Parent Effectiveness Training (PET). The program has seven objectives: (1) understand a practical theory of human behavior and its implications for parent-child relationships; (2) learn new procedures for establishing democratic relationships with their children; (3) improve communication between themselves and their children, so all concerned feel they are being heard; (4) develop skills of listening, resolving conflicts, and exploring alternatives with their children; (5) learn how to use encouragement and logical consequences to modify their children's self-defeating motives and behaviors; (6) learn how to conduct family meetings; and (7) become aware of their own self-defeating patterns of faulty convictions which keep them from being effective parents who enjoy their children.

Several studies have been conducted that attempt to assess the effectiveness of these different types of parenting programs. Researchers such as Burnett (1988); Jackson and Brown (1986); Brooks, Spearn, Rice, and Crocco (1988); and Krebs (1986) all have published research that supports the Adlerian parenting program, STEP, as being effective in making positive changes (e.g., in children's behavior and self-concept and parental behavior and attitude in family systems). Still, Todres and Bunston (1993) and Rogers-Wiese (1992) argue that methodological problems (e.g. absence of consideration of experimenter bias; failure to incorporate large numbers of individuals in the design; and failure to compare treatment groups with no treatment groups) exist in the research that attempts to evaluate the overall effectiveness of parenting programs. In contrast, Dinkmeyer, McKay & Dinkmeyer (1990) cite research that supports the effectiveness of STEP on various dimensions and argues that some of the critical reviews of the literature against STEP have their own methodological problems as well. Ritchie and Partin (1994) report that STEP is the most popular program with school counselors because it's an easy to understand program that addresses issues of misbehavior identification, family dynamics, encouragement, communication styles, and discipline techniques. Overall the parent education programs that were successful with lower-socioeconomic status families were less dependent on reading and discussion formats, but utilize more role playing, model and coaching in the training methods (Cowden, 1995). For low-income African American parents to receive the most beneficial parent involvement training, specific elements must be in place. First, successful training begins with high parent attendance. Parents must be willing to participate in the training that is being offered so recruitment strategies must match the population to be served. Recruitment strategies that include

personal contact and use of former parents are most effective in increasing attendance. Asking parents and following up with them has also been shown to increase involvement (Balli, et. al, 1998). Second, the needs of parents should be considered in developing a parent education training program. This may involve sending out questionnaires soliciting help in scheduling, content, location, child care, and transportation needs. Third, parents are not interested in replicating school at home, but instead they want to enrich a child's life by building background through experiences, exploration, and exposure to high quality educational resources. Understanding the key elements to successful parent involvement education training programs will assist in the design of parental involvement training programs for future studies. This study will focus on designing a parent education training program that will improve parents' perceptions of their home and school involvement whereby improving children's academic outcomes.

Conclusion

The literature reviewed yielded rather consistent findings. Parental involvement and Urie Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological theory has been shown to affect students' achievement and overall educational experience. The bioecological theory allows on to look at multiple areas within a child's environment that may influence academic achievement which can ultimately help others understand how parent involvement can improve student outcomes. Parental involvement has been shown to affect students' achievement and overall educational experience. Parental involvement is often grouped by parent-child interaction at home, parent-teacher interaction, parent-school activities, and parental aspirations and expectations of the child (Carter & Wojtkiewicz, 2000; Fan, 2001; Ma, 1999; Shumow & Miller, 2001; Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996).

Socioeconomic status has been found to affect student academic achievement and parental involvement. For example, high poverty levels predict low educational attainment (Cooney, 2001; Ma, 2000; Portes & MacLeod, 1996; Yzaguirre, 2001). In addition, family socioeconomic status has been found to be moderately correlated with parental involvement, home discussion, school communication, and school participation (Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996).

Ethnicity is another variable that has been shown to determine the degree of parental involvement (Balli, 1996; Singh et al., 1995). Most researchers found differences among ethnic groups depending on the dimensions of parental involvement measured by (i.e. school communication, school participation, home discussion, home supervision, educational expectations) (Desimone, 1999; Huang & Waxman, 1993; National Center for Education Statistics, 1994; Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996; Yan & Lin, 2005). Parent's level of education is an additional indicator of participation in their children's education. Namely, the higher the parent's educational degree, the greater their involvement with their children's education (Shumow & Miller, 2001).

There are a number of limitations to the literature of parent involvement. First, there is a lack of consensus about the definition of parent involvement; while the majority of researchers define involvement as parent activities done at school (i.e. parent-teacher conferences), other studies include home-based involvement activities such as reading to children and helping with homework (Epstein, 1985; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Griffith, 1996; Grolnick, Benjet, Kurowski, & Apostoleris, 1997). Second, while few studies have used Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory, most in the field do not have a theoretical base. The bioecological theory allows for the exploration of multiple components within

a child's environment that may influence academic achievement and thus can help the field to understand how parent involvement serves as a mechanism for improved outcomes. Third, the majority of parent involvement literature is based on qualitative and intervention studies using small, unrepresentative samples (Epstein, & Dauber, 1991; Fan & Chen, 2001). While these studies offer insights into the factors that promote parent involvement and generate hypotheses that can be tested with larger samples, the generalizability of their findings are limited. Fourth, although there is a growing body of parent involvement research on young children, there continues to be a lack of longitudinal research on parent involvement across the early school years. By assessing parent involvement over time, it enables researchers to understand the effects of involvement over time on children's academic outcomes. Lastly, there are several associations between parents' characteristics, involvement and child outcomes that have remained unexplored. For example, although studies suggest that parent's beliefs about their children's academic performance are associated with their children's school achievement (Pomerantz, & Dong, 2006) it is unclear how these beliefs are associated with parent involvement. Further research is needed to explore this area. The current study explores the relationship between parental involvement and students' academic performance. Additionally, the study will examine the effects of intensive parenting workshops to determine if parent participation will help improve school knowledge and academic outcomes of students whose parents have actively participated.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Chapter III includes a description of the research design, and discusses the rationale for the approach. In addition, the sample population, participant selection, research procedures, and instrumentation are described. Lastly, issues of external validity, data analysis, and limitations are discussed.

Research Design

Parents of students enrolled in the College Reach-Out Program (CROP) at a community college in Central Florida participated in this study. Parent Involvement Training workshops were conducted to help improve parental home and school participation and knowledge of important academic and behavioral issues of students, as well as helping to improve parents' attitudes toward parenting and toward their children, and overall family functioning. In order to measure the efficacy of the PIT, which has been designed to help improve student success several quantitative and qualitative methods were used to collect data to aid the investigator in this process. This study employed a mixed methodology approach. A mixed methodology study compares both quantitative and qualitative data (Jones, 2004). Quantitative data is numerical and often originates from questionnaires or structured interviews; whereas qualitative data is descriptive in nature and is often derived from unstructured interviews or observations (Taylor, Richardson, Yeo, March, Trobe, & Pilkington, 1995). The mixed method approach to research uses both quantitative and qualitative instruments. The use of the two methods will allow for a more accurate interpretation of the entire analysis.

Quantitative Phase: A Quasi-Experimental One Group Pretest/Post Test Design

The quantitative phase of the study made use of a one group pre/post test design. According to Isaac and Michel (1995) Quasi-experimental research approximates the conditions of a true experiment in a setting that does not allow for the control and/or manipulation of all relevant variables. This research typically involves settings (i.e., education) where it is not possible to control the relevant variables the investigator must have a clear understanding of the issues related to internal and external validity so as to not compromise the study. Because the community college is an educational institution that does not believe in denying any parent and child an opportunity for advancement, a true experimental and control group was not able to be utilized.

Intervention

Parents completed a demographic survey (Appendix E) designed to collect data on family demographics, ethnicity, level of education, family income and employment status. Parents were given the Parent-Child Relationship Inventory (PCRI; Gerard, 1994). The Parent-Child Relationship Inventory (Appendix J) is a (78) item self-report measure intended to assess parents' attitudes toward parenting and their children. Parents and students were given the McMaster Family Assessment Device (FAD Appendix K). The Family Assessment Device was designed to assess the dimensions of the McMaster model according to family members' perception (Epstein et al., 1983). The FAD consists of a total of sixty statements describing various aspects of family functioning, with the number of items in the subscales ranging from 6 to 12. Family members complete the assessment by rating how well each statement describes their family by selecting among four alternative responses: strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. The questionnaire is designed to be completed by family members over the age of 12.

Additionally, individual interviews were conducted to collect data on parents' perception of their home and school involvement.

These two quantitative questions guided the first part of this study.

1. What effect will Parent Involvement Training (PIT) have on parents' attitude toward parenting?
2. What effect will Parent Involvement Training (PIT) have on overall family functioning for CROP families?

Hypotheses

1. ^{H1} Parents who are given training consisting of practical tips on enriching their relationships with their children will be more likely to improve their attitude toward parenting as measured by the Parent-Child Relationship Inventory.
2. ^{H2} Parent training programs that provide comprehensive, and clinically sound techniques (i.e., Communication, Roles, and Behavior Control, etc.) will help to increase overall family functioning for CROP families, as measured by the Family Assessment Device.

Quantitative Instrumentation

The data for the study was collected utilizing three self-administered inventories. The first inventory administered was the researcher developed demographic survey. The survey consists of 11 questions designed to collect data on family demographics (i.e., age, gender, marital status, etc.). The second inventory administered was the Parent-Child Relationship Inventory (PCRI; Gerard, 1994). The PCRI is a 78-item self-report questionnaire that can be administered either to an individual or a group. Parents respond to each item using a four (4) point Likert scale with responses ranging from "Strongly

Agree”, “Agree”, “Disagree”, and “Strongly Agree”. The items are grouped into seven content scales: Parent Support Scale (9 items), Satisfaction with Parenting Scale (10 items), Involvement Scale (14 items), Communication Scale (9 items), Limit Setting Scale (12 items), Autonomy Scale (10 items), and the Role Orientation Scale (9 items).

Normative data for the PCRI (Gerard, 1994) was collected on over 1,100 predominately white mothers and fathers across the United States in four major geographical areas (North East, South, Mid-West, and West) the parents were identified through schools and day care centers. Letters were sent out by the authors to solicit participation in the study. The response for participation was very low with only 4.4 % of the 2,000 schools and day care centers agreeing to participate. According to Boothroyd (2004), this resulted in the normative sample being more educated and less diverse than the U.S. population as a whole. The author created separate norms to account for children who are living with the father as opposed to the mother.

Boothroyd (2004) reported internal consistency and the test-retest reliability estimates were generated using data collected from the standardization sample. Individual samples yielded alphas ranging from .70 on the parental support scale to .88 on the limit setting scale, the median value alpha is .80. Boothroyd also (2004) reported that validity for the PCRI was achieved using expert judges from various disciplines to help eliminate gender and cultural bias. According to the assessment manual (Gerard, 1994), five of the seven scales highly correlated with their own scale scores more so than they did with the score totals from the other scales. There was also a high inter-correlation between the PCRI satisfaction and involvement scales (.64), the Satisfaction and Limit setting Scales

(.65), and the Limit Setting and Autonomy Scale (.64) suggesting that the scales may be somewhat redundant.

Scaled score (*t*-scores and percentiles) are based on a sample of the 1, 139 parents with higher scores on each scale indicating better parenting. Scores that are one standard deviation below the mean are indicative of possible problematic parenting, with two standard deviations below the mean indicating the possibility for serious parenting problems. The PCRI can be scored manually or by using computer software provided by the publisher.

The last inventory used was the McMaster Family Assessment Device (FAD). The McMaster Family Assessment Device was originally designed as a screening instrument only. The premise was to collect information on the various dimensions of the family system as a whole, and to collect this information directly from family members (Epstein, Baldwin, & Bishop, 1983). The FAD is a 60-item self-report instrument that yields scores on each of the six dimensions (Roles, Affective Responsiveness, Affective Involvement, Behavior Control, Problem Solving, and Communication) of family functioning as well as a general functioning score. The scores on the FAD items range from 1 (healthy) to 4 (unhealthy), and questions are worded to emphasize both positive and negative family functioning.

The psychometric properties of the FAD have been described in detail in previous publications (Epstein et al., 1983; Kabacoff, Miller, Bishop, Epstein, & Keitner, 1990; Miller, Epstein, Bishop, & Keitner, 1985). The FAD has been found to have high levels of internal consistency across a variety of different types of families, and acceptable levels of test-retest reliability (Miller et al., 1985). The FAD scales have been found to be

moderately correlated ($r = .4 - .6$), this level of intercorrelation is consistent with the theoretical perspective that all aspects of family functioning are interrelated.

The FAD has also been found to have low correlations with social desirability ($r = .06 - .19$), moderate correlations with global measures of marital functioning such as the Dyadic Adjustment Scale and the Locke-Wallace Marital Satisfaction Scale ($r = .47, .59$). The FAD has been found to correlate moderately ($r = .4 - .6$) with the observer-rated McMaster Clinical Rating Scale (Miller et al., 1994).

The FAD has been translated into fourteen languages with empirical evidence of its utility in different cultures (Miller et al., 2000) and has been used in over forty research studies. In general, these studies support the discriminative validity of the FAD and its utility as a research instrument. In addition, the FAD has been extensively used as an assessment tool by family clinicians. The twelve items comprising the general functioning scale of the FAD have been used along as a brief measure of overall family functioning, with excellent psychometric properties (Byles, Byrne, Boyle, & Offord, 1988).

Quantitative Data Collection

Both parents and CROP students were asked to attend the Pre-Session meeting. The Pre-Session was scheduled a week prior to the PIT workshops beginning. During the Pre-Session, parents completed all necessary documentation to participate in this research study (i.e., informed consent, parent consent form, etc.). CROP students also completed the research assent form, and both parents and students were administered the Family Assessment Device. The students in this study were assessed because family functioning is much more related to the systemic properties of the family system as opposed to the

individual characteristics of family members. Only assessing the parents would not have provided an accurate description on how the family functions. Once students completed the FAD they were directed to a separate holding room that was reserved for childcare services. Parents completed the PCRI, and FAD posttest assessments during the post-session.

Qualitative Phase: Individual Parent Interviews

The qualitative phase of the study, individual parent interviews were utilized to give meaning to the experience of participating in the Parent Involvement Training workshops. According to Creswell (1998) the analysis of interviews via open-ended questions highlighting participant perceptions about the meaning of an experience or event is commonly referred to as a phenomenological tradition. The qualitative phase of the study used a purposive sample. The parents in this study were available and expecting to participate. The individual parent interviews were guided by these questions:

1. Tell me about your participation at your child's school prior to attending the PIT workshops.
2. Tell me what you enjoy most about the opportunity to meet with personnel from your child's school.
3. What has the experience of participating in the Parent Involvement Training workshops meant for you?
4. What do you believe it has meant to your child?

Qualitative data collection

Data was collected following the Post-Session (See Appendix G). The individual parent interviews were conducted after the Post-session. The investigator called all

participants to schedule their 25 minute interview. The participants were offered the convenience of having the interview conducted at their home, at the community college campus, or some other previously decided upon location. The investigator used a digital audio recording device. The data collected during the process was analyzed to determine if the Parent Involvement Training workshops were helpful in improving parents home and school involvement. All data with identifiers were kept in a locked file cabinet separate from other data. The audio files will be destroyed five years after completion of the study.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Transcriptions from the participant interviews were microanalyzed as described by Miles and Huberman (1994), in order to correlate wording toward the development of associating similar phraseologies between interviews. From this correlation, themes representing participants' perceptions will be represented utilizing, rich, thick narratives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Quotations from interviewees will provide a platform giving voice to the participants (Moustakas, 1994). The data collected was transcribed and analyzed by the investigator.

Independent Variable

The independent variable in this study was the Parent Involvement Training (PIT) workshops.

Dependent Variables

There were two dependent variables derived from the following instruments: (1) parents' attitude toward parenting and their child as measured by the Parent-Child

Relationship Inventory; (2) family functioning as measured by the Family Assessment Device.

Participants

Participants for the study were parents whose children are enrolled in the College Reach-Out Program (CROP) at a community college in Central Florida. CROP is a state funded initiative that provides focused educational and enrichment opportunities to students in grades 6-12 who might otherwise be unlikely to seek admission to a post secondary institution. To be eligible for CROP, students must be first generation college attendees, on free or reduced lunch (based on family income) or need academic help (indicated by low FCAT scores, GPA, etc.). The Parent Involvement Training workshops were open to all parents who have children actively participating in CROP. Parents who expressed an interest were invited to participate. Enrollment was on an availability basis. The first 20 parents enrolled made up the participant group. A large number of students enrolled in CROP reside in West Orange and Osceola counties. Many of them attend large urban schools that have been cited for low test scores by the Florida Department of Education. These students have been identified as having academic and economic issues that have resulted in multiple retentions and decreased graduation rates, furthering the need for greater parental involvement.

Selection of Participants

The investigator in charge of this study is employed by the community college and serves as the program coordinator for CROP and facilitated the workshops. Using Action Research the investigator and the parents worked collaboratively to generate knowledge and shared experiences through a process of action, reflection, and

investigation. Prior to sending out letters, parent contact information was assessed using the internal institutional CROP database. The investigator requested permission to use this database from the Assistant Vice President of Transition Services at the community college. The investigator then sent out letters (Appendix F) to parents inviting them to participate in the Parent Involvement Training workshops. The letter addressed the goals, program objectives, session topics, and inclusion of CROP students for one assessment, and expected benefits of participating in the workshops. The letter included a form for parents to complete indicating their availability for optimal participation. The investigator gave parents two weeks to submit their information expressing an interest in participating in the workshops. After two weeks, the investigator made telephone contact with parents who submitted their information addressing the location and time of the Pre-Session (See Appendix G) meeting. Both parents and CROP students were asked to attend the Pre-Session meeting. During the Pre-Session parents completed all necessary documentation to participate in this research study (i.e., informed consent, parent consent form, etc.). CROP students also completed the research assent form, and both parents and students were administered the Family Assessment Device.

The Pre-Session, Post-Session and all other PIT workshops (See Appendix G) took place at the community college campus. Parents were given an introduction to the Parent Involvement Training workshop goals and program objectives. The investigator distributed informed consent and confidentiality agreements to program participants in small groups of 4 to 5 participants. The small group format was utilized to make certain that parents had a complete understanding of the research being conducted. As in all parent workshops and correspondences to date the information has been presented in

English unless specifically requested by a parent, at which time the correspondence and or workshop material is presented in their primary language. The Parent Involvement Training workshops followed the procedure that was already in place. In addition, all instruments meet national adult reading standards. According to the National Center for Education, (Kutnier, Greenbery, & Baer, 2002), “Half of American adults read at or below an 8th grade level”. The PCRI is at the 4th grade reading level (Mental Measurement Yearbook, 1994), and the FAD is at a 6th grade reading level (Grotevant, & Carlson, 1989). Parents were assured that participating in the program will not negatively affect their child or their position in the College Reach-Out Program.

Procedure

Permission to conduct this study was obtained via the Barry University Institutional Review Board (IRB); in addition, consent was obtained from the community college’s Institutional Review Board. The investigator for this study is employed by the community college and is the Program Coordinator for the College Reach-Out Program. Following approval, the introductory letters were sent out to the parents, and students targeted for subject recruitment as described earlier. Once documentation was returned expressing interests in participating in the workshops the investigator contacted all participants to determine availability for workshop sessions. Participants received a phone call confirming the time and date of the first Parent Involvement Training workshop.

The Parent Involvement Training workshops were conducted once a week for five consecutive weeks. The Pre-Session was scheduled a week prior to the Parent Involvement Training workshops starting and included the introduction to the program,

completion of informed consent, and the completion of all pre-test assessments.

Participants were instructed to complete the researcher developed demographic survey, and Parent-Child Relationship Inventory (PCRI). Parent assessments were administered by an independent instructor other than the investigator who is knowledgeable in the area of testing and assessments and was able to answer questions that study participants had. The independent instructor completed the third-party confidentiality form (Appendix P). Additionally, individual interviews were conducted to collect data on parents' perception of their home and school involvement. CROP students also completed the research assent form, and both parents and students were administered the Family Assessment Device. Once students completed the FAD they were directed to a separate holding room that was reserved for childcare services. All parent and student assessments were coded using a numerical identifier. This identifier was used to help the researcher determine a baseline score at the onset of the PIT workshops, and at the conclusion of the PIT workshops. The identifiers were kept in a separate locked file cabinet from the data. The curriculum for the Parent Involvement Training workshops were created by the investigator after meeting with CROP parents for monthly meetings. In these meeting parents demonstrated their ability to work together to develop areas they wanted more training in to help their child have better academic success, and improve their overall family functioning.

Participants were then given an overview of the program as well as the anticipated outcomes (see Appendix G for Parenting Involvement Training Workshops Instructional Calendar). The training workshops were held at the community college campus during the evening hours at a time designated as most convenient for a majority of respondents. Childcare services were provided for each session. Light refreshments

were served before each session. Parent Involvement Training workshops were conducted over a five week period. The objective of these workshops was to help improve parental home and school participation and increase their knowledge of important academic and behavioral issues of students. The workshops were also designed to improve parents' attitudes toward parenting and their children, and to improve overall family functioning. To promote these meaningful social changes, several strategies were employed to engage parents in self-reflection: (a) planning a change within the family; acting and observing the process and consequences of change; (b) reflecting on these process and consequences; and (c) further cycles of planning. The workshops were held once a week for five consecutive weeks. Guest speakers were invited to speak with parents about the topic covered during the weekly workshop sessions. The guest speakers had many years of experience on their topic, which allowed for greater interaction and discussion with workshop participants.

At the completion of the PIT workshops a Post-Session was scheduled where parents and CROP students were asked to attend. The Post-Session was scheduled a week after the PIT workshops ended. During the Post-Session both parents and students were administered the Family Assessment Device. Once students completed the FAD, they were directed to a separate holding room that was reserved for childcare services. The other assessments, the PCRI, were administered in the same format as the Pre-Session (Appendix G). The information the research participants provided was held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Any published results of the research will refer to group averages only and no names will be used in the study. Data will be kept in a locked file in the investigator's office. The signed consent forms will be kept separate from the data.

All data will be destroyed after five years from the completion of this research project. At the completion of the study, participants were given the opportunity to share with the investigator the impact that the program has had on them personally as well as the impact that it has had on their child(ren). The investigator offered to share individual data with subjects to determine how effective the program was in helping to increase parental involvement at home and school, and improving attitude toward parenting, and family functioning. If participants experienced emotional distress from this study, they were provided with contact information for the Barry Family Enrichment Center (BFEC), 321-235-8413, at Barry University - Orlando for counseling services. Barry Family Enrichment Center provided counseling services to participants in this study at no cost (See Appendix P).

Threats to Internal Validity

The main threats to internal validity will happen from interaction between such variables as selection and maturation, selection and history, or selection and testing. Because the investigator is not using the randomization process the possibility exists that some difference not reflected in the pretest, is operating to contaminate the posttest data. One possible example of this will be the volunteer participants. Because they have volunteered to participate in this study their motivation may be higher.

Threats to External Validity

In regards to external validity, the extent to which the results can be generalized to other populations is limited. The results of this study can only be generalized to other parents and students participating in the College Reach-Out Program (CROP) in Central Florida. It cannot be generalized to parents and students within the general population of

the school because they are not receiving the specialized services that CROP students and parents receive on a continuous basis.

Assumptions

Best and Khan (1998) define assumptions as statements of what the investigator believes to be facts but cannot verify. In this study, it was assumed that parents and students completed assessments properly and independent of each other. It was also assumed that parents and students had the necessary reading skills to comprehend and record their responses properly. In the alternative, it was assumed that translators were effectively able to communicate with participants allowing the participants to correctly respond.

Limitations

Limitations are defined as conditions beyond the control of the researcher that may place restrictions on the conclusions of the study and their application to other situations (Best & Khan, 1998). Participants in the Parent Involvement Training workshops were recruited for this program because they were from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, which may have hindered their access to reliable transportation, being able to take time off from work, and having safe and reliable child care services for their children possibly causing a lack of full participation in the training sessions. An additional limitation may have evolved from the use of the PCRI wherein the normative data for the PCRI was collected on a sample of more than 1,000 predominately white parents whereas the current study was conducted primarily with African American and Latino families.

Delimitations

Delimitations are defined as conditions within the control of the investigator that may place restrictions on the conclusion of the study, and their application to other situations (Best and Kahn, 1998). There were two delimitations that apply to this study. First, this study only focused on subjects from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and the results may not be generalizable to other populations. Second, the study was conducted with subjects who volunteered to participate so their responses and participation may be different than someone who was mandated to attend parenting workshops.

Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences for Windows, Version 14.0 for Students software will be used to analyze results (SPSS, Chicago, IL).

Summary

In summary, parents were asked to complete three quantitative inventories. First, parents completed a researcher developed demographic survey. The second inventory administered was the Parent-Child Relationship Inventory (PCRI), and the final inventory used was the Family Assessment Device (FAD). Additionally, individual interviews were conducted to collect data on parental involvement at home and school and parents' perception of the students' academic achievement and educational goals. Data collected was utilized to determine the impact that Participatory Action Research and Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory has had on parent home and school involvement, parenting attitude, and family functioning of parents participating in the College Reach-Out Program. The information gathered may provide CROP administrators, schools, teachers, community groups, and program coordinators with

useful information for creating and maintaining more effective and comprehensive interventions for improving home and school involvement, parenting attitude, and family functioning.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Because the traditional methods of parental involvement such as Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings and parent conferences are no longer effective in getting parents involved, alternative methods must be implemented to engage and empower parents to take a more active role in their child's education (Heymann, 2000). The purpose of this research was to present a series of workshops using the Participatory Action Research (PAR) method whereby the investigator and the parents worked together to gain a better understanding of how to become actively involved in their child's education. Using the key principles of PAR, the investigator and parents collaborated to generate knowledge that resulted action.

Parent Involvement Training workshops were conducted to improve parental home and school participation and knowledge of important academic and behavioral issues of students, as well as to improve parents' attitudes toward parenting and toward their children, and overall family functioning. The independent variable in this study was the Parent Involvement Training (PIT) workshops. The two dependent variables were (a) parents' attitudes toward parenting and their child as measured by the Parent-Child Relationship Inventory (PCRI) (Gerard, 1994) and; (b) family functioning as measured by the Family Assessment Device (Epstein, Baldwin, & Bishop, 1983).

The goal of the study was to investigate the following research questions: (a) What effect will Parent Involvement Training (PIT) have on parents' attitude toward parenting; (b) What effect will Parent Involvement Training (PIT) have on overall family

functioning for CROP families? The corresponding hypotheses were: (1) Parents who are given training consisting of practical tips on enriching their relationships with their children will be more likely to improve their attitude toward parenting as measured by the Parent-Child Relationship Inventory. (2) Parent training programs that provide comprehensive, and clinically sound techniques (i.e., Communication, Roles, and Behavior Control, etc.) will help to increase overall family functioning for CROP families, as measured by the Family Assessment Device.

Parents of students enrolled in the College Reach-Out Program (CROP) at a community college in Central Florida and their child (CROP student) participated in this study. The Parent Involvement Training workshops were open to all parents who had children actively participating in CROP. Parents who expressed interest were invited to participate. Because the community college is an educational institution that does not believe in denying any parent or child an opportunity for advancement, a true experimental and control group was not utilized. The study used a one group pretest/posttest design. Parents were administered the Parent-Child Relationship Inventory as pre and post assessments. The PCRI is a 78 item self-report measure that assesses parents' attitudes toward parenting and their children. Parents and students also completed the McMaster Family Assessment Device (FAD) as pre and posttest assessments. The FAD assesses the dimensions of the McMaster model according to family members' perceptions (Epstein et al., 1983). The FAD consists of a total of 60 statements describing various aspects of family functioning, with the number of items in the subscales ranging from 6 to 12. Parents also completed a researcher developed demographic questionnaire designed to collect data on family background (parents'

ethnicity, level of education, and socioeconomic status). Eighteen parents and eighteen students participated in the study.

This chapter will present the descriptive and inferential statistics of the study. Paired sample *t*-tests were used to analyze the quantitative data. The individual parent interviews were micro analyzed. A discussion regarding the findings and conclusions derived from individual qualitative interviews was conducted.

Descriptive Statistics

This study was based on a sample of 18 parents and 18 students participating in the College Reach-Out Program (CROP) at a community college in Central Florida. A large number of students enrolled in CROP reside in West Orange and Osceola counties. Many of them attend large urban schools that have been cited for low test scores by the Florida Department of Education. These students have been identified as having academic and economic issues that have resulted in multiple retentions and decreased graduation rates, furthering the need for greater parental involvement.

The demographic characteristics of the sample are reported in Table 1. The parents who participated in the Parent Involvement Training workshops were identified by three ethnic groups: fourteen (77.8%) were African American (three were Haitian, yet they identified themselves as African American), three (16.7%) were Hispanic, and one (5.6%) was White. The population was mostly female. There were fifteen (83.3%) mothers and three (16.7%) fathers who participated. The age range for the participants varied; one parent (5.6%) fell into the 25-30 age bracket, two (11.1%) were between the ages of 30-35, three (16.7%) were between the ages of 36-40, and two (11.1%) were between the ages of 41-44. Ten (55.6%) participants were in the 45-or-older category.

Nine (50%) of the parents were married, two (11.1%) were single, three (16.7%) were divorced, one (5.6%) was widowed, two (11.1%) were separated, and one (5.6%) was part of a non-married couple.

The educational level of the workshop participants was diverse: one (5.6%) had less than a high school education, two (11.1%) had some high school preparation, six (33.3) completed high school, eight (44.4%) had taken some form of college courses, and one (5.6%) had completed graduate school.

The participants had wide-ranging employment positions: eleven (61.1%) were employed, one (5.6%) was self-employed, one (5.6%) was out of work for more than a year, one (5.6%) was out of work for less than a year, two (11.1%) were homemakers, one (5.6%) was retired, and one (5.6%) was unable to work.

Family income levels also varied: two (11.1%) made 60,000 or more a year, one (5.6%) made 59,999-50,000, one (5.6%) made 49,999-40,000, two (11.1%) made 39,999-30,000, four (22.2%) made 29,999-20,000, while six (33.3%) were in the largest income range of 19,999-10,000 for participants, and two (11.1%) were in the 9,999-1,000 income range.

The student's demographic characteristics are presented in Table 2. Of the eighteen students who participated in the study there were fourteen (77.8%) African Americans, two (11.1%) Hispanics, one (5.6%) White/Non Hispanic, and one (5.6%) who identified themselves as other. There were twelve (66.7%) female and six (33.3%) male students. Their grade levels ranged from middle school to college freshman; two (11.1%) were in middle school, sixteen (88.88%) were in high school, and two 11.1% were freshman in college.

Table 1. *Demographics.-Distribution of Sample (N=18)*

Characteristics	N	%
Ethnicity		
African American	14	77.8%
Hispanic/Latino	3	16.7%
White/Non Hispanic	1	5.6%
Gender		
Male	3	16.7%
Female	15	83.3%
Age		
20-25	1	5.6%
30-35	2	11.1%
36-40	3	16.7%
41-44	2	11.1%
45-or over	10	55.6%
Marital Status		
Single	2	11.1%
Married	9	50.0%
Divorced	3	16.7%
Widowed	1	5.6%
Separated	2	11.1%
Couple	1	5.6%
Education Level		
Less than High School	1	5.6%
Some High School	2	11.1%
High School Graduate	6	33.3%
Some College	8	44.4%
Graduate School	1	5.6%
Employment Status		
Employed	11	61.1%
Self-Employed	1	5.6%
Out of work less than Year	1	5.6%
Out of work more than Year	1	5.6%
Homemaker	2	11.1%
Retired	1	5.6%
Unable to work	1	5.6%
Family Income		
1,000-9,999	2	11.1%
10,000-19,999	6	33.3%
20,000-29,999	4	22.2%
30,000-39,999	2	11.1%
40,000-49,000	1	5.6%
50,000-59,999	1	5.6%
60,000 and above	2	11.1%

Table 2. *Student Demographic-Distribution of Sample (N=18)*

Characteristics	N	%
Ethnicity		
African American	14	77.8%
Hispanic/Latino	2	11.1%
White/Non Hispanic	1	5.6%
Other	1	5.6%
Gender		
Male	6	33.3%
Female	12	66.7%
Grade Level		
7	1	5.6%
8	1	5.6%
9	4	22.22%
10	3	16.67%
11	3	16.67%
12	4	22.22%
13	2	11.1%

Inferential Statistics

Quantitative Data Analysis

Research Question 1: What effect will Parent Involvement Training (PIT) have on parents' attitude toward parenting?

Hypothesis 1: Parents who are given training consisting of practical tips on enriching their relationships with their children will significantly improve their attitude toward parenting as measured by the Parent-Child Relationship Inventory.

The first hypothesis was tested using a paired samples *t*-test analysis. For the seven subscales on the Parent-Child Relationship Inventory: Support, Satisfaction, Involvement, Communication, Limit Setting, Authoritative, and Roles, only the Roles subscale had a statistically significant pretest and posttest difference $t(17) = 2.78$,

$p = .006$). The mean Roles pretest score was $M = 26.33$, $SD = 13.73$, and the mean posttest score was $M = 24.39$, $SD = 4.06$. Hypothesis 1 was not accepted. The results are summarized in Table 3 below.

To better understand the means score of the participants it is important to note that the Parent Child Relationship Inventory (PCRI) has seven subscales. The PCRI raw scores are converted to t -scores, normalized standard scores with an $M = 50$ and $SD = 10$. Low scores indicate possibly problematic parenting. A T -score less than 40 on a PCRI subscale (more than one standard deviation below the mean of the normative sample) suggests problems in the domain (i.e., Involvement, Support, Limit Setting) the scale measures. A t -score less than 30 (two standard deviations below the mean) indicates the possibility of serious problems. When t -scores on the various subscales exceed 40, it is an indication that parents have attitudes congruent with good parenting. The mean scores for the PCRI subtests ranged from 23.4 to 46.5. This indicates that parents who participated in this study had varying degrees of attitudes toward parenting. Their scores are consistent with parents who are struggling to raise children with limited parental support. Involvement was the highest score within the acceptable range for parents. This indicates that the parents who participated in the workshops were more likely to seek out activities for his or her children and show a genuine role in them. The involvement scale is designed to assess the amount of time a parent spends with their child and to indicate the parent's level of knowledge of the child.

Table 3. Paired Sample T-test for Parent Child Relationship Inventory (N=18)

Subscale	<i>t</i>	Mean Pretest T-Score	Mean Posttest T-Score	Mean Difference	<i>p</i>
Support	-1.269	24.8	25.8	-1.000	.11
Satisfaction	.000	34.3	34.3	.000	.50
Involvement	.913	46.5	44.3	2.22	.19
Communication	.223	27.8	27.7	.11	.41
Limit Setting	-1.508	33.8	35.5	-1.67	.07
Authoritative	-1.144	23.4	24.7	-1.28	.13
Roles	2.787	26.3	24.3	1.94	.006

Note: Higher scores indicate better parenting.

Research Question 2: What effect will Parent Involvement Training (PIT) have on overall family functioning for CROP families?

Hypothesis 2: Parent training programs that provide comprehensive, and clinically sound techniques (i.e., Communication, Roles, and Behavior Control, etc.) will help to increase overall family functioning for CROP families, as measured by the Family Assessment Device.

The second hypothesis was tested using a paired samples *t*-test analysis. The mean pretest score ($M = 1.891$, $SD = .305$) on the Family Assessment Device was slightly higher than the mean posttest score ($M = 1.846$, $SD = .218$) with a mean difference of

0.045. There was no significant statistical difference between the pre and post test of the Family Assessment Device ($t(17) = .459, p = .25$). Hypothesis 2 was not accepted.

Of the 18 students who took the Family Assessment Device the mean pretest score was ($M = 2.05, SD = .297$) and the mean posttest score was ($M = 2.09, SD = .345$) with a mean difference of .038 between the two. There was no significant difference between the pre and post test score on this assessment for the student participants. The students in this study were assessed because family functioning is much more related to the systemic properties of the family system as opposed to the individual characteristics of family members. Only assessing the parents would not have provided an accurate description on how the family functions.

To further understand the mean scores of the participant group it is important to note that a family score is the total of all individual scores. The scale scores range from 1.00 (healthy) to 4.0 (unhealthy) for families completing the Family Assessment Device. The students' mean score of 2.0 and the parents' mean score of 1.8 on the FAD indicates that both students and parents fall within the acceptable range of overall family functioning. The scores are indicative of how the student and the parent individually view the family.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The individual parent interviews were conducted after the last session. The investigator contacted each parent to schedule their 25-minute interview. The participants were offered the convenience of having the interview conducted at their home, at the community college West campus, or some other previously decided upon location. After making contact with the parents only fourteen of the original eighteen participants were

able to complete the individual interview. Many of the parents had work and home obligations that prevented them from being able to make their appointment. The data collected from the interviews was analyzed to determine if the Parent Involvement Training workshops were helpful in improving parents home and school involvement. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of those interviewed. Transcriptions from the participant interviews were microanalyzed as described by Miles and Huberman (1994), in order to correlate wording toward the development of associating similar phraseologies between interviews. The individual parent interviews were guided by four open-ended questions. From these questions, correlations and themes representing the participants' perceptions were represented utilizing, rich thick narratives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Using Hycner's (1999) explication process the investigator followed a systematic process of analyzing the phenomenological data. The first step, bracketing and phenomenological reduction, included removing the investigators own presuppositions and not allowing the investigators meanings and interpretations or theoretical concepts to interfere with the analysis (Creswell, 1998). The second step involved the delineating of the meaning units. To accomplish this, the investigator considered the literal content, the number (significance) of times a meaning was mentioned, and how (non-verbal cues) it was stated (Moustakas, 1994). The third step incorporated clustering units of meaning to form themes. At this point the investigator identified significant topics or units of significance (Sadala & Adorno, 2001). The fourth step involved summarizing and validating. During this stage, the investigator conducted a validity check, and made modifications if necessary (Hycner, 1999 p.154). The fifth and final step was extracting general and unique themes to make a composite summary. The investigator transformed

participants' everyday expressions into appropriate scientific discourse that supported the research (Sadala & Adorno, 2001).

After careful and detailed analysis of the transcripts using the aforementioned process, three themes emerged: Active Parent Involvement, Enlightened and Empowered Parent, and the importance of Family Functioning. The themes captured how each parent felt about their home and school involvement and how their level of involvement impacted their child's academic outcomes. The investigator then identified similar parent responses which laid the foundation for the findings. Lastly, the investigator put the themes into a format that highlighted relevant conclusions.

Findings

Four open-ended questions were asked of fourteen of the eighteen participants of this study. Sample responses are included in this section identifying parents as P1 to P14.

Q1. Tell me about your participation at your child's school prior to attending the PIT workshops.

Table 4. *Active Parent Involvement (Involved Parent)*

Sub-Themes	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	P11	P12	P13	P14
Lack of knowledge of education system		X	X		X		X	X	X					
Informed parent/information	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X				
Lack of belief that college is attainable			X						X					X

The findings in Table 4 represent the parents who had active home and school involvement. The sub-themes of active parent involvement are also included in Table 4.

Active Parent Involvement (Involved Parent)

According to Epstein (1987) active parent involvement encompasses families establishing home environments that support children and students academically. Many studies confirm that when schools develop excellent programs of partnership, even hard to reach families (i.e. low income, minorities) become involved in their children's education (Epstein & Rodriguez-Jansorn, 2004). When schools have well-developed partnership programs, families become involved and students become more positive about school and learning. Eight of the fourteen parents described how they actively participated at their child's school in various capacities.

P1 stated: I was very involved with Kenya and Paul's schooling making sure their classes were right, going to all the IEP, the PTA's and different things...umm just trying to stay on top of them basically as a concerned parent.

P4 noted: (Heavy Spanish accent) Participation in school... I am always involved no matter what...I am always involved...especially because I am in the school but even though if I was not a part of the school...I am always involved...everything that needs to be with her I am there.

P5 observed: Yes, yes I make sure she is taking the right classes, that she gets her electives, and the classes that she needs to take...because umm she wanted to take Spanish or Latin or something, but I wanted to make sure she had all her other classes first.

P6 pointed out: My participation at her school...has been supervising homework and to make sure she goes to school on time, and I make sure I know the principal...all the principals and the teachers who have my daughter...and then I involve...to the activities when she invites me for some of the activities at school...I do everything I can to get her.

P7 observed: Well, (Coughing). I make sure Lilly is on top of her work, as far as doing her homework...this is the first time she took an online class and so... therefore I have to participate also, so we do that together and talk to the teacher and email her, and just making sure she is focused, and doing everything she needs to do so she doesn't get behind.

Yet, five parents admit they lack knowledge of the education system.

P2 noted: More involvement in the higher grades especially since I have three younger kids growing up...I noticed I tend...slack off as the kids get older...even the one in middle school I find myself not being as involved.

P7 observed: Well it's good to know the teachers because umm... I feel like if you don't participate in kids and stay behind them...they (teachers) feel like you are not interested and they are not going to push them...if they know that you're interested they will push them more and keep them on top of things.

P8 stated: To be honest with you I...coming to this country it's so different for me... I was just telling Lisa it's so much...when you talk inside the meeting it sounds so foreign (Laughing). So I told Lisa, so I have to...there is so much stuff that I need to get to know and get more involved...and get more involved with the guidance counselor and find out what is going on...because I find out the system over here is so different from the

Bahamian system...so now I told Lisa I have to come and meet with the counselor and teachers and get more involved...and learn...it opened me up to know the fact that there is so much I need to learn about the schools.

P9 commented: Yeah, a lot of the information as far as the scholarships (Investigator: umm, OK) and the CROP's program itself... and umm... because in the beginning I thought that he only did it for four year...but he just told me recently he has to go to high school for four year.

Although the parents may have lacked knowledge of the education system they still wanted their child(ren) to attend college. Three of the fourteen admit to always stressing the importance of doing well academically so that college is a reality and not just a dream. The results of this study are consistent with Heiss' (1996) finding that African American and Hispanic parents who never attended college or completed their secondary education due to economic hardships, or bearing children at a young age wanted their children to have opportunities that they were not afforded.

P3 noted (Creole accent): ...I say I need you finish college... I made money but I need my baby to finish college...I say I'm no good in school, I don't care, I need you finish...I say I need you finish college, I don't like you go to work housekeeping.

P9 pointed out: Umm... well basically concerned about the financial part of it...that is my main concern... Right, mainly...like how he's going to pay for it now and after (Laughter)...in the long run...yeah, yeah that is my main concern...I don't want him to have any loans...in debt and he can't get a home or anything like that...because even though he has an education...that is what I am mainly worried about.

P14 observed: I think my kids, umm they realize that with me being so involved in their... umm school that it has helped them mature and be able to make the next step in their life because I always remind them I didn't have nobody to give me that extra push because my parents didn't have the same opportunities and all this knowledge that we have today so it's really helping the whole family especially them because they can get a better education...because coming to these workshops I know all the ends and outs, and dos and don'ts and ya'll giving me all the information I need to give them what they need to succeed.

Q2. Tell me what you enjoy most about the opportunity to meet with personnel from your child's school.

Interacting with School Personnel

Active parent involvement also includes opportunities for parents to interact with school administrators, and teachers at their child's school. This interaction with school officials keeps parents informed and up to date on what is taking place at the school, as well as providing information on what needs to happen at home to further support the efforts of the school. Eight of the fourteen parents give reasons for staying informed. The parent's comments support research that parent expectations and student achievement are correlated. According to the Michigan Department of Education (2001) the most consistent predictors of children's academic achievement and social adjustment are parents' expectations of the child's academic attainment and satisfaction with their child's education at school. Parents of high achieving students tend to set higher standards for their children's educational activities. The CROP parents who completed the Parent Involvement Training are likely to fall within this category.

P1 noted: It helped me know exactly what they was doing in school...umm knowing what I can do to help them maintain their grades or achieve higher goals...umm as far as my daughter Kenya she had like special classes...and now I just recently went to a meeting since the workshop started...That is probably why Kenya kept going to her teachers for extra work and her realizing that Kenya was on a higher level...because I asked her to ask the lady about getting in different programs to help her get into her right grade because she always says she is bored...I listened to what you said that night so that is one of the things that helped us out a lot because Kenya really wants to be on her grade level.

P4 stated: Because I feel I have more control...yeah of the relationship with the teachers and the confidence that she has in me...saying even if she has bad grades she will always talk to me... That was a good experience...because now I have another...again some ideas how to work better with my daughter...and that was important for me...and ways that can help me improve my relationship with her is good for me.

P10 noted: (Sighing) what I enjoy about the teacher...meeting with the teacher...I want to know each thing about my son...and also I make sure I know everything good or bad about my son... from meeting with the teacher.

Q3. What has the experience of participating in the Parent Involvement Training workshops meant for you?

Table 5. *Enlightened and Empowered Parent*

Sub-Themes	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	P11	P12	P13	P14
Sharing Knowledge with others						X				X	X	X		

Grateful					X	X		X		X		X	X	X
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The findings in Table 5 represent the parents who have been enlightened and empowered (P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P12, P13, and P14) by participating in the Parent Involvement Training workshops. The sub-themes of enlightened and empowered parents are also included in Table 5.

Enlightened and Empowered Parent.

Numerous researchers have discovered that minority and low-income parents are often underrepresented among the ranks of parents involved in schools (Cotton & Wikeland, 2001). There are many reasons for this: lack of energy (due to long hours, or working more than one job), embarrassment or shyness about one's own educational level or linguistic abilities, lack of understanding or information about the structure of the school, perceived lack of welcome by teachers and administrators and teachers, and administrators' assumption of parents' disinterest or inability to help with children's schooling. Many of these assumptions are incorrect as it relates to minority and low-income parents. Twelve of the fourteen who were interviewed all reported feeling empowered and enlightened by acquiring new knowledge to help their child have academic success. The parents often shared what they learned with other parents, and they were grateful that they were able to learn new strategies to help their child and their family function better.

P1 noted: I mean, it opened my eyes on a lot of things, just like what I was just talking about umm, what to look for at the schools. To keep asking ok, if they are doing this umm...can they do a little extra credit on this if they are slacking or whatever umm...and getting to know my children better. I thought I knew them, and this workshop and reality

has slapped... Nobody knows their children. Only the child knows themselves and they half know that.

P2 commented: Umm...it opened my eyes on a lot of different areas.

P3 observed: I love the meetings.

P5 noted: It's opened my eyes about the things that they do the problems that they have...the peer pressure...I am doing everything over again...but it's just an elevated level.

P6 suggested: Oh, these workshops meant to me a lot (Laughing). That is why I don't miss even one... I don't miss any nights since we start, and even today I was late but I don't miss...I am here I know as a parent how to participate in the children's education and these workshops open my, my eyes way wider...and then to know my responsibilities as a father... I tell her I will be there for half the class, and she says well...I don't have no choice but if you can be there all the time then it's better for me...I tell her I don't go only for you...I go for myself too...I learn for myself too (Repeating).

P7 commented: (Laughing) Oh, it's been awesome...it's been a lot of fun and we are doing stuff together... and we look forward to coming every Thursday...so that is something that I will miss.

P8 observed: Yes and even coming here to the meeting and all the stuff that is available (Laughing) I never knew that...coming to the meetings really exposed me a lot; to so many things...I really appreciate that... (Laughing) Like I said, for me it has open my eyes to so much information that is out there that I don't know...and it show me that umm there's is a lot of stuff available to the students in order for them to grow.

P9 stated: See if I had not been coming to this program I probably wouldn't know that (Investigator interjecting: known that, right that's good you see).

P10 noted: For me I learned... (Unclear) even my son also...when I finish here I go home and I explain to him what I find out here...he so excited...for my family also... Yes, it is...and that is the reason why even today...the second time he had tried to come with me...to understand everything by himself...yeah I would say he is excited.

P12 commented: Wow, I mean... it's to the point...to where you're never too late...because when I came in I felt the warmth...I felt you know...I got right on point... and you know...you and the other instructors made sure I got what I was getting out of this ...and I enjoyed...I enjoyed it more than Tasha I believe.

P13 observed: Oh, I think it's just a good idea that the parent can come here to know all the programs...you know...how we can help him... I think it's a good idea for parents to involve in his education...and children's education.

P14 stated: It meant a lot for me because it's um opening my eyes to a lot of things that...you know because time change, year to year, and um just keeping me abreast on, you know things that's changing because things change all the time... Just coming to this particular workshop it gave me a big insight on...um, being involved with other families and we pretty much see eye to (Together in unison) eye...Yeah and it was really valuable and then just...getting the workshop books because I found myself, like today I had a, um parent conference I took my workshop... (Laughter)...my workshop book in the middle...in my child's teacher see...hey...now we got any problems now...I can just go back to, um, Ms. Ruby Dee...umm (Laughter) Ruby Payne...I've been reading up on this stuff...just you know that... showing them that, not just telling them but showing them

here's my book where I've been going having my workshops...and school starting in September...

Sharing knowledge with others

Four of the fourteen parents interviewed gave examples of how they have shared new information that they learned from the workshops with members of their church, and community to keep them up to date on the decision-making policies that are impacting their children. The goal for these parents was to provide information to other families who wanted it or those who needed it, not just those who were able to attend workshops or meetings at their child's school.

P6 noted: I've learned a lot for myself...I learned too to share with other parents...I can challenge them to involve themselves in their children's education.

P10 commented: For me I learned... (Unclear) even my son also...when I finish here I go home and I explain to him what I find out here...he so excited...for my family also.

P11 stated: I enjoyed as I put on my evaluation tonight...the movies and the interaction...and the input from other parents that we had...that was an enjoyable thing for me.

P12 observed: Well, actually they know me...they know that I am always involved...you know no matter if I am late or not (Laughter) remember I have six kids...so they umm understand and they be looking forward to...and not only that... when I come home so I can tell them what we did and what we talked about...and umm...not only that I had a couple of them to come here and join us as well...you know to see what we was really doing...and you know, so that they would know... So I think it helped them as

well and also with the learning we also learned here...and umm like I said going back and telling them you know what was learned to help them

Grateful

Seven of the parents commented on how grateful they were to be able to participate in the Parent Involvement Training workshops. For many of them it was their first time participating in a comprehensive training that focused on improving their skills as a parent without making them feel that they were deficient in some way. The workshops helped reiterate to them that they serve as their child's primary educator and advocate. Their presence and participation during the child's educational career contributed to better behavior, higher self-esteem, and better grades. This also contributed to the overall functioning of their family because it took stress off the parents when they did not have to deal with negative issues.

P5 noted: That's true...she said Grammy I want you to come with me, and I said do you want me to? She said, yes. Then I said OK, I will go then. She said, thanks Grammy I really appreciate it. So it made her happy.

P6 stated: What I enjoy most about...when I approach them they always be kind to me...they always be able to give me...like I need to be able to know how her grade is...her GPA is and then they are always open to tell me where she is weak or what part she strong...then when I always ask them how I can do to help her...they always tell me if I cannot help her I can always find out someone who can zero...and help her get to the level she needs to be.

P10 commented: (Heavy Creole accent) Umm, before I started the workshop...Dalton working good I think. But since I explained to him...I find out and I try help him...in this program to go to college.

P12 stated: Yes, to where we got to express ourselves as parents... and you know learning from other parents...you know on things that we couldn't cope with as a parent...umm I enjoyed that because communication is the best...is the best that you can have in any home...and umm other parents really helped me out because it was like all different age groups in there.

Q4. What do you believe it has meant to your child that you have participated in the Parent Involvement Training workshops?

Table 6. *Importance of Family Functioning*

Theme	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	P11	P12	P13	P14
Family Functioning				X	X		X				X			

The findings in Table 6 represent the parents who have worked to improve their family functioning as a result of participating in the Parent Involvement Training workshops.

Importance of Family Functioning

The nuclear family structure of father, mother, and children has seen a drastic decrease in the U.S. (Trotman, 2001). An increasing number of families are headed by a single parent especially in urban settings (Lippman, Burns, & McArthur, 1996). This has occurred as a result of surges in the number of divorces, separation, and unwed and/or teenage parents. Most low-income urban children live in a growing number of single parent, female-headed households (Lippman et.al, 1996). To circumvent the ill

effects of single parenthood and poverty, programs that enable families to share information with each other about school, community, culture, background, children's talents and needs are effective (Ma, 2000). Four of the fourteen parents who were interviewed commented on how the workshops helped them to identify areas that would help improve the functioning of their families.

P4 noted: Ah, she feels more secure because she can see the support that we give to her...the interest that we have in her life...her success and her experiences and all that other stuff.

P5 commented: I enjoyed them all...the one umm...I don't know what number it was...the family... yes, my family is really close and we do a lot of things together and ...umm I can find different ways to change things up a little bit.

P7 suggested: (Pausing) well, basically the one how the family...yes, family functioning with the kids...what they need to do too to stay on top of things for school...and she doesn't have to lie... and you know...it makes them more motivated.

P11 stated: The one about discipline... do I think I am a good parent and is it coming naturally... Yes, because it was a lot of interaction to see how my family values versus somebody else's...versus another one and it wasn't a comparativeness it's pouring in truth things, especially the guy with the children...she went home that night and said Daddy...There a man's with four or five children and he comes out to the CROP program (Laughing while telling story) with his child, and without his children, and he is raising them all by himself and his wife don't want to participate and she leaves him alone.

Summary

The data analysis did not find support for the research hypotheses. The Parent Involvement Workshops did not impact parents' attitude toward parents, or their overall family functioning. In spite of this, one of the most important findings of this research is that parents of disadvantaged and minority children can and do make a positive contribution to their children's achievement in school if they receive adequate training and encouragement in the types of parent involvement that can make a difference. Family systems models that utilize parent empowerment by helping parents make informed decisions, take control over environmental events, and focus interventions on family strengths are the most effective in working with low-income and minority families (Dunst, 1985). This strategy was employed with workshop participants through the Participatory Action Research method. Parents and the investigator worked together to develop strategies that would be helpful in improving the academic outcomes of CROP students. This method of collaboration also helped the parents to reevaluate how their family functions and how it may impact their child socially, emotionally, and academically.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The foremost purpose of this study was to determine if Parent Involvement Training (PIT) workshops improved parental home and school participation and knowledge of important academic and behavioral issues of students, and improved parents' attitudes toward parenting and their children, and overall family functioning. Because traditional methods of parental involvement may not be effective (Jeynes, 2005), this research examined whether Parent Involvement Training might be an effective alternative to these methods.

Using the key principals of the Participatory Action Research method (PAR) (reflective critique, dialectical critique, collaborative resource) the investigator and parents collaborated to generate knowledge that promoted action. These workshops helped parents recognize the value of including the school, community, churches, and school volunteers to gain a better understanding of resources with which they were unfamiliar.

Additionally, there was a need to understand what type of parent involvement works to promote academic success, improved attitude and interaction between parent and child, and positive family functioning. The current wave of education reformers maintain that high-quality teachers and schools can help overcome negative environmental factors, yet there is no definitive data supporting this claim (Cruz, 2009). More research is needed to determine how to reach all parents, not just the parents who self-select for the various parent education classes, workshops, and training sessions. In the current study, the effect of Parental Involvement Training on parents' attitude toward

parenting, and overall family functioning was explored. The goal of this study was to determine the impact that PAR which is strongly correlated with Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory, had on parent home and school involvement, parenting attitudes, and family functioning of parents participating in the College Reach -Out Program (CROP).

This chapter includes a brief overview of the study and its results. In addition, this chapter will discuss limitations of the study, contributions and implications of the findings, as well as recommendations for future research that identifies the barriers that commonly prevent active parent involvement.

Summary of Workshops

Eighteen parents and eighteen students enrolled in the College Reach- Out Program (CROP) at a community college in central Florida participated in this study. A letter inviting parents to participate in the study was sent out to all CROP parents in Orange and Osceola counties. The letter specified that parents would be given two-weeks to respond to the invitation to participate. The letter also addressed the goals, program objectives, session topics, and expected benefits of participation. Of the twenty-five parents who expressed interest, eighteen completed all documentation (i.e., informed consent, parent consent, research assent, etc.) thus, making them eligible to participate in the study. Therefore, there were eighteen sets of data included in this study. At the initial meeting parents completed a demographic survey, the Parent Child Relationship Inventory (PCRI), and both parents and students completed the Family Assessment Device (FAD). The Parent Involvement Training workshop sessions started the week

after pre-test assessments were complete. After 6 weeks the participants completed the assessment measures again.

Parent Involvement Training workshops were conducted over an five week period. The objective of these workshops was to help improve parental home and school participation and increase their knowledge of important academic and behavioral issues of students. The workshops were also designed to improve parents' attitudes toward parenting and their children, and to improve overall family functioning. To promote these meaningful social changes, several strategies were employed to engage parents in self-reflection: (a) planning a change within the family; acting and observing the process and consequences of change; (b) reflecting on these process and consequences; and (c) further cycles of planning. The workshops were held once a week for five consecutive weeks. Guest speakers were invited to speak with parents about the topic covered during the weekly workshop sessions. The guest speakers had many years of experience on their topic, which allowed for greater interaction and discussion with workshop participants.

The workshop topic for week one was *Getting to Know Your Child/Importance of Parent Involvement*. This topic was presented by the Assistant vice-president of Transition services at the community college. During her session she discussed the misconception that minority parents do not care to be involved in their child's education. She highlighted the work that the college is does to get more minority students and families involved in pursuing post-secondary studies. The workshop participants were very receptive to this topic. As evidenced by their concern and frustration which was voiced with individuals and institutions that do not believe they are indeed interested in seeing their children succeed because of their race and socioeconomic status. Once the guest

speaker concluded her presentation, the investigator led a discussion on *Getting to Know Your Child*. The parents watched a clip from the movie *Lean on Me* that highlighted a school plagued by poor performance, poor facilities and an uncaring faculty. This led to a very impassioned discussion about the plight of African American and Hispanic students in the poor performing schools in central Florida.

The workshop topic for the second week was *Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory (The Body, Brain, Emotional, and Behavioral Systems) /Mentoring*. The first part of this session was presented by the investigator. She introduced Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory to the workshop participants. The CROP parents were unfamiliar with this topic, but were very interested in finding out how the various systems impact their child's development. The investigator proceeded to detail how each of the systems within the bioecological theory effect's a child's development and how it's related to parent involvement. The key point that was stressed during this portion of the workshop session was that parents should consider finding resources within each system to support the overall development of the child. The one area that parents identified as being important to their child's development was mentoring. This portion of the workshop was conducted by a minister from the community who serves as an academic advisor on the college campus. He discussed the two mentoring programs that he is in charge of on campus. He also brought in a panel of college students who are members of the campus mentoring programs. The students on the panel were from low-income minority backgrounds, including African American, Haitian American, and Hispanic students. They discussed how their home and school environment and lack of resources impacted their access to a quality education, and how it had forced them to work harder to

overcome the socioeconomic obstacles of their family of origin. Parents then engaged in a question and answer forum where they gathered information about how to secure a mentor for their child.

The workshop topic for the third week was *Communication and Staying Informed of Student Academic Progress*. This evening's guest speaker began her presentation by asking parents what type of communication they most often have with their child's school. She gave examples of phone calls, emails, and teacher conferences. The parents identified a phone call as the method they most often used to stay in contact with school personnel. She then went on to cover other methods of useful communication between home and school, which included post cards, home visits, planner/ agenda books, using older siblings to deliver messages, and the importance of having information in the home language of the student. This resonated with many of the Haitian American parents because many of them speak very little English, and they stated they would prefer that school communications be sent home in Creole. She then went on to discuss the various registers, or categories, of language and how they impact communication styles. She informed the parents that educational and professional institutions use the formal language register, whereas most low-income families may use a casual language register at home. Furthermore, she explained this variation in style can lead to miscommunication between the home and school, and may result in the mishandling of important decisions that impact students. Parents were then instructed to complete an exercise to determine if they were able to recognize the difference between the formal and casual language registers. From this it was discovered that CROP students do not utilize the formal

language register as much as they should, which impacts their school work, and performance on standardized assessment, thus impacting their academic achievement.

The workshop topics for the fourth week were *Discipline, Family Functioning, and Parenting Styles*. The guest speaker for this workshop was a Licensed Clinical Social Worker. She started the workshop by discussing the importance of families working together to improve their overall functioning. She had the parents work together in groups to identify how their families of origin dealt with problems while growing up. The groups were instructed to pull scenarios from an envelope and have discussions at their table. From these discussions it was discovered that most parents in the room had many similarities in how situations were handled in the family in which they were raised. She then discussed Adler's parenting styles and how they relate to disciplining children. Several participants identified Authoritarian as the parenting style of their family of origin; however, they identified Democratic as the style that they most often use with their own children. There was lively discussion as to which style was better in light of the problems that many adolescents are facing today (e.g., violence in schools, drug/alcohol abuse, disrespecting elders, exposure to misogynistic music). The study investigator ended the session by showing a clip from the movie *Doubt* and a recent CNN news clip on violence among teens. The two controversial clips aided the discussion about the importance of parent involvement in schools; and communities to improve the functioning of poor minority families.

The workshop topic for the last session was an overview of Ruby Payne's *Framework for Understanding Poverty*. During the last session the researcher, who is a certified trainer for the Ruby Payne method, along with a guest speaker who was also a

certified trainer, presented the workshop material. The session started with the investigator giving a brief history of Ruby Payne's work and how it's related to poverty and education. The session was very interactive, parents were encouraged to ask questions, and comment on the material as it was being covered. The guest speaker and the study investigator then proceed to highlight the research on poverty, and the causes of poverty. The study participants were then instructed to complete an interactive quiz on poverty which resulted in discussions about how their life experiences (i.e. lack of education, language barriers, bearing children at early age, and perceived institutional racism) may have impacted their current socioeconomic status.

The didactic portion of the session focused on poverty (i.e., free and reduced lunch program, Title I, and Chapter I federally funded programs) and its impact on a child's education outcomes. In addition, the different types of poverty and how each type impacts a person's ability to move out and become socialized into the middle class were discussed. The parents were then given an individual quiz to determine if they could survive in poverty, the middle class, and in wealth. It was determined that most study participants knew how to survive in poverty, but wanted the opportunity to live in the middle class; the parents explained that they had no desire to survive in wealth. They simply wanted to have better opportunities for themselves and their children. After this discussion, study participants expressed a better understanding of how education was the key to moving from one social class to the next, and most parents wanted their children to be the first in their family to attend college and live a middle class existence. However, they did not want their children to forget the struggles and sacrifices that the family had to make for them to have success. Like session four, this session ran over the allotted

time due to the topic and nature of the discussion. Once the final session was complete parents were instructed to return the following week with their CROP student to complete the post-assessments. Parents and students attended the Post-session where again they both completed the FAD; and parents also completed the PCRI. To ensure the parents' voices were heard they were asked to participate in individual interviews during which they answered four open-ended questions.

Summary of Findings

This study did not find a statistically significant relationship between Parent Involvement Training and parents' attitude toward parenting; or overall family functioning. For the seven subscales on the Parent-Child Relationship Inventory: Support, Satisfaction, Involvement, Communication, Limit Setting, Authoritative, and Roles, only the Roles subscale had a statistically significant difference. The subscale score of Involvement (46.5) on the PCRI also indicated that workshop participants were very involved in their child's life, whereas the other subscale scores indicated they had some difficulty interacting with their children. Thus, Hypothesis 1 was not accepted. Additionally, there was no significant statistical difference between the pre and post test of the Family Assessment Device for the parents and students who took the assessment. Hypothesis 2 was not accepted. The qualitative data collected, on the other hand indicated that parents in this study were already highly involved in their children's educational activities. The parents were involved in numerous activities that contributed to the academic success of their child. Thus, this may have impacted any significant changes in scores that would have resulted due to participation in the Parent Involvement

workshops. The primary goal of the qualitative analysis was to give meaning to the experience of participating in the Parent Involvement Training workshops.

Qualitative Analysis

From the interviews, three important themes emerged. First, Active Parent Involvement (Involved Parent) was demonstrated through the sub-themes: lack of knowledge of education system; informed parent/information; and college is attainable were brought forth. Active parent involvement encompasses families establishing home environments that support children and students academically. Eight of the fourteen parents identified ways that they stay active and connected to their child's school. According to Hester (1989) being active in a child's education increases academic achievement, improves student behavior, and improves motivation. The research consistently supports the position that parents, as role models and first teachers, are the single most influence in a child's life. Children who succeed have parents who are involved in all aspects of their lives (Freedman & Montgomery, 1994). Families provide the social, cultural, and emotional support that children need to function well in school.

The second theme was the Enlightened and Empowered Parent which had two sub-themes: sharing knowledge with others, and gratefulness. Twelve of the fourteen parents interviewed reported feeling empowered and enlightened by acquiring new knowledge to help their children have academic success; this new sense of empowerment often prompted parents to share what they learned in the workshop sessions with other parents at their child's school and with the parents in their church and community. Empowerment is defined by Dunst and Trivette (1987) as the perception that parents

have the necessary capability and skill to make a significant difference in their child's life. Dunst (1985) further stated that the most effective family systems models are those that best utilize parent empowerment by helping parents make informed decisions, take control over environmental events, and focus interventions on family strengths.

The third, theme expressed by the parents was the importance of family functioning. Four of the fourteen parents who were interviewed commented on how the workshops helped them to identify areas that would help improve the functioning of their families. These results support the position that although; most parents may not know what to do to help their child and their family with guidance and support they may become increasingly involved in home learning and family activities. It also illustrates that they find themselves faced with opportunities to teach, to be models for and to guide their children. The more parents participate at home and school, in a sustained way, (i.e., in advocacy, decision-making, and volunteering) the better it is for their child's achievement in school. Freedman and Montgomery (1994) believe educating parents to become collaborators and problem-solvers involves creating opportunities for parents to increase their knowledge of school policies and the curriculum; thus, equipping them with strategies that support learning at home and school. Likewise, the development of school-community partnerships designed to connect with parents who are socially and economically disadvantaged has been strongly recommended by educators at all levels as an essential element in any strategic model or framework designed to promote equitable, quality educational opportunities (Ford, 2002).

Limitations

Possible limitations of the current study deal with the sampling size and the purposeful method. The sample size of eighteen participants was small; therefore, it is not possible to generalize to the overall population. The participants in this study represented a limited number of ethnic groups. A vast majority of CROP students identify themselves as African American or Black, but many of them came from Haitian, Jamaican, or Bahamian families. The next largest ethnic group in this sample was Hispanic. There were no Asian or Native American participants in the study.

The study was conducted with parents who volunteered to participate. It is likely that the participants were parents who were already highly involved and not representative of the overall parent population of CROP students.

Further, the sample from the current study is not generalizable to the larger population of all children and parents because parents who were not proficient in English chose not to participate in the study. Numerous studies have examined the home language and teaching styles of children. The studies found that home language and maternal interaction with children influence their development (Scott-Jones, 1984). Comer (1986) believes the lack of well-designed programs for minority parents is the reason many traditional parent teacher organizations do not do much to improve participation. Parent participation programs must be structured to overcome the problems that occur because less-well educated parents with language deficiencies are reluctant to come to school. Schools and parent training programs must ensure that parents who cannot read or understand English have access to the information in languages or forms they can understand (Sheldon & Epstein, 2005).

Another significant limitation was the absence of an assessment that specifically measured parental involvement. Based on an extensive search of the *Mental Measurement Yearbook* (2004), there were no assessments that measured parent involvement; however there were assessments that measured how parents interact with their children in school and other areas, hence the use of the Parent Child-Relationship Inventory. This scale was used because it has subscales that can be correlated with school involvement, and family functioning.

Additionally, this study did not identify or control for several other factors that could be associated with students' academic achievement and parent involvement. The study was limited to examining only parent effect without considering teachers' expectations on students' achievement. Studies have indicated that both teachers and the school environment have an influence on children's academic achievement (Becker, & Epstein, 1982). According to Bronfenbrenner (1986) a child's development is impacted by his or her surrounding environment which includes school variables such as teacher characteristics or the makeup of the school. Thus, the current study could have been more complete with the inclusion of teacher and school level variables.

Finally, the results of this study are not conclusive as to how parent involvement training helps parents improve their home and school involvement. The sessions were held over an five week period which may not have been enough time to effectively take the new skills and strategies that were learned in apply them in such a way as to show meaningful change in behavior. It may have been more effective to administer the pre-test assessments at the start of the school year, and then conduct the Parent Involvement workshops within the fall semester. The post test-assessments would have been

administrated at the end of the school year during the spring semester. This would have allowed the development of new skill sets to be properly demonstrated by workshop participants.

Contribution and Implications of Findings

The outcome of the study did not support the prediction that Parent Involvement Training workshops would have a positive effect on parents' attitude toward parenting, and overall family functioning. However, a review of the literature (Akister, & Stevenson-Hinde, 1991; Amato, 1989; Bronfenbrenner, 1989; Chavkin, 1989; Comer, 1988; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Epstein, 1992; Epstein & Salanas, 2004) revealed that parents who participate in well-organized, and structured trainings, compared to those who do not, have a greater impact on the academic outcomes of their children. Improving parent involvement has been found to increase grades, test scores, and graduation rates; increase motivation and self-esteem; decrease use of drugs and alcohol; and improve school attendance (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Balli, Demo, & Wedman, 1989; Bianchi, 1995; Chrispeels, 1996; Finn, 1998; Haynes, 1996). The past research also suggested that any type of parent involvement is better than no involvement at all. Any attempt at being actively involved in a child's home and school life will bring about positive changes.

In the current study, the effect of intensive parent training on parenting attitude, family functioning, and academic achievement was studied. The goal of this study was to provide structured and informative material that would increase knowledge and skills through a collaborative learning process. In developing an integrated parent training program, care was taken to ensure all parents had an opportunity to learn new skills such as: basic parenting; effective home/school communication; academic; social activities;

and school governance. To successfully meet the intended goals of the study a significant amount of time, effort, and energy went into carefully addressing the needs of the parents and students so that the workshops were meaningful and practical. The investigator continuously collaborated with other professional to provide parents with the tools necessary to become effective and positive forces in their children's education and life. The fundamental goal of creating the parent training workshops was to make certain every CROP student in Orange and Osceola counties has the social, emotional, and physical skills necessary to learn. With training, parents can obtain the skills necessary to create an environment at home that will enable their children to become successful lifelong learners capable of functioning in a global society. The current study was similar in structure to the training programs that are being used throughout the country to help parents become more involved, in addition to meeting the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Legislation (Christie, 2005).

These programs have similar goals, content, structure, and the interventions used are based on Epstein's (1985) Six Types of Parent Involvement. Programs that use this model seek to improve parents' home and school involvement, and thereby have an impact on the long-term academic achievement of their children. Like the current study, these programs are designed to provide structure that will lead to evidence-based outcomes. The outcomes of active involvement are: parent involvement leads to improved educational performance (Epstein et al., 2002; Fan & Chen, 2001; NMSA, 2003; Sheldon & Epstein, 2002; Van Voorhis, 2003); parent involvement fosters better student classroom behavior (Fan & Chen, 2001; NMSA, 2003); parents who participate in decision making experience greater feelings of ownership and are more committed to

supporting the school's mission (Jackson & Davis, 2000); parent involvement creates a better understanding of role and relationships between and among the parent-student school- triad (Epstein et al., 2002); and types of parent involvement and quality of parent involvement affect results for students, parents, and teachers (Epstein, 1995).

Based on the current study findings in order to establish effective parent involvement training it is necessary to conduct a needs assessment identifying what the concerns and issues are surrounding parent involvement in the education of their children (Epstein, 2005); develop, in collaboration with parents, shared goals and missions concerning young adolescents; learning and development (Ruebel, 2001); develop a long-range parent involvement plan (Comprehensive School Reform Quality Cente, 2005); and identify a family-school liaison who actively works to engage all parents (Comprehensive School Reform Quality Cente,2005).

In the current study the CROP parents were active participants, cooperative and receptive to the activities that were presented to them. During the course of the Parent Involvement Training sessions they told of their active home and school involvement; however, they admitted that they lacked knowledge of the education system and policies that impacts their child's educational future. Additionally, they acknowledged that parenting attitude, and appropriate family functioning are areas they enjoyed learning more about, although their quantitative results did not indicate this.

Recommendations

Presently, the nation-wide focus on increasing parent involvement as a means of enhancing student achievement is based on small quantitative and qualitative studies that may not be generalize to the larger population (Christenson et al., 1997; Grolnick &

Slowiaczek, 1994; Stevenson & Stigler, 1992; Tommey, 1993; Miller & Kelly, 1991; and Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001). Using a combination of the two research modalities with a larger number of inactive parents may yield better outcomes. Although, qualitative studies allow for a closer examination into method of involvement, larger scale studies that use national data bases allows for better generalization to the population.

The majority of participants in this study were female; however, the study found interesting data regarding parental involvement by male parents. If schools are able to identify the types of parental involvement mostly associated with male parents and work towards engaging the male parents and assisting them in becoming more involved it will benefit the child. The research has shown that, in general fathers' involvement decreases as children get older and students do better academically when fathers are involved (Kunjufu, 2006). Therefore, it is imperative to make efforts to try to engage the fathers in participating in their children's education.

Additionally, school counselors, family counselors, social workers, program coordinators, and parents can identify factors (i.e., poverty, lack of education, skills) that may place students at a disadvantage. Counselors and program coordinators may develop outreach programs to encourage parents from various backgrounds to become involved. Parents of all ethnicities and socioeconomic backgrounds should be targeted and provided with more information about the school system and higher education opportunities. This can be accomplished by setting up informational workshops for parents regarding the importance of higher levels of parent participation on the academic outcomes of their children. Cruz (2009) reports that information has to be brought to the

parents, this often includes going into homes, community centers, and churches to get the message out.

School and family counselors can aid in this process by providing leadership in implementing parent involvement strategies that speak to community needs. This includes implementing community centric parent strategies, which serve to enhance not only children's school experiences but also their overall quality of life (Van Velsor & Orozco, 2007). As counselors work to design parent involvement strategies, it is important that they take into account the unique needs of low-income and minority families. This means understanding the barriers of involvement, helping parents to learn about the school culture, needs, and addressing the needs of the community in which the student lives. Counselors who tackle this challenge are encouraged to follow the strategies set forth by Benson and Martin (2003). The strategies that embrace a community centric model of involving low-income parents in the schools include: (a) learning about the families of the children in the school; (b) learning about the community where the student live; (c) helping parents address community concerns; (d) providing onsite training for parents (e) offering in-service training for school personnel; (f) and utilizing parents' cultural capital. These and other interventions will help create a mutually forged school culture in which parents have knowledge of how schools operate, and school personnel have knowledge of children's families and communities (Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, & Hernandez, 2003). The goal is to promote the academic and life success of children from low-income families.

Finally, the association between home-school involvement activities and lower academic outcomes needs additional research to unravel the factors that impact both. The

current study was based on answers provided by parents about their perceptions of their attitude toward parenting, family functioning, and their level of parent involvement. Further research should sample parents, students, and teachers. This would provide a more comprehensive view regarding parental involvement as perceived not only by parents, but by teachers and students as well. Parental involvement is multidimensional and studies should include students and teachers and not just parents. Research should also explore how poverty and race play a role in parental involvement. Desimone (1999) found that the effectiveness of certain parent-involvement practices differ according to race and/or ethnicity and family income. A more complete analysis focusing on cultural differences and family relationships can provide a better understanding of how parents from specific ethnic and income groups can effectively be approached and encouraged to become involved with their children's education. Ethnically and economically appropriate curricula can assist in developing focused approaches to parental involvement in schools or in at-home parent-involved activities.

Summary

While this study did not find support for the use of Parent Involvement Training in improving parents' attitude toward parents, and overall family functioning, the qualitative analysis indicated that parents found the workshops to be very helpful and informative. The qualitative results indicated that parents were empowered and enlightened and were able to share with other parents who were unable to attend the workshops information that they found useful in helping them stay more active in their child's life both educationally and socially. However, additional research is needed to fully investigate the effectiveness of Parent Involvement Training programs. School and

family counselors can play an important leadership role in strengthening the relationship between schools and low-income parents by implementing community-centered strategies for parent involvement. These strategies respect community culture and parents' abilities to contribute to their children's education. This includes providing assistance with parent workshops, early parent exposure to the school, teachers and classrooms, adult literacy and education initiatives that are designed to improve parents' educational experiences, beliefs about school all of which can factor into increasing children's positive academic outcomes. Implementing these strategies may provide better and enhanced knowledge about the importance of active parent participation.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Cover Letter

Barry University

February 28, 2009

Dear Research Participant,

You are invited to participate in a study conducted by Tanisha D. Carter, under the direction of Dr. Christine Sacco-Bene in the Adrian Dominican School of Education at Barry University. The purpose of the research is to present a series of workshops using the Participatory Action Research method to help parents improve their home and school involvement, attitude towards parenting, and overall family functioning. During the Parent Involvement Training Workshops you will be asked to complete the following:

1. The researcher designed demographic survey.
2. The Parent-Child Relationship Inventory (PCRI).
3. The Family Assessment Device (FAD).
4. Individual parent interviews will be conducted following the post-session. The questions are designed to collect data on parental involvement at home and school and parents' perception of the students' academic achievement and educational goals.

If you decide to be a part of this research you will be asked to do the following:

- Attend Pre/Post Session which will be held one week prior to workshops starting, and one week following workshops ending.
- Attend workshops. Workshops will be held once a week for five consecutive weeks. The anticipated time commitment for each session is two and a half hours.
- Give input and feedback during discussions
- Learn new skills and techniques to improve home and school involvement

There is no known potential for physical, psychological, and/or social risks or harm linked to this research.

There are no known direct benefits to the participants. However, your participation in this study may help our understanding of parents' perceptions of their home and school involvement activities as it relates to their child's academic success. The results of the study may provide important information to other parents, teachers, schools, and community agencies whose mission it is to help economically disadvantaged minority parents to become more involved in their children's education.

As a research participant information you provide will be kept confidential. Study data will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's office.

Please read and sign the informed consent form attached to this letter. Your participation in this research study will be greatly appreciated. If you should have any questions or need more information please contact Ms. Tanisha Carter at 850-445-3343, my supervisor, Dr. Christine Sacco-Bene at (321)235-8411, or the Institutional Review Board point of contact, Barbara Cook at (305) 899-3020.

Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Ms. Tanisha D. Carter, Student
Barry University

APPENDIX B

Barry University Informed Consent Form

Your participation in a research project is requested. The title of the study is: Parent Involvement Training: An Educational Participatory Action Research Study.

The research is being conducted by Tanisha D. Carter, a student in the Counseling and Marriage and Family Therapy department at Barry University, and is seeking information that will be useful in the field of Education. The purpose of the research is to present a series of workshops using the Participatory Action Research method to help parents improve their home and school involvement, attitude toward parenting, and overall family functioning. The workshops will be held once a week for five consecutive weeks. There will also be two additional sessions scheduled. The pre/post sessions will take place one week prior to workshops starting, and one week following workshops ending. The anticipated time commitment for each workshop is two and a half hours, including the pre/post session. In accordance with this purpose, the following procedures will be used: (1) parents will be asked to complete a researcher developed demographic survey; (2) Parents will be pre and post tested using the Parent-Child Relationship Inventory (PCRI) by Anthony B. Gerard. The Parent-Child Relationship Inventory is a (78) item self-report measure intended to assess parents' attitudes toward parenting and their children; (3) additionally, CROP parents and students will be given the McMaster Family Assessment Device (FAD). The Family Assessment Device was designed to assess the dimensions of the McMaster model according to family members' perception (Epstein et al., 1983); (4) lastly; data will be collected following the Post-Session (See Appendix G). The individual parent interviews will be conducted after the Post-session. The investigator will call all participants to schedule their 25 minute interview. The participants will be offered the convenience of having the interview conducted at their home, at Valencia Community College West campus, or some other previously decided upon location. The questions are designed to collect data on parental involvement at home and school and parents' perception of the students' academic achievement and educational goals. We anticipate the number of participants to be 20.

If you decide to participate in this research you will be asked to do the following: actively participate in the workshops and discussions and learn new skills and techniques designed to improve home and school involvement. The workshops will be conducted once a week for five consecutive weeks. The anticipated time commitment for each session is two and a half hours. Compensation for travel will not be permitted for this study.

Your consent to be a research participant is strictly voluntary and should you decline to participate or should you choose to drop out at any time during the study, there will be no adverse effects on your child's participation in the College Reach Out Program at Valencia Community College.

There are no foreseeable risks involved with this study. There are no known direct benefits to the participants, however their participation in this study may help our understanding of parents' perception of their home and school involvement activities as it relates to their child's academic success. The results of the study may provide vital information to other parents, teachers, schools, and community agencies whose mission it is to help economically disadvantaged minority parents to become more involved in their child's education.

As a research participant, information you provide will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Any published results of the research will refer to group averages only and no names will be used in the study. Data will be kept in a locked file in the researcher's office. Your signed consent form will be kept separate from the data. All data will be destroyed after five years.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the study or your participation in the study, you may contact me, Tanisha D. Carter, at (850) 445-3343, my supervisor, Dr. Christine Sacco-Bene, at (321) 235-8411, or the Institutional Review Board point of contact, Barbara Cook, at (305)899-3020. If you are satisfied with the information provided and are willing to participate in this research, please signify your consent by signing this consent form.

Voluntary Consent

I acknowledge that I have been informed of the nature and purposes of this experiment by Tanisha D. Carter and that I have read and understand the information presented above, and that I have received a copy of this form for my records. I give my voluntary consent to participate in this experiment, and no data from my participation will be used without my consent.

Signature of Participant

Date

Researcher

Date

Witness

Date

(Witness signature is required only if research involves pregnant women, children, other vulnerable populations, or if more than minimal risk is present.)

APPENDIX C

Parental Consent Form for Participation in Research

I give my consent for my child _____ to participate in the research titled, “Parent Involvement Training: An Educational Participatory Action Research Study”, which is being conducted by Tanisha D. Carter (850-445-3343), a student in the Counseling and Marriage and Family Therapy department at Barry University. I understand that this participation is entirely voluntary; I also understand that my child will be taking one inventory (McMaster Family Assessment Device); I or my child may withdraw consent at any time without penalty and have the results of the participation, returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

1. The research is seeking information that will be useful in the field of Education.
2. The purpose of the research is to present a series of workshops using the Participatory Action Research method to help parents improve their home and school involvement, attitude toward parenting, and overall family functioning. The workshops will be held once a week for five consecutive weeks. The anticipated time commitment for each workshop is two and a half hours.
3. In accordance with this purpose, the following procedures will be used: (1) parents will be asked to complete a researcher developed demographic survey; (2) Parents will be pre and post tested using the Parent-Child Relationship Inventory (PCRI) by Anthony B. Gerard. The Parent-Child Relationship Inventory is a (78) item self-report measure intended to assess parents’ attitudes toward parenting and their children; (3) additionally, CROP parents and students will be given the McMaster Family Assessment Device (FAD). The Family Assessment Device was designed to assess the dimensions of the McMaster model according to family members’ perception (Epstein et al., 1983); (4) lastly; data will be collected following the Post-Session (See Appendix G). The individual parent interviews will be conducted after the Post-session. The investigator will call all participants to schedule their 25 minute interview. The participants will be offered the convenience of having the interview conducted at their home, at Valencia Community College West campus, or some other previously decided upon location. The questions are designed to collect data on parental involvement at home and school and parents’ perception of the students’ academic achievement and educational goals. We anticipate the number of participants to be 20.
4. No discomforts or stresses are foreseen.
5. No risks are foreseen. My child’s participation is voluntary. This choice will not affect my child’s participation in CROP.

6. The results of this participation will be confidential, and will not be released in any form without the prior consent of myself and my child, unless otherwise required by law.
7. The investigator will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the study, and can be reached by phone at 850-445-3343. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the study or your participation in the study, you may contact my Faculty Research Advisor, Dr. Christine Sacco-Bene at (321) 235-8411 or the Institutional Review Board point of contact, Barbara Cook, at (305) 899-3020.

Please sign and return to the investigator.

Signature of Investigator

Signature of Parent/Guardian

Witness

APPENDIX D

Research Assent Form

I agree to participate in the research titled “Parent Involvement Training: An Educational Participatory Action Research Study”, which is being conducted by Tanisha D. Carter (850-445-3343), a student in the Counseling and Marriage and Family Therapy department at Barry University. I understand that this participation is entirely voluntary; I can withdraw consent at any time without penalty and have the results of the participation (up to the date of withdrawing), returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

1. The research is seeking information that will be useful in the field of Education.
2. The purpose of the research is to present a series of workshops using the Participatory Action Research method to help parents improve their home and school involvement, attitude toward parenting, and overall family functioning. The workshops will be held once a week for five consecutive weeks. The anticipated time commitment for each workshop is two and a half hours.
3. In accordance with this purpose, the following procedures will be used: (1) parents will be asked to complete a researcher developed demographic survey; (2) Parents will be pre and post tested using the Parent-Child Relationship Inventory (PCRI) by Anthony B. Gerard. The Parent-Child Relationship Inventory is a (78) item self-report measure intended to assess parents’ attitudes toward parenting and their children; (3) additionally, parents and students will be given the McMaster Family Assessment Device (FAD). The Family Assessment Device was designed to assess the dimensions of the McMaster model according to family members’ perception (Epstein et al., 1983); (4) lastly; data will be collected following the Post-Session (See Appendix G). The individual parent interviews will be conducted after the Post-session. The investigator will call all participants to schedule their 25 minute interview. The participants will be offered the convenience of having the interview conducted at their home, at Valencia Community College West campus, or some other previously decided upon location. The questions are designed to collect data on parental involvement at home and school and parents’ perception of the students’ academic achievement and educational goals. We anticipate the number of participants to be 20.
4. No discomforts or stresses are foreseen.
5. No risks are foreseen. My participation is voluntary. This choice will not affect my participation in CROP.

6. The results of this participation will be confidential, and will not be released in any form without the prior consent of myself and my child, unless otherwise required by law.
7. The investigator will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the study, and can be reached by phone at 850-445-3343. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the study or your participation in the study, you may contact my Faculty Research Advisor, Dr. Christine Sacco-Bene at (321) 235-8411 or the Institutional Review Board point of contact, Barbara Cook, at (305) 899-3020.

Please sign and return to the investigator.

Signature of Investigator

Signature of Parent/Guardian

Witness

APPENDIX E

Parent Interest Letter



CROP Parent Involvement Training Workshops

Name:

Child's Name:

Phone Number:

Please indicate that you are interested in participating in the CROP Parent Involvement Training workshops.

_____ Yes, I am interested in participating in the CROP Parent Involvement Training workshop.

_____ No, I am not interested in participating in the CROP Parent Involvement Training workshop.

Times that are best for me to attend workshops

Day	Times	Please select
Monday	6:30-8:45pm	
Tuesday	6:30-8:45pm	
Wednesday	6:30-8:45pm	
Thursday	6:30-8:45pm	
Friday	6:30-8:45pm	
Saturday	9:00-11:00am	

_____ Yes, I will need child care services during the workshops.

Please return this form to the CROP coordinator in the self addressed postage paid envelope. If you have any questions or would like more information about the workshops please call the CROP office at 407-582-5521.

We look forward to working with you.

APPENDIX F

PARENT INVOLVEMENT WORKSHOPS



The CROP Parent Involvement Training workshop Series is intended to influence individual, familial, and social factors that affect the lives of children and their parents. Workshops will cover these and other topics:

- Qualities of family relationships
- Parenting skills
- Knowledge of student academic progress
- Parent-child Relationships
- Mentoring
- Support systems/ and Resources
- Discipline/ and Communication
- FCAT testing, and instruction on improving achievement
- Bioecological Systems Theory and Ruby Payne's Framework for Understanding

Program Highlights

- 5 Sessions
- 2 ½ Hour Sessions
- Child Care Services Provided
- Light Snacks Provided

If you are interested in participating, please complete the interest survey and return it to the CROP coordinator in the self-addressed postage paid envelope. You will be receiving additional information related to this program once all interest surveys have been returned.

APPENDIX G

Instructional Calendar

Session and Topic	Session Goals
<p><u>Pre Session</u> Assessment Administration</p> <p>Research Participation Documents</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Complete Pre-test Assessments ❖ To clarify and explain issues of confidentiality and informed consent ❖ To explain the purpose of research and assessment measures
<p><u>Session 1</u> The Purpose (Why are we here?)</p> <p>Introduction to Parenting Involvement Workshops</p> <p>Introduction to Participatory Action Research</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ To provide clear information about the PIT sessions , and how it's designed to help your child ❖ To help families feel comfortable with facilitators and each other ❖ Discussion on how to generate knowledge to inform action, to make meaningful changes
<p><u>Session 2</u> Bronfenbrenner Bioecological Theory (The Body, Brain, Emotional, & Behavior System)</p> <p>Who Can help me make a difference in my child's life (Socially and Academically)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Discussion of Theory and how it relates to Parent Involvement (PI) ❖ To help parents identify current supports and resources for parenting ❖ To help parents identify ways to get the parenting support they need ❖ For parents to identify community resources that can aid their child academically
<p><u>Session 3</u> Communication &</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ To introduce the various forms of communication that take place between schools/teachers/parents ❖ To help parents identify how communication promotes positive interaction between school, teachers, and children

<p>Staying Informed/Student Academic Progress (Part 1& 2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ To discuss with parents the importance of keeping up with school functions (meetings, testing schedules, parent conferences, report cards, etc) ❖ To have parents exchange information/ideas on how to support each other in being informed ❖ To help parents identify resources to help track student progress (FCAT explorer, school planners, email, etc)
<p><u>Session 4</u></p> <p>Discipline</p> <p>Family Functioning/Parenting Attitude</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ To give parents information on discipline issues that take place at school ❖ To discuss the six dimensions of Family Functioning ❖ To discuss the various parenting styles ❖ To assess parents attitude toward parenting and their children
<p><u>Session 5</u></p> <p>Creating Relationships</p> <p>Ruby Payne's Framework for Understanding Poverty Overview</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ To provide parents with information on helping the child at home (websites, practice resources, etc), ❖ To provide parents with an overview of the research on generational poverty and how it impacts a child's academic outcomes.
<p><u>Post Session</u></p> <p>Where do we go from here?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ To ensure that parents understand the purpose of the research ❖ To help parents understand the value of their participation in research ❖ Completion of Post-test assessments

APPENDIX H

PARENT INVOLVEMENT TRAINING SYLLABUS**Session 1**Parent Training Workshop Lesson Plan**One Month before:**

- Create a flyer for the event including who should attend, where it will be held, why, and when.
- Arrange for interpreters to attend each session.
- Reserve a room for the event.
- Arrange for childcare and space for children.
- Assemble notes books for all parents.
- Assemble writing supply bag with paper, pencils, post-it notes and highlighters. Make one gallon sized Ziploc bag with enough supplies for five people.
- Make and copy a calendar with workshop dates.

One Week before:

- Order food for the event. Purchase bottled water, napkins, plates, etc.
- Get activities and games for childcare room.
- Call each family and personally remind them to attend.
- Purchase door prizes for the event.

Day of Event:

- Confirm food order delivery time/pick up time.
- Confirm all room locations.
- Arrange the room so four to five family members are able to sit at a table together. Put supply bags on each table.
- Set up a welcome table with nametags, permanent markers, Bingo Boards and folders.
- Set up tools including computer, SMART board, writing charts, etc.
- Review presentation materials to ensure all supplies are in place.
- Set up tables for food, and drinks.
- Welcome all family members!

Why are we here? (Participatory Action Research)

- Discussion on how the PIT workshops will be used to generate knowledge and inform action to make meaningful changes
- Let family members know that this is a research project (outline the sessions)

- This project is designed with parents in mind
- Goal is to get more parents involved
- Families are not mandated to participate
- Refusal to participate will not adversely affect your child's participation in CROP
- Parents who are not willing to participate can leave/those who stay will complete Informed Consent

Ice Breaker/Getting to know you activity

- Bingo
- Make sure prizes are in place for winners

What is CROP?

- Show Power Point Presentation on the College Reach Out Program
- Give Handouts from the state
- Why CROP is necessary?
- Expected benefits to the students
- Show video from Summer Program

Getting to Know Your Child/Importance of Parental Involvement

- Address the misperception that minority parents don't care to be involved
- What is going on in your child's life
- Do you know your child's teacher, friends, hang out locations?
- Does your child have a mentor/role model?
 - We will go deeper into this in sessions two
 - Is this person someone who is positive?
 - Discuss implementation of CROP mentoring program

Parent Involvement (Pair Share)

- Give each group chart paper/markers
- Choose a recorder and speaker
- Discuss in small groups (will share with larger group)
 - Why is parent involvement important?
 - What have you done to stay involved?
 - What more do you wish you could do?
 - What makes it difficult to stay active?
 - How receptive is school staff (teachers, principals, etc.) when you make attempt to be involved?
 - Is there an active PTA at your child's school, are you invited to participate?
 - Does the school reach out to get you involved?

Session 2

Bronfenbrenner Bioecological Theory/ Who can help me make a difference in my child's life

One week before:

- Make a phone call home reminding parents of session.
- Make arrangements for food.
- Purchase bottled water, napkins, plates, etc.
- Purchase door prizes
- Photocopy materials needed.

Day of event:

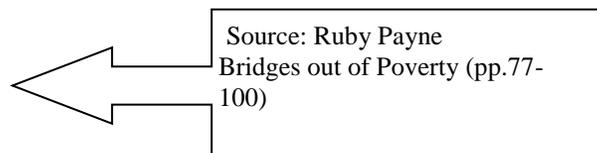
- Confirm childcare room location.
- Arrange the room and place supply bag on each table.
- Set up welcome table with nametags, permanent markers, handouts, etc.
- Set up presentation materials.
- Set up table for food and drinks.
- Welcome all Family members!

⇒ Review from previous session (group discussion)

⇒ Outline current session (have agenda for all parents)

Bioecological Theory

- Review Power Point Presentation covering this material (give handout to all parents)
- Include color picture of system
- Detail how each system effects child's development and how it's related to parent involvement
- Have group give examples of things in each system that may impact the child



Source: Ruby Payne
Bridges out of Poverty (pp.77-100)

Who can make a difference in my child's life?

Mentoring (create Power Point/make handouts)

What is mentoring?

Does mentoring work?

Laws of mentoring

- Discuss the implementation of the CROP mentoring program
- Review Power Point for mentor resource packet
- Review/give parents mentor guidelines
- Review/give mentor resource packet

*Present Parents with Resource Guide/ Gift

Session 3

Communication/ Staying Informed of Student Academic Progress Part 1 & 2

One week before:

- Make a phone call home reminding parents of session.
- Make arrangements for food.
- Purchase bottled water, napkins, plates, etc.
- Purchase door prizes
- Photocopy materials needed.

Day of event:

- Confirm childcare room location.
- Arrange the room and place supply bag on each table.
- Set up welcome table with nametags, permanent markers, handouts, etc.
- Set up presentation materials.
- Set up table for food and drinks.
- Welcome all Family members!

⇒ Review from previous session (group discussion)

⇒ Outline current session (have agenda for all parents)

Staying informed

- Home language for all materials sent home
- Emails (if not email access at home use public library create free email account using yahoo, Gmail, hotmail, etc.)
- Notes/letters
- Post cards
- Home visits
- Phone calls (making sure teacher/school has up to date numbers)
- Siblings (if in same school)
- Planners/Agendas
- Talking to and being in contact regularly helps parents know what is going on
- Keeps line of communication open before problems arise
- Lines of Communication can break down between home and school

Communication

- How communication between parent/teachers/school break down
 - Start strong in beginning/falter at the end
 - Only being called for discipline issue (negative)
 - Misunderstandings (Introduce Ruby Payne)

Staying Informed

- Calendar
- PTSA
- SAC Committee
- FCAT Administration dates
- DIEBLES/Stanford 9

- Open house
- Report card conferences

FCAT Explorer Example

- Go to web page
- Use student log-in to show parents examples

Session 4

Family Functioning/Discipline and Parenting Styles

One week before:

- Make a phone call home reminding parents of session.
- Make arrangements for food.
- Purchase bottled water, napkins, plates, etc.
- Purchase door prizes
- Photocopy materials needed.

Day of event:

- Confirm childcare room location.
- Arrange the room and place supply bag on each table.
- Set up welcome table with nametags, permanent markers, handouts, etc.
- Set up presentation materials.
- Set up table for food and drinks.
- Welcome all Family members!

⇒ Review from previous session (group discussion)

⇒ Outline current session (have agenda for all parents)

Family Functioning/Parenting Match Up

Materials:

Typed statements related to family functioning and parenting
Envelopes

Poster board
 Markers (or writing instruments)
 Scissors/Tape

Objectives:

To discuss school discipline issues and detailed overview of the concepts related to family functioning and parenting attitude.

Group Discussion Questions:

- What were some commonalities you discovered in how your families relate?
- How are roles defined in your family? Are these roles different or similar in the family you grew up in?
- How are rules decided in your family?
- What form of communication is most often used within the family group?

Discussion of Parenting Styles

What is your parenting style? (Have handout with each style highlighted)

Authoritarian- Authoritarian parents always try to be in control and exert their control on the children. These parents set strict rules to try to keep order, and they usually do this without much expression of warmth and affection. They attempt to set strict standards of conduct and are usually very critical of children for not meeting those standards. They tell children what to do, they try to make them obey and they usually do not provide children with choices or options.

Authoritarian parents don't explain why they want their children to do things. If a child questions a rule or command, the parent might answer, "Because I said so." Parents tend to focus on bad behavior, rather than positive behavior, and children are scolded or punished, often harshly, for not following the rules.

Children with authoritarian parents usually do not learn to think for themselves and understand why the parent is requiring certain behaviors

Permissive-Permissive parents give up most control to their children. Parents make few, if any, rules, and the rules that they make are usually not consistently enforced. They don't want to be tied down to routines. They want their children to feel free. They do not set clear boundaries or expectations for their children's behavior and tend to accept in a warm and loving way, however the child behaves.

Permissive parents give children as many choices as possible, even when the child is not capable of making good choices. They tend to accept a child's behavior, good or bad, and

make no comment about whether it is beneficial or not. They may feel unable to change misbehavior, or they choose not to get involved.

Democratic or Authoritative-Democratic parents' help children learn to be responsible for themselves and to think about the consequences of their behavior. Parents do this by providing clear, reasonable expectations for their children and explanations for why they expect their children to behave in a particular manner. They monitor their children's behavior to make sure that they follow through on rules and expectations. They do this in a warm and loving manner. They often, "try to catch their children being good" and reinforcing the good behavior, rather than focusing on the bad.

For example, a child who leaves her toys on a staircase may be told not to do this because, "Someone could trip on them and get hurt and the toy might be damaged." As children mature, parents involve children in making rules and doing chores: "Who will mop the kitchen floor, and who will carry out the trash?"

Parents who have a democratic style give choices based on a child's ability. For a toddler, the choice may be "red shirt or striped shirt?" For an older child, the choice might be "apple, orange or banana?" Parents guide children's behavior by teaching, not punishing. "You threw your truck at Mindy. That hurt her. We're putting your truck away until you can play with it safely."

Adlerian Parenting Styles

- Review chart (in handouts section)

Session 5

Creating Relationships/Ruby Payne's Framework for Understanding Poverty Overview

One week before:

- Make a phone call home reminding parents of session.
- Make arrangements for food.
- Purchase bottled water, napkins, plates, etc.
- Purchase door prizes
- Photocopy materials needed.

Day of event:

- Confirm childcare room location.
- Arrange the room and place supply bag on each table.
- Set up welcome table with nametags, permanent markers, handouts, etc.
- Set up presentation materials.
- Set up table for food and drinks.
- Welcome all Family members!

⇒ Review from previous session (group discussion)

⇒ Outline current session (have agenda for all parents)

Creating Relationships

- How do I create a better relationship with my child's school/teacher?
- The key to achieving in poverty is building key relationships (Ruby Payne, 1996)
- Individuals who have made it out of poverty always attribute this change to a personal relationship
- Discussion of Deposits and Withdrawals (Stephen Covey, The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People)

Ruby Payne

- Give brief history of her work
- Mention that I am a certified trainer
 1. Introduce language registers (make chart for Power Point)
 2. 2 most important language registers (FORMAL/CASUAL)
 3. Casual vs Formal Chart (Create Power Point)
 4. The Cinderella Story (Source: A framework for understanding poverty pp.32-33)

Poverty Quiz-Could You Survive in Poverty

APPENDIX I

Parent Demographic Survey**What is your child's gender?**

Male.....1

Female2

Please circle one answer to indicate your child's ethnicity.

African
American/Black.....1

Asian/Pacific
Islander.....2

Hispanic/Latino.....3

White/Non
Hispanic.....4

Other (Please Specify)

How many children live in your household who are...

Less than 5 years old? _____

5 through 12 years old? _____

13 through 17 years old? _____

Older than 17 _____

What is your child's grade level?

Please circle the answer that best describes you.**What is your gender?**

Male.....1

Female.....2

What is current marital status?

Single, Never	
Married.....	1
Married.....	2
Divorced.....	3
Widowed.....	4
Separated.....	5
A member of an unmarried couple.....	6

Please circle the category that best describes your age.

25- 30.....	1
30- 35.....	2
36-40.....	3
41-44.....	4
45-or over.....	5

Please circle one answer to indicate your ethnicity.

African	
American/Black.....	1
Asian/Pacific	
Islander.....	2
Hispanic/Latino.....	3
White/Non	
Hispanic.....	4
Other (Please Specify)	

Please circle the highest level of education completed.

Professional or Graduate	
School.....	6
College	
Graduate.....	5
Some	
College.....	4
High School	
Graduate.....	3
Some High	
School.....	2
Less than High	
School.....	1

Please circle the category that best describes your employment status.

Employed for wages.....	1
Self-employed.....	2
Out of work for more than 1 year.....	3
Out of work for less than 1 year.....	4
A homemaker.....	5
A student.....	6
Retired.....	7
Unable to work.....	8

Please circle the category that best describes your yearly family income.

\$1,000 to \$9,999.....	1
\$10,000 to \$19,999.....	2
\$20,000 to \$29,999.....	3
\$30,000 to \$39,999.....	4
\$40,000 to \$49,999.....	5
\$50,000 to \$59,999.....	6
\$60,000 and above.....	7

APPENDIX J

Parent Child Relationship Inventory

Profile Form		Parent-Child Relationship Inventory (PCRI)						WESTERN PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES wps 12031 Wilshire Boulevard Los Angeles, CA 90025-1251 Publishers and Distributors	
Father		Name: _____	Date: _____	ID Number: _____					
T-Score	SUP	SAT	INV	COM	LIM	AUT	ROL	Percentile	
85	36								
84									
83									
82									
81	35		56		47	36	36		
80									
79							35		
78									
77					46				
76	34					35			
75									
74			55		45	34	34	99	
73	33								
72					44		33		
71					43				
70	32			36					
69			54			33	32		
68		40			42				
67	31					32	31		
66			53	35	41			95	
65	30								
64			52	34		31	30		
63				33				90	
62	29	39	51		40		29		
61				32		39			
60			50		38				
59	28	38		31			28		
58			49		37				
57				30		29	27	75	
56	27	37	48		36				
55							26		
54		36	47	29	35	28			
53	26		46				25		
52			45	28	34	27			
51		35							
50	25		44		33		24	50	
49		34							
48	24	33		27		26	23		
47			43		32				
46		32							
45	23		42	26	31	25	22		
44		31							
43	22		41		30	24	21	25	
42		30		25		23			
41					29				
40	21	29	40	24		22	20		
39		28				21			
38	20	27				20	19		
37			39		23-25	19		10	
36		26		23	22				
35	19		38			18			
34					21	17		5	
33	18	25		22	20		17		
32			37			16			
31		24			19				
30	17		36	21			16		
29		23	35		17-18				
28		22					15		
27	16	21	34	20	16	15	14	1	
26							13		
25		20			15				
24	15			19			12		
23	14	19				14	11		
22									
21			33	16-18	14		10		
20									
19	13	18		15			9		
18									

REMOVE THIS SHEET BEFORE COMPLETING FORM

VALIDITY INDICATORS										
Inconsistency Indicator:	17	<input type="checkbox"/>	55	<input type="checkbox"/>	53	<input type="checkbox"/>	39	<input type="checkbox"/>	49	<input type="checkbox"/>
	36	<input type="checkbox"/>	67	<input type="checkbox"/>	60	<input type="checkbox"/>	46	<input type="checkbox"/>	78	<input type="checkbox"/>
	24	<input type="checkbox"/>	64	<input type="checkbox"/>	63	<input type="checkbox"/>	10	<input type="checkbox"/>	25	<input type="checkbox"/>
	27	<input type="checkbox"/>	77	<input type="checkbox"/>	72	<input type="checkbox"/>	26	<input type="checkbox"/>	32	<input type="checkbox"/>

Social Desirability Score: _____

Inconsistency Score: _____

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Profile Form
Mother

Parent-Child Relationship Inventory (PCRI)

Published by
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12031 Wilshire Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90025-1251
Publishers and Distributors

Name: _____ Date: _____ ID Number: _____

T-Score	SUP	SAT	INV	COM	LIM	AUT	ROL	Percentile
85								
84								
83								
82								
81								
80					48			
79								
78	36				47			
77					46	37	36	
76	35							
75					45			
74	34				44	36		
73							35	99
72	33		56		43	35		
71								
70	32					34	34	
69					42			
68			55	36			33	
67	31					33		
66		40			41		32	95
65	30		54			32		
64					40		31	90
63								
62	29			35	39	31	30	
61			53		38			
60	28	39		34				
59			52		37	30	29	
58	27			33				
57		38	51		36		28	75
56	26			32		29		
55			50	31			27	
54		37			35			
53	25		49	30			26	
52		36	48		34	28		
51	24						25	
50		35	47	29	33			50
49	23		46			27		
48		34			32		24	
47	22		45	28	31	26		
46		33					23	
45	21	32			30	25		
44		31	44		29		22	
43				27	28	24		25
42	20	30						
41		29	43		26-27	23	21	
40	19	27-28			25	22		
39			42	26	24	21		
38	18	26			23	20	20	
37			41		22	19		10
36	17			25	21	18	19	
35		25	40		20	17		
34				24			18	5
33	16		39		19			
32		24	38	23			16	
31							17	
30	15	23	37		18			
29		22	36	22	17	15	16	
28			35	21	16			
27	14	21	34	20			15	1
26					15	14		
25	13		33	19	14			
24		19-20				13	14	
23		16-18	30-32	18				
22	12	15	29		13			
21								
20		14	25-28					
19	11							
18		13	24	17		11	13	

VALIDITY INDICATORS

Inconsistency Indicator:	17 <input type="checkbox"/>	55 <input type="checkbox"/>	53 <input type="checkbox"/>	39 <input type="checkbox"/>	49 <input type="checkbox"/>
	36 <input type="checkbox"/>	67 <input type="checkbox"/>	60 <input type="checkbox"/>	46 <input type="checkbox"/>	78 <input type="checkbox"/>
	24 <input type="checkbox"/>	64 <input type="checkbox"/>	63 <input type="checkbox"/>	10 <input type="checkbox"/>	25 <input type="checkbox"/>
	27 <input type="checkbox"/>	77 <input type="checkbox"/>	72 <input type="checkbox"/>	26 <input type="checkbox"/>	32 <input type="checkbox"/>

Social Desirability Score: _____

Inconsistency Score: _____

Directions

The statements below describe different ways some parents feel about their children. For each statement, decide how you feel. If you *strongly agree*, circle the 1 next to that statement number on the answer sheet. If you *agree*, circle the 2. If you *disagree*, circle the 3 on the answer sheet. If you *strongly disagree*, circle the 4. Please make sure that you are circling the correct response on the answer sheet.

Use a ball-point pen only, and make heavy marks that completely circle the appropriate response. If you want to change your answer, cross out your first mark and circle another response.

Try to respond to all of the statements. If you aren't sure how you feel, mark the response that comes closest to your feelings at this time. *There are no right or wrong answers.*

PCRI

Anthony B. Gerard, Ph.D.

Name (Optional): _____ Date: _____

ID Number: _____ Age: _____

Ethnicity: Asian Black Hispanic Native American White Other _____

Parent: Mother Father

Child's Age: _____

Child's Sex: Male Female

Examiner's Name: _____

Strongly Agree
Agree
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

PLEASE PRESS HARD WHEN CIRCLING YOUR RESPONSE.

- | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 1. My child generally tells me when something is bothering him or her. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 2. I have trouble disciplining my child. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3. I get as much satisfaction from having children as other parents do. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 4. I have a hard time getting through to my child. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5. I spend a great deal of time with my child. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 6. When it comes to raising my child, I feel alone most of the time. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 7. My feelings about being a parent change from day to day. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 8. Parents should protect their children from things that might make them unhappy. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 9. If I have to say no to my child, I try to explain why. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 10. My child is more difficult to care for than most children are. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 11. I can tell by my child's face how he or she is feeling. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 12. I worry a lot about money. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 13. I sometimes wonder if I am making the right decisions about how I raise my child. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 14. Being a parent comes naturally to me. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 15. I sometimes give in to my child to avoid a tantrum. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 16. I love my child just the way he or she is. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 17. I get a great deal of enjoyment from all aspects of my life. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 18. My child is never jealous of others. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 19. I often wonder what the rewards are in raising children. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 20. My child tells me all about his or her friends. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 21. I wish I could set firmer limits with my child. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 22. I get a great deal of satisfaction from having children. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 23. I sometimes feel if I don't have more time away from my child I'll go crazy. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 24. I regret having children. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 25. Children should be given most of the things they want. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 26. My child is out of control much of the time. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 27. Being a parent isn't as satisfying as I thought it would be. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 28. I feel that I can talk to my child on his or her level. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 29. My life is very stressful right now. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 30. I never worry about my child. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 31. I wish my child would not interrupt when I'm talking to someone else. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 32. Parents should give their children all those things the parents never had. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 33. I generally feel good about myself as a parent. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 34. I sometimes feel overburdened by my responsibilities as a parent. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 35. I feel very close to my child. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 36. I'm generally satisfied with the way my life is going right now. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 37. I have never had any problems with my child. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 38. I can't stand the thought of my child growing up. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 39. My child would say that I am a good listener. |

PLEASE TURN THE FORM OVER NOW AND COMPLETE STATEMENTS 40 THROUGH 78.

W-293A

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TO OPEN, TEAR ALONG PERFORATION.

- PLEASE PRESS HARD WHEN CIRCLING YOUR RESPONSE.**
- | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | |
|----------------|---|----------|-------------------|---|
| Strongly Agree | | | | |
| Agree | | | | |
| | | Disagree | | |
| | | | Strongly Disagree | |
| | | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 40. I often lose my temper with my child. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 41. I am very involved with my child's sports or other activities. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 42. My spouse and I work as a team in doing chores around the house. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 43. I have never been embarrassed by anything my child has said or done. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 44. My child really knows how to make me angry. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 45. Parents should be careful about whom they allow their children to have as friends. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 46. When my child has a problem, he or she usually comes to me to talk things over. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 47. My child never puts off doing things that should be done right away. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 48. Being a parent is one of the most important things in my life. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 49. Women should stay home and take care of the children. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 50. Teenagers are not old enough to decide most things for themselves. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 51. My child keeps many secrets from me. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 52. Mothers who work are harming their children. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 53. I feel I don't really know my child. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 54. I sometimes find it hard to say no to my child. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 55. I wonder if I did the right thing having children. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 56. I would really rather do a lot of other things than spend time with my child. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 57. It's a parent's responsibility to protect his or her child from harm. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 58. Sometimes I wonder how I would survive if anything were to happen to my child. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 59. I miss the close relationship I had with my child when he or she was younger. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 60. My child rarely talks to me unless he or she wants something. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 61. A father's major responsibility is to provide financially for his children. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 62. It's better to reason with children than just to tell them what to do. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 63. I spend very little time talking with my child. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 64. I feel there is a great distance between me and my child. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 65. For a woman, having a challenging career is just as important as being a good mother. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 66. I often threaten to punish my child but never do. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 67. If I had it to do over, I would probably not have children. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 68. Husbands should help with child care. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 69. Mothers should work only if necessary. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 70. Some people would say that my child is a bit spoiled. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 71. I worry a lot about my child getting hurt. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 72. I seldom have time to spend with my child. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 73. Below age four, most children are too young to be in a regular preschool or day-care program. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 74. A woman can have a satisfying career and be a good mother too. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 75. I carry a photograph of my child in my wallet or purse. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 76. I have a hard time letting go of my child. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 77. I feel I don't know how to talk with my child in a way that he or she really understands. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 78. Having a full-time mother is best for a child. |

FAMILY ASSESSMENT DEVICE (FAD)

Nathan B. Epstein, MD- Lawrence M. Baldwin, PhD- Duane S. Bishop, MD

Instructions:

This assessment contains a number of statements about families. Read each statement carefully, and decide how well it describes your own family. You should answer according to how you see your family.

For each statement there are four (4) possible responses:

Strongly Agree= SA Select SA if you feel that the statement describes your family very accurately.

Agree= A Select A if you feel that the statement describes your family for the most part.

Disagree= D Select D if you feel that the statement does not describe your family for the most part.

Strongly Disagree=SD Select SD if you feel that the statement does not describe your family at all.

Try not to spend too much time thinking about each statement, but respond as quickly and as honestly as you can. If you have difficulty, answer with your first reaction. Please be sure to answer *every* statement and mark all your answers in the space provided below each statement.

1. Planning family activities is difficult because we misunderstand each other.
 ___ SA ___ A ___ D ___ SD _____
2. We resolve most everyday problems around the house.
 ___ SA ___ A ___ D ___ SD _____
3. When someone is upset the others know why.
 ___ SA ___ A ___ D ___ SD _____
4. When you ask someone to do something, you have to check that they did it.
 ___ SA ___ A ___ D ___ SD _____

5. If someone is in trouble, the others become too involved.
___ SA ___ A ___ D ___ SD _____
6. In times of crisis we can turn to each other for support.
___ SA ___ A ___ D ___ SD _____
7. We don't know what to do when an emergency comes up.
___ SA ___ A ___ D ___ SD _____
8. We sometimes run out of things that we need.
___ SA ___ A ___ D ___ SD _____
9. We are reluctant to show our affection for each other.
___ SA ___ A ___ D ___ SD _____
10. We make sure members meet their family responsibilities.
___ SA ___ A ___ D ___ SD _____
11. We cannot talk to each other about the sadness we feel
___ SA ___ A ___ D ___ SD _____
12. We usually act on our decisions regarding problems.
___ SA ___ A ___ D ___ SD _____
13. You only get the interest of others when something is important to them.
___ SA ___ A ___ D ___ SD _____
14. You can't tell how a person is feeling from what they are saying.
___ SA ___ A ___ D ___ SD _____
15. Family tasks don't get spread around enough.
___ SA ___ A ___ D ___ SD _____
16. Individuals are accepted for what they are.
___ SA ___ A ___ D ___ SD _____

17. You can easily get away with breaking the rules.

___ SA ___A ___D ___SD _____

18. People come right out and say things instead of hinting at them.

___ SA ___A ___D ___SD _____

19. Some of us just don't respond emotionally.

___ SA ___A ___D ___SD _____

20. We know what to do in an emergency.

___ SA ___A ___D ___SD _____

21. We avoid discussing our fears and concerns.

___ SA ___A ___D ___SD _____

22. It is difficult to talk to each other about tender feelings.

___ SA ___A ___D ___SD _____

23. We have trouble meeting our bills.

___ SA ___A ___D ___SD _____

24. After our families try to solve a problem, we usually discuss whether it worked or not.

___ SA ___A ___D ___SD _____

25. We are too self-centered.

___ SA ___A ___D ___SD _____

26. We can express feelings to each other.

___ SA ___A ___D ___SD _____

27. We have no clear expectations about toilet habits.

___ SA ___A ___D ___SD _____

28. We do not show our love for each other.
 ___ SA ___ A ___ D ___ SD _____
29. We talk to people directly rather than through go-between.
 ___ SA ___ A ___ D ___ SD _____
30. Each of us has particular duties and responsibilities.
 ___ SA ___ A ___ D ___ SD _____
31. There are lots of bad feelings in the family.
 ___ SA ___ A ___ D ___ SD _____
32. We have rules about hitting people.
 ___ SA ___ A ___ D ___ SD _____
33. We get involved with each other only when something interests.
 ___ SA ___ A ___ D ___ SD _____
34. There's little time to explore personal interests.
 ___ SA ___ A ___ D ___ SD _____
35. We often don't say what we mean.
 ___ SA ___ A ___ D ___ SD _____
36. We feel accepted for what we are.
 ___ SA ___ A ___ D ___ SD _____
37. We show interest in each other when we can get something out
 of it personally.
 ___ SA ___ A ___ D ___ SD _____
38. We resolve most emotional upsets that come up.
 ___ SA ___ A ___ D ___ SD _____

- 39. Tenderness takes second place to other things in our family.
___ SA ___ A ___ D ___ SD _____

- 40. We discuss who is to do household jobs.
___ SA ___ A ___ D ___ SD _____

- 41. Making decisions is a problem for our family.
___ SA ___ A ___ D ___ SD _____

- 42. Our family shows interest in each other only when they can get something out of it.
___ SA ___ A ___ D ___ SD _____

- 43. We are frank with each other.
___ SA ___ A ___ D ___ SD _____

- 44. We don't hold to any rules or standards.
___ SA ___ A ___ D ___ SD _____

- 45. If people are asked to do something, they need reminding.
___ SA ___ A ___ D ___ SD _____

- 46. We are able to make decisions about how to solve problems.
___ SA ___ A ___ D ___ SD _____

- 47. If the rules are broken, we don't know what to expect.
___ SA ___ A ___ D ___ SD _____

- 48. Anything goes in our family.
___ SA ___ A ___ D ___ SD _____

- 49. We express tenderness.
___ SA ___ A ___ D ___ SD _____

- 50. We confront problems involving feelings.
___ SA ___ A ___ D ___ SD _____

51. We don't get along well together.

___ SA ___A ___D ___SD _____

52. We don't talk to each other when we are angry.

___ SA ___A ___D ___SD _____

53. We are generally dissatisfied with the family duties assigned to us.

___ SA ___A ___D ___SD _____

54. Even though we mean well, we intrude too much into each others' lives.

___ SA ___A ___D ___SD _____

55. There are rules about dangerous situations.

___ SA ___A ___D ___SD _____

56. We confide in each other.

___ SA ___A ___D ___SD _____

57. We cry openly.

___ SA ___A ___D ___SD _____

58. We don't have reasonable transport.

___ SA ___A ___D ___SD _____

59. When we don't like what someone has done, we tell them.

___ SA ___A ___D ___SD _____

60. We try to think of different ways to solve problems.

___ SA ___A ___D ___SD _____

APPENDIX L

CROP Brochure

What is CROP?

CROP is a state funded initiative that provides focused educational and enrichment opportunities to students in grades 6-12 who might otherwise be unlikely to seek admission to a postsecondary institution. Since 1990, the CROP program has served over 150, 000 students.

What are the Benefits of CROP?

CROP provides tutoring, mentoring, academic counseling, motivational workshops, after-school and summer programs for students. Information on college admission requirements, financial aid and other requisites for academic success are also provided for students. Additionally, CROP students have opportunities for on-campus, real world college experience for one or two weeks in the summer. Many CROP students receive scholarships from participating institutions.

How Does CROP Work?

Participating community colleges and universities determine the range of activities that would further CROP's goals, and present them to the State for approval. Most CROP affiliates are organized into consortia (a group of institutions) throughout the state and many of CROP's tutoring and mentoring programs and activities vary depending on institution. The main office is located at the Department of Education in the Office of Equity and Access (OEA). Please contact OEA for opportunities for tutoring and enrichment activities provided in your area, or visit the website at: <http://www.fim.edu/doe/eeop/crop.htm>.



CROP Highlights

In comparison to their peers from similar backgrounds:

- CROP students have better school attendance
- CROP students are promoted at a higher rate
- CROP students perform better on FCAT
- CROP students have a higher Grade Point Average
- CROP students are admitted *and* graduate from postsecondary institutions at a higher rate



How do I Apply for CROP?

Local CROP project personnel and middle and high school counselors identify students for participation in the program based upon the specified criteria. Students and parents may contact the staff at local CROP project offices or call the FDOE Office of Equity and Access for more information.

What are the Requirements to Participate?

To be eligible for CROP, the student must meet specific criteria related to:

- Family Income
- Academic Standing (GPA, FCAT scores, etc.)



APPENDIX M

Letter from Assistant Vice President of College Transitions



February 25, 2009

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is to support the work of Tanisha Carter, a doctoral candidate at Barry University. As her supervisor at Valencia Community College, I am writing to confirm that is acceptable under Valencia's policy for Ms. Carter to use the parental demographic information available to her through the College Reach Out Program (CROP) to send letters to parents asking for their voluntary participation in a Parent Involvement Training Program conducted as part of Ms. Carter's dissertation research.

This letter does not represent IRB approval for this project, and I understand that Ms. Carter must obtain Valencia's IRB approval prior to commencing her work.

If there are any further concerns or questions, please feel free to contact me at 407-582-1238.

Sincerely,


 Linda Downing
 Assistant Vice President, College Transitions

Valencia Community College

Post Office Box 3028
 Orlando, Florida 32802-3028
 (407) 299-5000, Suncom 339-0111
 an equal opportunity institution

APPENDIX N

Human Subjects Training Certificate



APPENDIX O

Third Party Confidentiality Form

Confidentiality Agreement

As a member of the research team investigating Parent Involvement Training: An

Educational Participatory Action Research Study., I understand that I will have access to confidential information about study participants. By signing this statement, I am indicating my understanding of my obligation to maintain confidentiality and agree to the following:

- I understand that names and any other identifying information about study participants are completely confidential.
- I agree not to divulge, publish, or otherwise make known to unauthorized persons or to the public any information obtained in the course of this research project that could identify the persons who participated in the study.
- I understand that all information about study participants obtained or accessed by me in the course of my work is confidential. I agree not to divulge or otherwise make known to unauthorized persons any of this information unless specifically authorized to do so by office protocol or by a supervisor acting in response to applicable protocol or court order, or public health or clinical need.
- I understand that I am not to read information and records concerning study participants, or any other confidential documents, nor ask questions of study participants for my own personal information but only to the extent and for the purpose of performing my assigned duties on this research project.
- I understand that a breach of confidentiality may be grounds for disciplinary action.
- I agree to notify the investigator immediately should I become aware of an actual breach of confidentiality or situation which could potentially result in a breach, whether this be on my part or on the part of another person.

Signature	Date	Printed Name
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Signature	Date	Printed Name
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APPENDIX P

Letter from Barry Family Enrichment Center

11300 NORTHEAST SECOND AVENUE
Miami Shores, Florida 33161-6695
Powers (305) 899-3700
FAX (305) 899-3630
Switchboard (305) 899-3000



BARRY UNIVERSITY

Adrian Dominican School of Education

March 3, 2009

Tanisha Carter
Barry University
2000 North Alafaya Trail
Orlando, Florida 32826

Re: PARENT INVOLVEMENT TRAINING: AN EDUCATIONAL PARTICIPATORY
ACTION RESEARCH STUDY

Dear Ms. Carter:

The mission of the Counseling Program at Barry University is to provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to perform competently and successfully as professional counseling practitioners in a wide range of clinical and organizational settings. We do this by offering counseling to the community on a sliding fee scale or free.

Because this is a Barry University research, we will be glad to see any participant who wishes to speak to a counselor free of charge.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Robbins, MA, LMHC
Administrative Manager of Barry Family Enrichment Center

A Catholic International University