

2017

# Parent-Teacher Perceptions of the Factors That Interfere with Productive Parent-Teacher Relationships in Urban Schools

Darryl Marc Mason  
*Cleveland State University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://engagedscholarship.csuohio.edu/etdarchive>

 Part of the [Education Commons](#)

**How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!**

---

## Recommended Citation

Mason, Darryl Marc, "Parent-Teacher Perceptions of the Factors That Interfere with Productive Parent-Teacher Relationships in Urban Schools" (2017). *ETD Archive*. 989.

<https://engagedscholarship.csuohio.edu/etdarchive/989>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by EngagedScholarship@CSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in ETD Archive by an authorized administrator of EngagedScholarship@CSU. For more information, please contact [library.es@csuohio.edu](mailto:library.es@csuohio.edu).

PARENT-TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF THE FACTORS THAT INTERFERE WITH  
PRODUCTIVE PARENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS IN URBAN SCHOOLS

DARRYL MASON

Bachelor of Arts in Social Work

Cleveland State University

May 2000

Master of Arts in Social Work

Cleveland State University

May 2004

Submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN URBAN EDUCATION

at the

CLEVELAND STATE UNIVERSITY

March 2017

We hereby approve this dissertation for  
Darryl Mason  
Candidate for the Doctor of Philosophy in Urban Education degree for the  
**Office of Doctoral Studies,**  
College of Education and Human Services and  
CLEVELAND STATE UNIVERSITY  
College of Graduate Studies by

---

Dissertation Chairperson, Justin Perry, Ph.D.

---

Counseling, Administration, Supervision, and Adult Learning March 2017

---

Dissertation Committee Member, Jim Carl, Ph.D.

---

Curriculum and Foundations March 2017

---

Dissertation Committee Member, Julia Phillips, Ph.D.

---

Counseling, Administration, Supervision, and Adult Learning March 2017

---

Dissertation Committee Member, Maggie Jackson, Ph.D.

---

College of Liberal Arts and Social Science March 2017

---

Dissertation Committee Member Edward McKinney, Ph.D.

---

College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences March 2017

Student's Date of Defense: March 31, 2017

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Anna Sue Smith, (1931-1988) who provided unlimited love, friendship, private academic training in the community and most of all, encouragement to pursue the life path of my choice.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

The following individuals were instrumental throughout the course of this research project:

Justin Perry Ph.D., who from the very beginning, made this entire process smoother and manageable. Despite his own individual goals and aspirations always made the time to encourage me and be there for me.

Patricia Mason, my wife, for always believing in me, encouraging me to reach my goals, and providing hours of helping me to format my work.

My dissertation committee members: Jim Carl Ph.D., whose teaching style greatly impressed and inspired me.

Julia Phillips Ph.D., whose participation as a reader I am most grateful and an admirer of her research interests surrounding gender and sexuality.

Maggie Jackson Ph.D., who encouraged me to follow this path, believed in me and help to guide me through this process.

Edward McKinney Ph.D., for being a mentor and helping me to understand that real graduate work entailed one on one interaction and dialogue with your graduate instructor.

PARENT-TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF THE FACTORS THAT INTERFERE WITH  
PRODUCTIVE PARENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS IN URBAN SCHOOLS

DARRYL MASON

**ABSTRACT**

The main premise of this study is that teachers and parents (that is, single head-of-household mothers) of Black males living in urban communities should engage in collaborative, mutual, and respectful dialogue. A barrier to fostering such collaboration, however, lies in differences between the worldviews of teachers and parents based on a variety of cultural, social, economic, and individual factors. If external and/or internal barriers to developing a productive parent-teacher relationship can be overcome, Black males will have a significantly greater chance of succeeding in school. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of single African American mothers (N = 24), African American teachers (N = 12) and White European American teachers (N = 12) as a means of better understanding the factors that may or may not influence the parent-teacher relationship. NVivo was utilized as the data analysis program for the semi-structured interview methods employed to collect data on the perceptions of the participants. The overall arching research question is, “Do poor/working class African American female mothers who are head of households experience certain internal and external factors that influence relationships with teachers and school administrators when intervening on behalf of their adolescent sons”? The data for this study appears to support this overall question with a definitive “Yes”. However, results don’t appear to provide a high percentage of “nodes” and or language that supports concrete evidence for the underlying theories that define class consciousness as the problem. There were a few parents and teachers who specifically seemed to

use language that would appear to support differences in class. In conclusion, this study appears to be indicative of past literature that supports the idea that class, not race, is a determinant when looking at how parents intervene and interact with teachers on behalf of their children's academic progress.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                                      | Page |
|--------------------------------------|------|
| ABSTRACT.....                        | v    |
| LIST OF TABLES.....                  | viii |
| LIST OF FIGURES.....                 | x    |
| CHAPTER                              |      |
| I. INTRODUCTION.....                 | 1    |
| II. LITERATURE REVIEW.....           | 10   |
| III. METHODOLOGY.....                | 28   |
| IV. RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS.....   | 36   |
| V. DISCUSSION.....                   | 70   |
| REFERENCES.....                      | 76   |
| APPENDICES.....                      | 83   |
| A. Teacher Informed Consent.....     | 84   |
| B. Parent Informed Consent Form..... | 86   |



## LIST OF TABLES

| Table |                                     | Page |
|-------|-------------------------------------|------|
| 1     | <u>Parent Perceptions</u>           |      |
|       | Internal Factors .....              | 40   |
| 1.1   | <u>Parent Perceptions</u>           |      |
|       | Internal Factors .....              | 41   |
| 2     | <u>Parent Perceptions</u>           |      |
|       | External Factors .....              | 41   |
| 2.1   | <u>Parent Perceptions</u>           |      |
|       | External Factors .....              | 42   |
| 3     | <u>Parent Perceptions</u>           |      |
|       | Parent-Teacher Relationship .....   | 42   |
| 3.1   | <u>Parent Perceptions</u>           |      |
|       | Parent-Teacher Relationship .....   | 43   |
| 4     | <u>Parent Perceptions</u>           |      |
|       | Communication and Interaction ..... | 43   |
| 4.1   | <u>Parent Perceptions</u>           |      |
|       | Communication and Interaction ..... | 44   |
| 5     | <u>Teacher Perceptions</u>          |      |
|       | Internal Factors .....              | 45   |

|     |                                    |    |
|-----|------------------------------------|----|
| 5.1 | <u>Teacher Perceptions</u>         |    |
|     | Internal Factors .....             | 46 |
| 6   | <u>Teacher Perceptions</u>         |    |
|     | External Factors .....             | 46 |
| 6.1 | <u>Teacher Perceptions</u>         |    |
|     | External Factors .....             | 47 |
| 7   | <u>Teacher Perceptions</u>         |    |
|     | Parent-Teacher Relationship.....   | 48 |
| 7.1 | <u>Teacher Perceptions</u>         |    |
|     | Parent-Teacher Relationship.....   | 49 |
| 8   | <u>Teacher Perceptions</u>         |    |
|     | Communication and Interaction..... | 49 |
| 8.1 | <u>Teacher Perceptions</u>         |    |
|     | Communication and Interaction..... | 50 |

## LIST OF FIGURES

| Figure |   | Page |
|--------|---|------|
| 1      | Parents Perception of Internal Factors .....              | 62   |
| 2      | Parents Perception of External Factors .....              | 63   |
| 3      | Parents Perception of Parent-Teacher Relationship.....    | 64   |
| 4      | Parents Perception of Communication and Interaction ..... | 65   |
| 5      | Teachers Perception of Internal Factors .....             | 66   |
| 6      | Teachers Perception of External Factors .....             | 67   |
| 7      | Teachers Perception of Parent-Teacher Relationship.....   | 68   |
| 8      | Teachers Perception of Communication and Interaction..... | 69   |

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In our nation's inner city schools, under-achievement and school dropout continues to be a pervasive problem for racial and ethnic minority groups (Wong & Hughes, 2006; Reese, 2005; Swanson, 2004). According to Kitwana (2002), African American males have been one of the most adversely affected student populations regarding high-stakes academic outcomes. In fact, recent estimates reported by the National Center for Education Statistics indicate that 13.9% of Black males ages 16 to 24 drop out of school compared to 6.8% for White males and 8.9% for Black females (Planty et al., 2009). Low-income Black males are even at greater risk for these adverse outcomes (The terms *Black* and *African American* are considered interchangeable in this paper; however, *Black* will be used more frequently for purposes of consistency in style).

Many experts in the social sciences have observed that Black males disproportionately come from single female-headed households (Anyon, 1997). East Cleveland Ohio is a prime example of this national trend; the total population of the area is estimated to be 27,217 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000), out of which 25,418 (93%) are Black. For the 3,951 households with children under 18, 2,086 (53%) are headed by single mothers (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). In

contrast, married couples with children under 18 account for only 826 families (21%). Based on these statistics, one can see that Black female headed homes account for half of the public-school population in East Cleveland. In 2000, only 5,514 residents (20%) were high school graduates; moreover, this segment of high school graduates accounted for only 9% of the African American community that year (American Community Survey, 2000).

Researchers have extensively examined family characteristics and their relationship to poor academic achievement among Black youth. As scholars, familiar with this literature might expect, socioeconomic factors such as household income and family structure (Shaw, 1982), or children residing in single versus dual parent households (Ford Wright, Grantham & Harris, 1998; Mulkey, Crain & Harrington, 1992) have dominated the literature. Other common factors have centered on the role of race (Cross, 2003, Lopez, 2003, Lynn, 2006), culture diversity in parenting practices (Leareau, 2003), and language barriers between teachers and Black students (Delpit, 1998; Smitherman, 1998).

McKay et al. (2003) assert that discussions between teachers and parents focusing on race and cultural values are needed to create collaborative partnerships. In their view, there continues to be a lack of communication between teachers and parents, who clearly stand as fundamental sources of academic support and motivation (Bryan, 2005). Instead of viewing the role of parents and teachers in theoretical isolation, McKay and colleagues advocate for greater interaction between them, and, in turn, greater engagement in the educational lives of students. The main premise of this study is that teachers and parents (that is, single head-of-household mothers) of Black inner-city males should engage in a more collaborative, mutual, and respectful dialogue. A barrier to fostering such collaboration, however, lies in differences between the views of teachers and parents based on social class and race. If these barriers to a healthy parent-

teacher relationship can be overcome, Black males will have a significantly greater chance of succeeding in school (Bryan, 2005; Epstein & Sanders, 2000; Giles, 2005).

While the study focuses only on Black males, it is not meant to dismiss or minimize the academic difficulties which Black females experience in urban schools. When comparing males and females in the Black population, however, males perform at lower academic levels than girls and exhibit higher dropout rates (Noguera, 2002). Indeed, males are more likely to be diagnosed with a learning disability, placed in special education, and suspended/expelled from school than their female counterparts (Noguera). Outside of education, the literature indicates Black males are also more susceptible to homicides, suicide, incarceration, higher rates of unemployment, and reduced overall life expectancy than Black females (Noguera). Taken together, Black males are at significantly higher levels of risk than Black females across a variety of high-stakes outcomes.

Fisher's (1995) theory of urban modernity is primarily concerned with differences in "class consciousness" between suburban and urban communities. In other words, it raises the question of whether so-called gaps in these differences between low or working-class parents and middle or upper-middle class urban school teachers can be narrowed. If so, would this lead to an appreciable increase in academic achievement among Black males? The counter-argument would contend that Black single mothers from a lower socioeconomic status develop a cultural worldview that is only relevant to the experience of their social group, and thus have no way of relating to the cultural views of the teachers. If a climate of impersonality and mistrust between parents and authority figures in schools is indeed created by a history of class-based segregation, as many scholars would argue, that social distance could only be closed through a dialogue based on common social class and cultural values (Pearson, 2003). This kind of interaction, however, is difficult to generate while single Black mothers continue to be under internal and external

pressures that are attributable, to a large extent, to the mental health risk factors associated with the stressful, cumulative effects of poverty, neighborhood crime, racism, sexism, and generic negative life events (Lips, 2000; Thompson, 1997; Woods-Giscombe & Lobel, 2008).

Building on the existing literature, the central purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of how various risk factors, internal and external, might contribute to strained, unproductive relationships between single head-of-household Black mothers and teachers/school administrators. It is also designed to explore how these mothers may or may not be able to cope effectively with and overcome these stressors, and what factors might help ways in which more productive relationships can be facilitated on behalf of their sons.

Are strained, impersonal, unproductive relationships a common problem between Black head-of-household mothers and urban school teachers? The scholarship unequivocally shows that such tensions are prevalent (Giles, 2005). Bryan (2005) observed, “Oftentimes parents are regarded by school officials as adversaries instead of supporters of their children’s education. . . . School officials blame differences in cultural values and family structure for poor academic achievement while parents in turn blame discrimination and insensitivity by school personnel” (p. 2). This pernicious cycle of blaming each other for the student’s academic struggles naturally leads to parental mistrust of the school, poor communication, feelings of social exclusion, and perceptions of discrimination from school authorities – these phenomena are often based (Noguera, 2003). In their 3-year project at an urban K-12 school, which was 24% Black, Amatea, Daniels, Bringman, and Vandiver (2004) concluded:

Contacts with students’ families were infrequent and uncoordinated. Those contacts that did occur usually followed incidents of children’s inappropriate behavior or academic difficulty, or occurred informally when parents picked up their children from school, or when parents attended brief, highly ritualized encounters such as back-to-school night. Students’ families were viewed by the staff either as a cause of student problems or as the

source of greater demands. Consequently, although teachers often had friendly, informal contacts with some of the parents of their students, these contacts were neither regular nor systematic (p. 5).

The term “parents” does not only apply to Black female-headed households. In Amatea et al.’s (2004) study, 62% of the student population came from White female-headed households. Nonetheless, differences in the backgrounds of Black single mothers and the teachers in urban schools, who tend to be predominantly White and middle class, adds another potential layer of misunderstanding and source of tension. Indeed, as Hughes and O’man (2007) assert, “Positive relations with teachers in the classroom and between home and school appear to be less common for low-income and racial minority children than for higher income, White students” (p. 39). According to Giles’ (2005), patterns underlying the relationships between parents and educators in urban schools can be captured by three prevalent themes: the *deficit* narrative, the *in loco parentis* narrative, and *relational* narrative. First, the deficit narrative is thought to occur when educators consider “working-class and low-income parents to be deprived, deviant, or at-risk and have low expectations for their involvement in their children’s education” (p. 22). From this traditional perspective, it is assumed that an educator’s ability to teach a student is compromised by those problems existing within the family. Consequently, parents are viewed by school authorities as dependent, needy, and trying to take advantage of the system. Like the deficit orientation, the *in loco parentis* narrative shares the same assumption that low-income parents are unable to promote their child’s academic success, and so are part of the problem. What distinguishes this narrative, however, is the belief that educators can compensate for parental deficits. Rather than working alongside parents, the tacit assumption is that educators need to hold high expectations for students, but low expectations for parents. If parents cannot “fix” their child, educators must bear the burden of shaping the agenda for educational reform and moving it forward. In this



passive role, parents are intended to “be kept happy” from an uninvolved distance. Third and finally, the relational narrative is fundamentally different from the former patterns of interactions. From this perspective, educators “expect parents to bring knowledge and strengths to improving the school, and parents expect educators to do the same” (p. 22). Each party is held accountable, and their relationships are characterized by trust, open communication, and respect. Thus, parents play active roles in the school and are treated as “experts”. Giles coined this pattern as “comrades in struggles” – that is, struggles against a common enemy of academic under-achievement. She concluded that counselors working in urban schools can function as advocates in helping build a relational repertoire of interactions between parents and teachers. Giles listed several counseling practices that professionals can use to “midwife” linkages between families and schools. If such linkages can be established and maintained, counseling professionals working on behalf of strengthening partnerships between families and schools will undoubtedly play a critical role in fostering academic resilience among at-risk youth, including Black male inner-city youth (Bryan, 2005).

Consistent with Giles’ (2005) endorsement of a relational narrative, it is reasonable to postulate that teachers and administrators must be made aware, in an empathic and educational manner, of the factors that contribute to an underlying sense of exclusion, mistrust, discomfort, and/or social distance/tension when working with Black head-of-household mothers. If this awareness can be heightened to a level in which teachers can then engage in a relational pattern of involvement with these mothers, the tendencies to quickly judge them (“blame the victim”) could be eventually eliminated. This would serve in everyone’s best interests. At the heart of this understanding is the idea that such parents experience a world of stress and adversity that, by and large, fall outside the everyday experience of most teachers, and hence their perceptions of

what is deemed to be “normal” or “right,” including how to raise children. Because of this lack of perspective-taking on the part of most teachers and school officials, they also are susceptible to erroneously if parents of all backgrounds are exposed to (and thus have access to) the same types of resources or “social capital” in raising their child. By logical extension, the central theoretical underpinning of this argument lies in the *minority stress hypothesis* (Brooks, 1981), which has been applied to explaining the health risks (physical and mental) of a wide range of minorities (e.g., Geronimus, 1985; Gillock & Reyes, 1999; Meyer, 1995). For the population of interest, the core premise is that because of the “double jeopardy” (if not “triple jeopardy”) that single head-of-household Black mothers face in a world of racism, sexism, and classism, they will inevitably cope with stressors and associated risk factors that are not usually confronted by those, on average, who are socially, politically, and economically advantaged – namely, those in society who belong to a majority or dominant group. Of course, this does not mean that every problem or source of stress a single Black mother has is directly related to being a minority group member in society, but it does require a level of critical sensitivity that comes with being a culturally competent counselor (Aponte, Rivers, & Wohl, 1995).

Because the everyday experience of coping with poverty, neighborhood violence, lack of access to quality healthcare, unstable employment, various manifestations of racism, and other life stressors are prevalent among single head-of-household Black mothers, the minority stress hypothesis would argue that many internal risk factors, or adverse mental health outcomes (e.g., maternal depression, anxiety, trauma), stem from these external obstacles and forces of stress (Carter, 2007; Landrine & Klonoff, 1995; Woods-Giscombe & Lobel, 2008). In turn, this internal and external stress, especially depression, has been empirically related to the academic performance of their children (cf. Kohl, Lengua, & McMahan, 2000; McLoyd, 1990; McLoyd &

Wilson, 1991). According to Jackson, Gunn, Huang, and Glassman (2000), the “objective economic circumstances affects parents’ experience of economic pressure or strain, which reduces their psychological well-being,” which in turn “disrupts, effective parenting behaviors and, thereby, child outcomes” (p. 1410). Similarly, a recent study by Rogers, Wiener, Marton, and Tannock (2009) demonstrated that high levels of parenting stress was associated with lower levels of academic achievement. As Kohl, Lengua, and McMahon observed in their review:

Maternal depression was related to PI [parental involvement] at school, the quality of the parent–teacher relationship, the teacher’s perception of the parent’s value of education, PI at home, and parent endorsement of school. . . . A depressed mother may be able to muster the energy to contact her child’s teacher if there is a problem. However, she may lack the motivation and extra energy needed to be involved in school or home activities with her child. This lack of involvement may, in turn, adversely affect the teacher’s perception of the parent and their relationship. Depressed mothers generally feel more negatively about their lives (Downey & Coyne, 1990). These negative feelings could be directed at the school, the teacher, and the child, decreasing both her likelihood of initiating any involvement and her positive perception of others (p. 518).

In sum, the theoretical basis for the constellation of risk factors experienced by Black head of household mothers gives a rich perspective into the challenges impacting the academic achievement of their sons, namely, the quality of the parent-teacher relationship. Qualitative analysis in this area would offer, however, a more in-depth, experience-near examination of this complex phenomenon. Urban school teachers and school administrators must be aware of the mental health factors associated when working with Black women who are heads of household. They must be prepared to not only help link them link the necessary resources within various sectors of the community and mental health system, but also be able to anticipate and understand the ramifications involved with building and maintaining relationships with these mothers in the long run. The discovery-based research questions are designed, then, to address how to best meet

these critical professional needs on the part of teachers, administrators, and counselors working the schools who can act on behalf of the child as an instrumental change agent. These questions are as follows:

1. When male youth of low-income, single head-of-household African American mothers experience academic or behavior difficulties in school, *in the parent's view*, what socio-cultural factors might facilitate the mother's willingness or unwillingness to intervene and, consequently, communicate and interact with school teachers and officials?
2. When male youth of low-income, single head-of-household African American mothers experience academic or behavior difficulties in school, *in the teacher's view*, what socio-cultural factors might facilitate the mother's or teacher's willingness to interact with school officials.
3. What emotional stress, anxieties, or worries do the *mothers* experience when they do attempt to intervene with school officials on behalf of their children's education?
4. What emotional stress, anxieties, or worries do *teachers* experience when mothers do attempt to intervene on behalf of their children's education?
5. How is the potential stress of under-employment, perceived racism, economic hardship, and other external factors associated with these mothers' internal sources of distress, and how are they not associated?
6. How do the combination of external and internal risk factors affect how these mothers choose to intervene (or choose not to intervene) on behalf of their sons?

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The positive association between parental involvement and academic achievement has been well-supported in the literature (e.g., Hughes, Gleason & Zhang, 2005; Wong & Hughes, 2006; Padgett, 2006). In short, research has explored the interactions between teachers and parents, which may in part influence parental involvement (Epstein, 1986; Lareau, 1999, 2003; Baker, 1997; Lawson, 2003; Knoop & Swick, 2007; Trumbull, Rothstein & Hernandez, 2003; Miretzky, 2004; Hughes & O'i-man, 2007; Angelides, Theophanous, L. & Leigh, 2006; Bruckman & Blanton, 2003; Godber, 2002). In the following review, the most prominent parent-teacher perspectives and theoretical constructs thought to shape and influence how parents, particularly African American mothers, construct their relationships with school teachers and administrators is summarized, synthesized, and critically compared. While these ideas offer a conceptual framework for the study, no single theoretical model is viewed as the guiding lens which supersedes all others in terms of importance or impact. Rather, the goal of this review is to be balanced in theoretical bias and consider all the integral ideas at play.

Joyce Epstein's (1986) "Parents' Reactions to Teacher Practices of Parent Involvement" has often been cited by researchers as a driving force in establishing the theoretical background

for parental involvement. Epstein cites previous works (Parsons, 1959; Waller, 1932; Weber, 1947), however, that identify an earlier perspective which looked at the conflict and competition between teachers and parents as rationale for supporting the separation of these parties. The argument was that this separation allowed professionals and parents to complete their individual tasks more efficiently, thereby implying that teachers know best how to effectively reach optimal student outcomes in academic achievement. On the other hand, Epstein cited other scholars (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Leichter, 1974; Litwak & Meyer, 1974) who challenged the “teachers know best” argument, in which teachers and parents are believed to share common goals of student achievement that involve necessary connections. At the time, Epstein noted a paucity of research attempting to “measure differences in attitudes and reactions of parents whose children are in classrooms of teachers with different philosophies and practices of parent involvement” (p. 278). Consequently, she examined parent perspectives and awareness of teacher efforts; albeit, she did not explore the nature or constructed meanings of parent-teacher interactions.

In Epstein’s (1986) seminal study, parents of 1,269 students in 82 first, third, and fifth grade classrooms completed mailed surveys. She had a 59% response rate, of which 36% of the respondents were Black and 76% were two-parent versus 24% one-parent households. The questionnaire asked parents to respond to questions regarding their perceptions of experiences with teachers, their attitudes toward teachers and their involvement at school. Results indicated that few parents were involved at the school and that despite generally positive attitudes, parents believed the schools could do more to involve them in learning activities to help children at home. A limitation of the study, however, was external validity; it was not representative of at-risk populations, such as African American single-parent homes. Nevertheless, Epstein’s

research established ground for empirical efforts in the search for answering if teachers and parents desire partnerships, including reasons that account for those partnerships.

Since the landmark contributions of Epstein, a few qualitative studies in education have provided insight into the factors that seem to influence the quantity and quality of parent-teacher relationships. Based on 16 focus groups (111 parents, with 41.4% of them Black and nearly half unemployed) conducted through the National Council of Jewish Women, Baker (1997) presented questions which addressed certain types of contact that parents had with teachers, parental beliefs on their involvement with their children, and their perceptions of the school's involvement. Among the multiple themes that emerged during the focus groups (e.g., barriers to parent involvement, facilitators of involvement, communication between home and school, what parents want to be different about the schools), Baker was clear in pointing out that the parents had strong negative feelings about how they were treated by the school: "Many parents felt guilty when they could not be involved in ways encouraged by the school and angry when the school was not receptive to their initiation of involvement" (p. 32). This theme is important when considering the internalized affect that parents may experience with respect to lack of involvement or a feeling of being excluded.

On the other hand, some parents in Baker's (1997) study also volunteered their time to sit in classrooms and attend school field-trips. This was said by parents to be viewed positively by some teachers, but that it was not outwardly validated by others, suggesting lack of an authentic partnership. Notably, but perhaps not too surprisingly, one set of barriers identified for parents who struggled in intervening on behalf of their children were logistical constraints related to a basic lack of time, money, scheduling, transportation, and childcare. In addition, Baker stated

that single parents who worked faced a challenge for attending school events, let alone trying to be at the school on a regular basis for volunteering or participating in the PTA.

Using focus groups among 13 low-SES Black parents (out of which 10 were mothers and 7 were single), Lawson (2003) also examined the perceptions of parents concerning the meaning and function of parent involvement. The themes of the study centered around a host of barriers that were perceived by parents and teachers to interfere with child development. Many of these barriers illustrated the idea that parents often view their role of involvement in the same way as school administrators view it, but that external issues often take precedence and thereby do not allow parents to carry out that role. One single mother, for example, stated, “Parent involvement mean going on trips and stuff like that. Just being around talking to the teachers and helping in the classroom and stuff like that. Just, basically, doing whatever the school ask you to do.” But, all too often, the realities of devoting time to meeting daily needs of survival took priority, as the same mother went on to further say, “You know, most of us, we’re concerned with what’s gonna happen to these kids after they leave school each day. I mean, some of us are scraping to put food on the table, clothes on their backs. You know, keeping the kids off of the street corner. That’s our job, you know, taking care of business and making sure that they have the opportunity to go to school each day” (Lawson, 2003, p. 91). This statement not only attests to the external pressures that many Black single mothers face, which interferes with parent involvement, but the internal stress that such pressures instigate.

Hughes and O’man (2007) used quantitative methods to examine relationships between parents and teachers, including differences between Whites and minorities. More specifically, they did a survey study of 443 first-grade children, out of which 104 were Black. According to their review, females, on average, have more supportive and accepting relationships between



parents and teachers than males; they also observed research indicating that low SES minority children have less supportive relationships than higher-SES children from the suburbs. The authors assessed teacher perceptions to measure student–teacher support and parent-teacher relationships; a major flaw of the method was that the researchers limited assessment of involvement from the teachers’ perspective only. Be that as it may, the results demonstrated that African American children and their parents, relative to Hispanic and Caucasian children and their parents, had less supportive relationships with teachers. These results may suggest an underlying bias of the teachers that is reflective of prejudice towards the Black sub-sample, rather than problems that can be attributed to the fault of the Black parents. Racial factors may have intersected with socioeconomic factors in terms of how teachers perceived involvement of parents, although the racial makeup of the teachers was not reported. Based on interviews and observations, Lareau (1999) found similar themes after examining parents’ involvement with their third-grade children. Her study revealed how some of the Black parents in the study were deeply concerned about the historical legacy of discrimination against Blacks in schooling, and, therefore, approached the school with open criticisms.

***Race or Social Class: Which is More Important?***

So far, my review of key studies in the literature seem to consistently elucidate two main hypothetical constructs which can account for the reasons why Black head-of-household mothers and school teachers often do not engage in active, productive, or positive relationships: (a) race and the effects of racism, and/or (b) socioeconomic status, social class, and/or lack of access to social and cultural capital due to poverty and its associated risk factors, such as financial strains, reliance on public transportation, everyday hassles, and so forth. While it may be tempting to ask, “So which force is more important?” it is more useful and relevant to consider how both

race and social class variables interact with each other in complex ways, rather than operating in isolation from each other. After all, it is hard to imagine how Black families, especially single mother headed households, are impervious to the various manifestations of poverty and racism, or are somehow totally oblivious to the world of prejudice, discrimination, and inequality that functions around them. One conclusion, however, we can be certain about: very few teachers and urban single Black mothers are on the same page or working together to minimize the risks of low academic achievement and school dropout.

To reconcile the seemingly competing views of race and social class as primary contributors to parent-teacher relationships among this study's population of interest, Lareau's (1999, 2003) seminal work is worthy to further comment on and use as a guiding philosophical approach. This famous researcher, who was previously referred to, subscribes to the philosophy of Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu's view of social reproduction and how people utilize social capital is paramount to understanding Lareau; according to Bourdieu, social capital may be used in various ways within an individual's "field of action." Lareau builds on this conjecture that all people have social capital that can be used, but that this capital may not have the same value in other fields. Thus, she concludes that individuals must become aware of their social capital, how to use it, when to use it, and where. Interestingly, she uses a person who is playing cards who may not be aware of his or her hand and its potential if he or she is unfamiliar with the game as a metaphor. Coincidentally, this metaphor bears a striking resemblance to the assertion by Pearson (2003) that at-risk youth must be taught the "hidden rules" of the game.

In keeping with the notion that race and social class are more likely to interact than to compete as viable explanations, Lareau's (1999) scholarship arguably gives the best example of the possible dynamics at work when exploring the relationships between low-income Black

parents and white middle class teachers in inner city school settings. Her study consisted of interviews with parents of 24 youth who attended a predominantly white school in an affluent part of a mid-western town. The breakdown of the demographics of the sample is summarized below:

| Social Class  | White<br>(n=12) | Black<br>(n=12) | Total<br>(n=24) |
|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Middle class  | 9               | 3               | 12              |
| Working class | 3               | 4               | 7               |
| Poor          | --              | 5               | 5               |

The person that conducted interviews with several of the Black families was a Black graduate research assistant. The rest of the interviews were conducted by a middle aged white female. In all, interviews were conducted with 40 parents and 9 educators. Separate in-depth 2-hour interviews were held in the children’s homes with the parents and guardians (Lareau, 1999). The three areas that Lareau covered in her analysis were: (a) compliance with school standards, (b) race intertwining with social class and (c) variations in perceptions between Black and White parents. According to Lareau, the teachers perceived themselves as enthusiastically supportive of parental involvement and that their efforts in this area were very good; however, they still tended to espouse what Giles (2005) would call a deficit narrative. That is, when difficulties emerged, the teachers would usually blame the parents as the culprits. Lareau further noted that

teachers thought highly of those parents who acknowledged their efforts and concerns. In the *Compliance with School Standards* section of her analysis, Lareau presented commentary from a Black parent couple. The husband was a pastor of a small church and his wife was co-pastor and a beautician. Their commentary alluded to the perception of racial inequality in terms of their reference to the school's perceived lack of motivation and recognition for Martin Luther King Day:

I've been over to the school all year, and there are certain holidays, I mean like Halloween [when] witches and skeletons and what have you are hitting you all in the face as you walk down the hall. . . . There is a play on Washington's Lincoln's birthday. But then Martin Luther King is the only black person that is really kind of recognized in America. And they don't really, most times they're saying that they might [recognize him], . . . but I still don't feel like they're giving as much effort as they should (p. 43).

This illustrative quote by the wife evidences similar overtones of racial bias, as portrayed in the comments by her husband pertaining to his reference to the racial disparities of the justice system. In the study, the principal found these claims very upsetting, claiming, in reaction, that White children received the same kinds of detentions and reprimands as Black children. Another teacher commented that when she would correct the daughter of these parents for running in the hallway or engaging in other behavior, the daughter would say the redirection/discipline was administered because of the teacher's prejudice. These parents were said by teachers to be hostile in their verbal tone.

Although the above excerpts might appear "hostile" to many, Lareau (1999) argues that in this setting or "field of action" open conflict and anger were not considered legitimate. In the area of *Race Intertwining with Social Class and Variations Between Black and White Parents*, Lareau cited numerous excerpts and actual quotes by middle-class parents who took an entirely different perception of their interaction with teachers. Despite dialogue from some working class

white parents who did allude to the fact that some of the teachers needed to take a semester just learning about some of the problems that these kids faced, Lareau's analysis draws the lines and demonstrates the differences within social class. Furthermore, despite the clear racial implications, her study did seem to challenge Ogbu's (1994) assertion that the emphasis on class is a scapegoat for American comfort and guilt around race. Although she cited Ogbu (1986) in her suggestion that the study was like his and others who have suggested that race is significant in forming school experiences, she also suggested that the field move toward a more sharply defined and well-articulated model of social class. Indeed, her study paved the way for research published in 2003 that looked, again, at the crossroads of social class and race.

In the final analysis, Lareau (1999) suggested that researchers should pay more attention to the "field of action" upon which populations interact and determine the rules thereof. Some social capital such as "hostility" may not be valued because social class determines knowledge of these rules for gaining smoother access to resources, which varies from one social status to another in society. Lareau's work essentially appears to make the same assertion that was made by Pearson (2003) on the emphasis that lower class families need to be taught the rules of the game: the hidden language and behavioral gestures that promote relationship and partnership. Some parents may not want to utilize these even upon their ability to access them. The extent to which such motivation, or lack thereof, is determined by the need (or resistance towards) to "act White," as Ogbu would claim, or "act middle class" (prim and proper and decent, so to speak) is difficult to theoretically and empirically disentangle from her research. In fact, it may be well impossible to completely pull apart the influence of race and social class in any neat or tidy way.

Social class differences have highly complex meanings and different connotations for different scholars (for a review, see Liu et al., 2002). In *Unequal Childhoods*, Lareau (2003)

uses class differences as her principal lens through which she views the disparities in academic achievement between lower and upper middle class groups of students. According to Lareau, income plays a major factor; more specifically, family income dictates whether groups can take advantage of social and cultural capital in the service of promoting their children's education. She demonstrates how lower, working and upper middle classes differ in their perceptions and behavior regarding the education of their children. In doing so, she identifies two themes or social constructs that are thought to operate within these family types: *natural growth tendencies* and *concerted cultivation*.

From Lareau's (2003) perspective, poor and working class families operate out of *natural growth tendencies*, whereas upper middle class families utilize *concerted cultivation*. Working class families, therefore, see their children's education as the responsibility of school systems; hence, their perspective is that teachers and administration are the experts who minimize their level of participation and thus serve to fuel lower levels of achievement. By contrast, she contends that upper middle class families see their children's education as *their* responsibility; as such, they not only provide the resources and extracurricular activities outside of school systems to enhance their children's growth, academic, and artistic development, but they also interact with school officials from a position of equality, power and authority. As we can see, both parenting styles coincide with Giles' (2005) narratives of parent-educator relationships.

In contrast to Lareau, Lee (2005) and Hughes & Ogburn (2007) use as their theoretical model the "cultural ecological theory" endorsed by John Ogburn (1974, 1990). In short, Ogburn's theory postulates that minority youths' failure in school is based on the mainstream culture's implicit and explicit imposition of what is considered of value, acceptable, or of worth in learning and performing academically, and, how different minority groups (i.e., voluntary,

involuntary) cope with the dominant culture's messages about how to behave, learn, and act in school. For the purposes of this review, Ogbu believed that research which emphasized social class in explaining educational disparities served as a means of minimizing race. For many, the question would appear to be which explanation has more merit; social class or race? Since institutional racism still exists, as does classism, both seem worthy and could easily be justified depending on the nature of the circumstances for the involvement between teachers and parents. The goal should be for parents and school officials to be more effective at comprehending the nature of their interference.

According to the "culture of poverty" perspective, differences in income, in addition to a vague understanding of cultural norms, may exacerbate false presumptions or negative judgment on the part of school officials and parents toward each other. Historically, this point of view grew out of a "blame the victim" orientation (Ryan, 1971) concerning the presumably inherent problems of Black families and broken homes, thus reflecting what one might consider a deficit narrative (Giles, 2005). Ford, Wright, Grantham, & Harris (1998) summarized initial research that investigated the cultural and socio-economic reasons believed to underlie the low rates of academic achievement among Black students:

The initial research on the pathology of Black families appeared in the 1960's. These studies typically compared Black families with White families using data gathered on the latter group. Holding the nuclear family as the norm, the researchers proceeded to label single and extended families as pathological. A cultural deficit perspective emerged from this era: large, extended, or matriarchal families were equated with low achievement orientations rather than being viewed as sources of strength and support for their members (Ford, 1993). Black families became both the victims and perpetrators of the circumstances of their children. For example, the controversial Moynihan (1965) report blamed the pathology of the Black family on the inability of Black fathers to find steady employment and to reach higher educational levels (p. 364).

As a direct counter-argument to this pathologizing ideology, the Ford study demonstrated that Black matriarchal households, in comparison to Black dual parent households, did not show significantly different results when looking at Iowa Basic test scores and grade point averages of Black adolescents, ranging from age 11 to 15. Out of their sample of 140 youth, however, 89% consisted of female students rather than male. Despite the overly female representation, the Ford study indicated that students from two-parent families, despite having the same average levels of achievement, were more likely to be identified by teachers as gifted than were those from single-parent families. This key finding suggests possible bias and/or negative judgment on the part of school officials toward Black students based solely on their family structure. The study thus prompted investigation into possible cultural variables surrounding this discrepancy. Are parents in these families cognizant of these potential biases? How might this awareness affect their ability to intervene on behalf of their children? Many scholars would argue that poverty is the major factor for the challenges experienced by families in urban areas. Cultural pathology may not be the appropriate or accurate lens through which poverty is viewed but it does appear to affect language and interpersonal interactions. Indeed, Pearson (2003) asserts the following:

Poverty is primarily a result of interrelated factors, including parental employment status and earnings, family structure and parent education. People raised in a specific class learn certain thought patterns, social interactions and cognitive strategies that often remain with the individual through adulthood. Schools and businesses operate from middle class norms and use (but don't teach) the hidden rules of the middle class (p. 6).

Pearson seems to uncover these hidden rules and suggests helping people who are economically challenged ascertain skills and language (i.e., cultural capital) that distinguishes and utilizes the differences between what she identifies as school and work settings versus the world on "the street." Single Black mothers raising male youth, from Pearson's perspective,



may need to learn these hidden rules. Not understanding this sort of cultural capital may be a factor in their unproductive relationships and possible distorted perceptions when interacting with school teachers and officials. However, they cannot be the only factor at play.

In a somewhat different vein, other lines of research have suggested that discussions by teachers and parents centered on race are needed to help create more effective ways to combat low academic achievement in our inner cities (McKay, Atkins, Hawkins, Brown & Lynn, 2003). According to this perspective, critical race theory (CRT) advocates for a dialogue that attempts to raise awareness about racism and the very power structures it perpetuates within the school systems (Lopez, 2003). Hembold (2004) suggests that this process may lead to increased comfort levels about addressing racial issues in schools, and, in turn, transforming the school by making it feel more inclusive. As Lopez (2003) asserted:

Issues of racial avoidance are not at all uncommon. For example, in educational administration, very few individuals have had a critical dialogue about the role of racism in society—and more specifically, racism in our beliefs, ideas, practices, and knowledge bases. Within the politics of education, discussions of racism have also been largely avoided. Although we often have important conversations surrounding the core concepts of “power, conflict, government, and policy”, rarely have we had a provocative discussion of race and racism and how they affect the field (p. 76).

Two areas of concern appear to be present when looking at these kinds of interactions and discussions to build more effective teacher / parent relationships; the desire of teachers to hold these sorts of discussions and their comfort zone in doing so. The literature is very clear in outlining these implications for this sort of dialogue, but when looking at the research (Lawson, 2003, Obidah & Teel, 2001), this liberal approach will not be easy for some teachers, black or white, and simply opposed by others.

Similar to critical race theory, research indicates that educational instruction and its delivery to Black youth in inner city classrooms results in lower academic achievement rates (e.g., Smitherman, 1998; Fogel & Ehri, 1999). Delpit (1998) is among the most well-known scholars who holds this point of view from a racial and cultural lens. Specifically, she argues that Black children and their adoption of Black English Vernacular (BEV), or Ebonics, is an endemic social reality for them and should not be “corrected” or treated as a deficiency in education. When teachers use “standard English” as the yardstick by which to measure what represents good or correct forms of communication, it is often met by with resistance and even less academic motivation. In her study, Delpit observed from a Black female student, “Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_ always is interrupting to make you ‘talk correct’ and stuff. She be butting into your conversations when you not even talking to her! She need to mind her own business.” (p. 18). Delpit further went on to look at these kinds of experiences as seriously impeding the students’ ability (or perhaps willingness) to follow teacher directives or imitate that teacher’s style of speech (standard English).

Differences regarding language is important for the development of parent-teacher relationships because Black English in many ways can be argued to represent social class and racial differences from white middle class Standard English communication practices. Many would argue that if these dialectic practices are valued by the students, then it is fair to assume that, to a degree, they are also valued by the parents. Failure of teachers to recognize this fact and minimize their importance may seriously hamper the relationships between these two groups and lead to negative judgment and accusations from both groups.

### ***Teacher Perceptions***

In addition to parent perceptions, teacher perceptions of relationships with African American parents have been well documented (Lawson, 2003; Manning & Swick, 2006; Eberly, Joshi & Konzal, 2007; Izzo, Kasproh & Fendrich, 1999; Rice & Schneider, 1994; Hughes & Oi-man Kwok, 2007; Knopf & Swick, 2007; Rowley, Lumas, Helaire & Banerjee, 2010). Much of the debate that scholars address revolves around the fact that both groups are defining the problem differently. A landmark study conducted by Lawson (2003) exemplifies this debate. In his study, 12 teachers and 13 parents were interviewed. The 13 parents consisted of 10 African American women and 3 African American men. Five of the teachers were African American; 2 men and 3 women. The parents were all low socioeconomic status. Lawson's study provided compelling evidence to support the notion that much of the difficulty surrounding the challenges why parents and teachers see their roles through a different cultural lens is due to their different life experiences. By and large, other studies addressing the same issue have consistently found that teachers tend to perceive problematic styles of parenting and pupil preparation as the key source of academic difficulty for their children.

Because of the number of Black teachers in the Lawson study, it could be argued that race may not be a factor when looking at these perceptual differences between the two groups. Indeed, many African American teachers held the same conservative views noted among White teachers. This would appear to strengthen the Lareau (2003) argument that social class becomes more of an indicator of difference than race. The Lawson study suggests in its final implications that if teachers and parents in this social class can acknowledge their different world views, epistemologies and cultural frames of reference without negative judgment that common ground could be found. But this would involve teachers doing the very thing that many don't want to do: that is, to become more like counselors and social workers in their thinking. Indeed, early

investigations with parents of low socioeconomic standing have involved suggestions to create informal settings, at which food could be served. One African American female teacher found this to greatly enhance her relationship with inner city parents. But many teachers don't want the responsibility of this sort of interaction and appear to see it as a crutch. This perspective can be illustrated through one of the teachers' observations,

Unfortunately, we're frustrated because we're not seeing parents making that commitment. And, I think that it's gotten to the point where the staff feels that we're bribing parents to come in. "We're serving dinner". "If we serve food, they'll come". "If we give out prizes, then they'll come". And, we should not have to bribe them to come in to be involved! And, I think that it's sad that we've come to that state, but we have to do that (Lawson, 2003, p. 110).

Even though many experts advocate for the need for schools to become more like mental health agencies in the sense of forging a more authentic and empathic relationship with parents, it appears to be unpopular with many teachers. Some research has attempted to grapple with directly examining teacher and parent interaction in a roundtable format. Everbly, Joshi, and Konzal (2007), for example, examined teacher's understanding of familial influences on student's learning across cultures. Their results concluded that although some teachers were open to processing beliefs and differences in the goal of building relationships with parents, many found it difficult to move past their own biases and cultural beliefs to do so. One discussion during this study involved a teacher recognizing how Black people who immigrated from abroad appeared to value their education more than African Americans born in the U.S.

I think African Americans whose parents were born in Africa have a different upbringing and maybe learned a different set of values or morals. I have two kids that are African American first generation. The rest are African Americans who have been here for centuries. The first-generation African Americans seem to be more education focused (p. 18).

However, one parent totally disagreed with this perception. But other researchers provide a compelling argument that supports the assertion implied by the teacher. Berk (2003) reviewed research demonstrating that immigrant parents, by and large, tend to believe that best way for their children to improve their life chances is through education. So, was this disagreement by the parent concerning her perception of first generation African Americans accurate? And, if so, how can parents and teachers build rapport if teachers disagree on the positive values or cultural norms of a group? Many of the dynamics underlying this argument were processed by Obidah and Teel (2001). These two researchers (Obidah an African American female and Teel a White female) explored their racial and class differences to become more effective when facing racial and cultural differences in urban schools. Much of their struggle centered on miscommunication and negative judgment they both experienced because of tackling their own biases when looking at effective teaching practices. The study brought to life how Teel tried to put aside her pride to seek out how to learn to be more effective teaching a dominant African American middle school classroom.

Obidah and Teel's ability to face their fears and biases surrounding language and social differences in their upbringing greatly enhanced their overall effectiveness in seeing and being open to their differences in cultural world views. Of course, the same process or the same benefits may not be the case for other white females or teachers who are not willing to take a second look at their individual belief systems. This study was a profound example, though, of Teel's initial ineffectiveness with attempting to teach inner city black youth from an entirely white middle class perspective. The same ineffectiveness can, in theory, be transferred to interacting with Black parents as well – not just Black teachers.

## *Summary*

Race, language, educational instruction, mainstream culture, ethnic subculture and poverty appear to be vital elements when examining the relationships between black female heads of households and their capacity and/or willingness to effectively intervene on behalf of their children's education. The research has clearly established and described differences in patterns and perceptions of urban school systems by parents from different walks of life. In this regard, Aponte (1995) described the approach for counselors to take when working with low income minorities that may be experiencing internal and external stressors. But this also appears to warrant the need for teachers to become, in many respects, just as aware, if not more aware, of these internalization processes and external sources of distress that continue to impact the mental health of these parents. This awareness may help to bridge gaps and build healthier relationships between teachers and parents. This chapter has outlined the need for the continued recognition of parent's perceptions of their relationship with teachers when intervening on behalf of their children's education, and especially when looking at this particular group and the devastating effects on male children. This research continues to demonstrate the need for continued qualitative data that examines minority parent perceptions, especially around the areas of race, class, economics and their effects on the overall mental health of African American mothers.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Study Design and Methods**

The method that was utilized for this study was Grounded Theory. In this approach, the data was studied to examine and search for re-emerging and or common themes (Merriam, 2002). NVivo was the data analytic program used to analyze the transcribed interviews. This method consisted of looking at NVivo data to find consistencies and similarities that also may be broken into smaller segments and/or categories. A grounded theory consists of categories and properties that state relationships among categories and properties” (Merriam, 2002, p. 8). In addition, Critical Race Theory will be used to analyze the findings. According to Merriam (2002), “critical qualitative research uncovers, examines, and critiques the social, cultural, and psychological assumptions that structure and limit our ways of thinking and being in the world” p. 9).

The study is following the tenets of Critical Race Theory by its analysis on race, class and gender with a particular group (single black females who are heads of household) and is allowing the findings to emerge on their own and possibly develop its own hypothesis outside of the

study's theoretical framework and premises. The 5 theoretical perspectives are presented to give the reader a broad conceptual basis for race, class and gender within minority populations. The hope is that the findings, in addition to the presenting of the earlier perspectives, will generate more open dialogue and lead to new insights around the psychology of this area of research. This study is attempting to bridge therapeutic processes. Often, counselors and teachers are trying to solve the same problems within the same family unit. It is the hope that this study integrates and normalizes that process. In using Critical Race theory, with its inclusion of psychological assumptions, this study is attempting to bridge gaps of educational and counseling research.

### **Research Questions**

The primary research questions are as follows:

1. When male youth of low-income, single head-of-household African mothers experience academic or behavior difficulties in school, in the parent's view, what socio-cultural factors might facilitate the mother's or teacher's willingness to interact with school officials?
2. When male youth of low-income, single head-of-household African American mothers experience academic or behavior difficulties in school, in the teacher's view, what socio-cultural factors might facilitate the mother or teacher's willingness to interact with school officials?
3. What emotional stress, anxieties, or worries do the mothers experience when they do attempt to intervene with school officials on behalf of their children's education?
4. What emotional stress, anxieties, or worries do teachers experience when mothers do attempt to intervene on behalf of their children's education?



5. How is the potential stress of under-employment, perceived racism, economic hardship, and other external factors associated with these mothers' internal sources of distress, and how are they not associated?
6. How do the combination of external and internal risk factors affect how these mothers choose to intervene (or choose not to intervene) on behalf of their sons?

Since income requirements or AFDC eligibility were not noted during the intake process for participants, it is difficult to know exactly the ratio of parents that fall into poor/working class sections. And, although many of the parents did work and some didn't, the fact that they all were residents in poor areas and the only means of support for their families, it can be assumed that the majority fall into the categories of poor and working class.

### **Procedures & Participants**

Cleveland State University's Institutional Review Board reviewed and authorized the initiation of this study. Participants filled out a permission form outlining confidentiality, security and overview of the study they were being asked to take part in. Participants filled out the permission slip and the questionnaire upon their satisfied sample requirements. The cover letter and permission slip outlined that this study was being conducted for data collection regarding the researcher's Doctoral dissertation and that responses were completely anonymous.

A total of 45 participants took part in this study; 22 African American mothers who were single and head of household; 12 White (6 female and 6 male) and 11 African American, (2 male and 9 female) teachers from a variety of public and private schools in the northeast Cleveland area. The parents selected to participate in this study had at least one adolescent

male child 12 to 17 years of age. Parents were recruited from the surrounding Cleveland area and surrounding suburbs. The four interviewers, who are all former public school teachers, were responsible for locating the participants. Fictional names were given to participants'. Each participant answered 10 questions. Three African American females conducted the 45 interviews in addition to a lead interviewer. The lead interviewer was a retired Cleveland Public school teacher. Three other former, public school teachers were recruited and trained by the lead interviewer on how to conduct the interviews. The lead interviewer was trained by Darryl Mason as to how to conduct the interviews. This lead researcher was utilized several years prior on similar research by Darryl Mason in his Master's program. The teacher interviews were recorded in person at their designated school. Parent interviews were scheduled in person by that interviewer for a later date at which time those interviews would take place by phone and be recorded. Two individuals were used to transcribe the interviews and came from an office administrative background. The interviews were transcribed at a public Mental Health agency operated by Darryl Mason. Two Psychology Doctoral students analyzed the transcribed data using NVivo which they had extensive, past, experience using this format and analyzing data for other projects utilizing Grounded Theory. This team comprised a total of 8 members working on this project. Each member on the team was paid for their services. Two African American females transcribed the taped data and two psychology doctoral students analyzed the transcribed data using the research data program NVivo. Most parents in the sample were residents of the inner city of Cleveland with six residing in nearby suburbs that incorporated a significantly high number of African American residents and all are considered by the state to be identified as "urban schools". All eight

members of the research team were paid for their services. In addition, each parent and teacher who participated in the study was given a \$20.00 Visa gift card.

### **Interview Process**

Teacher interviews took place at that teacher's school. Parent interviews took place by phone and were recorded. Parents were recruited face to face, by interviewers at which time they signed consent forms. They then were scheduled a date to answer taped interview questions by phone. A tape recorder was used in person to record teacher responses at their respective schools.

The interview questions posed to Parents and Teachers are as follows:

(Parent Questions)

#### *Internal*

- a. As a parent do you feel nervous when talking with teachers and school administrators on behalf of your child? Please discuss this.
- b. As a parent do you feel angry when talking with teachers and school administrators on behalf of your child? Please discuss this.
- c. As a parent do you feel insulted when you believe that teachers and school administrators are trying to tell you how to raise your child? Please discuss this.
- d. As a parent do you feel overwhelmed and powerless when you're dealing with teachers and school administrators? Please discuss this.

#### *External*

- a. As a parent do you feel when talking to teachers and school administrators on behalf of your child that they are prejudiced or discriminate? Please discuss this.

- b. As a parent do you feel that your job does not allow you the time to be more active with teachers and school administrators? Please discuss this.
- c. As a parent do you feel overwhelmed with trying to help solve the challenges involved with your child's education. Please discuss this.
- d. As a parent do you feel that teachers and school staff should spend more productive time with the educational needs of your child. Please discuss this.
- e. Do you wish you could communicate better with teachers and school administrators? Please discuss this.
- f. Do you feel that teachers and school administrators do not understand the challenges you are dealing with at home and outside of the school? Please discuss this.

(Teacher Questions)

*Internal*

- c. As a teacher do you feel nervous when talking with parents in this group on behalf of their son? Please discuss this.
- d. As a teacher do you feel angry when talking with parents in this group? Discuss this.
- c. As a teacher do you feel insulted or hurt when you believe that parents in this group blame you?
- d. As a teacher do you feel these mothers are to be blamed for poor parenting? Discuss this.
- e. As a teacher do you feel overwhelmed and powerless when you're dealing with mothers in this group? Discuss this.

### *External Factors*

- a. As a teacher do you feel when talking with parents in this group on behalf of their son that they directly or indirectly accuse you of racism? Discuss this.
- g. As a teacher do you feel that parents in this group make excuses for not being more responsible where their child's education is concerned? Discuss this.
- h. As a teacher do you feel overwhelmed with trying to help solve the challenges involved with the parents in this group? Discuss this.
- i. As a teacher do you feel that parents in this group should spend more productive time with the educational needs of their son? Discuss this.
- j. Do you wish you could communicate better with parents in this group? Discuss this.
- k. Do you feel that parents do not understand the challenges you are dealing with in the school? Discuss this.

### **Open Coding**

Through a process of delineating each taped sentence by respondents, code words were developed. These code words or word that appeared to be constant throughout responses by all respondents were assigned a code name. From these code words, themes and concepts were derived.

## **Axial Coding**

From these concepts or emerging themes some were more apparent than others. Axial Coding attempts made connections between larger and smaller categories to develop specific main categories (Merriam, 2002)

## **Selective Coding**

The categories or specific main categories that emerged then were used to formulate a substantive theory. Hence, the emerging themes will then form a *grounded theory*. “The identification of a core category, one that accounts for most of the variation in a pattern of behavior, is essential for the development of a theory” (Merriam, 2002, p. 149).

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS**

A total of 45 participants took part in this study; 22 African American mothers who were single and head of households; 23 White and African American, male and female teachers from a variety of public and private schools in the northeast Cleveland area. The two researchers and or doctoral psychology students put the transcribed data through the following processes in NVivo.

#### **Data Analytic Procedures**

##### ***Renamed Data:***

To provide for equal number of parent versus teacher interviews, teacher interviews were combined and not separated by race. To do this, the researchers alternated between Black and White teacher interviews to rename transcriptions

### ***Open Coding***

The researchers read through the data several times and began creating tentative labels/codes/themes for portions of data that summarized what began emerging. The researchers recorded examples of participants' words and established components of each code.

### ***Axial Coding***

Using NVivo, the researchers consulted the codebooks and identified relationships among open codes. This explored the connections among codes that resulted in several possible "child nodes".

### ***Selective Coding***

Using NVivo, researchers then identified the core variables that includes all the data that is represented by the primary "node" that encompass related "child nodes" identified during axial coding. The researchers then reread the transcripts and selectively coded any data that related to the core variables identified. The Core variables are **Internal Factors, External Factors, Parent-Teacher Relationships and Communication and Interaction.**

### ***Frequency of Responses:***

This represents the number of interviews that addressed that node. A node is the "theme" or category that identifies subject matter being discussed. For example, *Level of Communication*, encapsulated in one of the squares is a "node". During the interviews with parents surrounding their perception of communication with teachers they identified the nature of that communication as being *poor, good, needing better etc...* These adjectives are identified as "child nodes".



### ***References:***

This indicates the number of times that the node was referenced throughout all the interviews.

Therefore the “sources” and “references” indicated for selective codes are the sum of all sources” and “references” for each “node” and “child node”. Going back to the original example of the node “*Level of Communication*” under parent perceptions, parents identified the nature of that communication as being *poor, good, needing better etc...* These separate categories identified in the smaller circles describing that nature of the communication are “child nodes”.

### ***Concept Maps***

Concept maps were developed for parent and teacher interviews to illustrate the relationships among codes. These maps will proceed the corresponding tables. The tables identify the ratios and or numerical significance to the “child nodes”. These maps give a good visual representation of the pre-ceding tables and nodes presented. The oval at the bottom of the page of these maps represents the “Core Variables” or selective codes. Stemming off the selective codes are what NVivo, again, terms “node” (themes identified in the squares) and finally, as mentioned before, the “child nodes” represented by the smaller circles at the tops of these maps, identify the perception and or interaction of respondents. The tables, again, pre-ceding these maps give a numerical ratio, for that circled child node, indicative of significant or non-significant responses. This next section will restate the six research questions followed by the tables of ratios proceeded by that table’s Concept Map. In addition, answers to these questions will be formulated using this corresponding data.

The primary question which is being explored or overall arching research question is “*Do poor/working class African American female mothers who are head of households experience certain internal and external factors that influence relationships with teachers and school administrators when intervening on behalf of their adolescent sons*”. The following questions, initially outlined in chapter III, draw from this main question within the data. Each research question will be restated in this next section with the corresponding answer and analysis. Tables and examples of responses from parents/teachers with their corresponding Concept Maps will first be presented.

The first table below (table 1 and 1.1) identifies core variable “*Internal Factors*” from the perception of the parents. In Grounded Theory repeated words, phrases, and or paragraphs that were constant throughout the parent/teacher interviews were assigned a code name. The constant words utilized by the parents and teachers were used to create the “nodes” or coded language. Coded language can be interpreted as the actual language used to portray an idea and or response and its categorization.

Emerging Themes or “nodes” derived from the repetitive language in the NVIVO analysis on “*Internal Factors*” are as follows:

1. *Feelings-Challenges in Dealing with Educational Needs* 17/26
2. *Feelings-Parent Teacher Relationship* 18/76

The first number of these ratios identify the number of interviews that addressed that node or pattern of language. The second number corresponds to the number of times respondents cited that node throughout the interviews. 18 interviews addressed the Core Variable “*Internal*

*Factors*”. Out of all the interviews this Core Variable (which encompasses its corresponding Nodes) was referenced by participants 102 times. The fact that the node was referenced 102x by participants does not mean that it is supportive of the overall-arching research question above but that this subject matter was referenced. The “child nodes” such as #3 “Overwhelmed” under node A. (*Feelings-Challenges in Dealing with Educational Needs*) represents 9 parent interviews indicative of feeling overwhelmed.

---

**Table 1**

---

PARENT PERCEPTIONS

|                  |  |        |
|------------------|--|--------|
| INTERNAL FACTORS |  | 18/102 |
| A.               | <i>Feelings-Challenges in Dealing with Educational Needs</i> | 17/26  |
| 1.               | Not Overwhelmed or Challenges                                | 7/8    |
| 2.               | Not Overwhelmed, but Challenged                              | 1/2    |
| 3.               | Overwhelmed  | 9/16   |
| B.               | <i>Feelings-Parent Teacher Relationship</i>                  | 18/76  |
| 1.               | Admits to Nervousness  | 2/4    |
| 2.               | Angry  | 4/10   |
| 3.               | Insulted   | 3/4    |
| 4.               | Never Angry or Insulted                                      | 4/6    |
| 5.               | Never Powerless or Overwhelmed                               | 9/9    |
| 6.               | Not Angry  | 8/9    |
| 7.               | Not Insulted   | 11/12  |
| 8.               | Powerless and Overwhelmed                                    | 3/6    |
| 9.               | Powerless  | 1/1    |

---

---

**Table 1.1**

---

PARENT PERCEPTIONS

## INTERNAL FACTORS

18/102

“Yes, I do, I really do (powerless and overwhelmed).  
Because I feel like, No, I have no help or nothing. No  
one is helping me, explain something to me, how I can,  
you know get/grow better by the situation. No one’s  
telling me nothing good”. (Parent 7)

9/16

---

(Table 1.1 Almost half the sample of parents using language that demonstrates their feeling overwhelmed 16x throughout data)

---

**Table 2**

---

PARENT PERCEPTIONS

## EXTERNAL FACTORS

18/144

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| A. <i>External Resources</i>                      | 1/4   |
| 1. Mentoring Program                              | 1/4   |
| B. <i>Parent Factors</i>                          | 1/2   |
| 1. Militant Disciplinarian                        | 1/2   |
| C. <i>Parent Perceptions-More Productive Time</i> | 14/29 |
| 1. Doing a Good Job                               | 5/7   |
| 2. Doing Best They Can                            | 3/3   |
| 3. More Productive Teacher-Student Time           | 5/8   |
| 4. Should Not spend More time with Students       | 2/3   |
| 5. Unsure   | 3/8   |
| D. <i>Parent’s Job</i>                            | 17/32 |
| 1. Flexible Job                                   | 4/6   |
| 2. No Job Interference                            | 5/10  |
| 3. Stay at Home Mom                               | 2/5   |
| 4. Yes and No Job Interference                    | 4/4   |
| 5. Yes Job Interference                           | 5/7   |
| E. <i>Racial Discrimination</i>                   | 18/22 |
| 1. No Experience with Racism                      | 13/14 |
| 2. Personal Experience with Racism                | 5/8   |

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| F. <i>School Setting</i>                            | 2/6   |
| 1. Classroom Size                                   | 1/1   |
| 2. Nontraditional versus Traditional School Setting | 1/5   |
| G. <i>Structural Problems that Interfere</i>        | 3/5   |
| 1. Breaking and Entering                            | 1/2   |
| 2. Homelessness                                     | 1/1   |
| 3. Transportation                                   | 2/2   |
| H. <i>Student Factors</i>                           | 9/23  |
| 1. Academic Performance                             | 8/17  |
| 2. Behavior Problems                                | 1/2   |
| 3. Good Kid   | 2/2   |
| 4. Home Life Interferes                             | 2/2   |
| F. <i>Teacher Perceptions-Single Parenthood</i>     | 15/21 |
| 1. Empathetic-Supportive School Officials           | 4/4   |
| 2. Some Do and Some Don't                           | 1/1   |
| 3. Some Teachers Understand                         | 7/8   |
| 4. Teachers Don't Understand                        | 6/8   |

**Table 2.1**

PARENT PERCEPTIONS

EXTERNAL FACTORS

18/144

No, I have in the past but not recently, the teachers that are? seem very interested in what's going with him as a student, they don't just email me or talk to me more on behavioral issues, getting off track, or something like but No, I haven't experience that. (Parent 12)  
 I'm going to say No, because it [racial discrimination] do not apply to me. (Parent 13)

13/14

(Table 2.1 demonstrates 13 interviews from parents utilized language that denies Racism being a factor in their interactions with teachers)

**Table 3**

PARENT PERCEPTIONS

PARENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIP

15/57

A. *Classification of Relationship*

15/42

|    |   |       |
|----|---|-------|
| 1. | Complicated                             | 3/3   |
| 2. | Decent                                  | 2/3   |
| 3. | Good Rapport                            | 4/6   |
| 4. | Good Relationship                       | 8/16  |
| 5. | No Relationship                         | 3/3   |
| 6. | To Have a More Productive Relationship  | 10/11 |
| B. | <i>Level of Engagement</i>              | 7/15  |
| 1. | Does not Initiate                       | 3/6   |
| 2. | Hands-on Approach                       | 3/3   |
| 3. | Teacher's Responsibility to Communicate | 1/3   |
| 4. | Very Engaged                            | 1/3   |

---

**Table 3.1**

PARENT PERCEPTIONS

PARENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIP

15/57

"Well, it's pretty good, I have relationship with all of his teachers actually, they all know me by name, they call me whenever he does good things, bad things, they call me, so it's a pretty good rapport between me and his teachers". (Parent #2)

8/16

Table 3.1 demonstrates 8 separate parent interviews that identified language that demonstrated their having a good relationship with teachers)

**Table 4**

PARENT PERCEPTIONS

COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION

18/83

A. *Level of Communication*

16/44

1. Good Communication

8/9

2. Need Better Communication

7/11

3. Parent-Teacher Conference

2/2

4. Poor Communication

3/11

|                                       |              |
|---------------------------------------|--------------|
| 5. Technological Interaction          | 7/11         |
| <b>B. Parent Teacher Interaction</b>  | <b>11/30</b> |
| 1. Difficult Interactions             | 3/4          |
| 2. Good-Comfortable                   | 6/8          |
| 3. Improve Communication              | 3/5          |
| 4. Parent Advocate-Take Command       | 3/3          |
| 5. Passion for Education              | 1/3          |
| 6. Professional, But Firm             | 1/1          |
| 7. Regular-Random Interaction         | 2/2          |
| 8. Working Together-Collaboration     | 3/4          |
| <b>C. Teacher-Student Interaction</b> | <b>6/9</b>   |
| 1. Good Relationship                  | 5/5          |
| 2. Strict Discipline                  | 2/3          |
| 3. Weak Teachers                      | 1/1          |

---

**Table 4.1**

PARENT PERCEPTIONS

COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION 18/83

“My communication with my child’s teachers and school are fine, I have good communication with them. (Parent 2) 8/9  
I just feel like I’m blessed to have the communication level that me and my son’s teachers have. I just feel like I’m very blessed, because I hear a lot of stories about how other parents are with their kid’s teachers and it sounds like a nightmare”. (Parent 2)

---

(Table 4.1 identifies 8 separate parent interviews that utilizes language that parents have good communication with teachers).

---

**Table 5**

---

**TEACHER PERCEPTIONS****INTERNAL FACTORS**

18/123

|  |       |
|--|-------|
| A. <i>Lack of Appreciation</i>                                       | 2/2   |
| 1. Teachers put a lot of time into Students                          | 2/2   |
| B. <i>Feelings-Parent Teacher Relationship</i>                       | 18/97 |
| 1. Envy  | 1/1   |
| 2. Insulted or Hurt  | 14/16 |
| 3. Insulted or Hurt when blamed for students' failures               | 6/8   |
| 4. Has not Felt insulted or Hurt                                     | 8/8   |
| 5. Anger   | 16/17 |
| 6. Angry when parent does not know their child is failing            | 1/1   |
| 7. Angry when parents do not push sons to achieve                    | 1/1   |
| C. <i>Nervousness</i>  | 18/19 |
| 1. Nervousness depends on subject matter                             | 1/2   |
| 2. Nervousness depends on violence risk                              | 1/1   |
| 3. Feels Nervous   | 1/1   |
| 4. Does not feel nervous   | 15/15 |
| D. <i>Overwhelmed and Powerless</i>                                  | 18/44 |
| Overwhelmed and powerless because of size of the class               | 1/1   |
| 1. Has felt overwhelmed as a teacher, but not as a parent            | 1/1   |
| 2. Has felt helpless dealing with the parents                        | 1/3   |
| 3. Has felt powerless when dealing with the challenges of parents    | 2/2   |
| 4. Teachers are over-extended  | 3/3   |
| 5. Has felt overwhelmed and powerless                                | 7/8   |
| 6. Overwhelmed when trying to solve challenges of Parents            | 12/12 |
| 7. Does not feel overwhelmed and powerless when dealing with Parents | 12/14 |
| E. <i>Blame</i>  | 18/24 |
| 1. Blamed for not doing enough                                       | 1/1   |
| 2. Parents feel teachers are trying to replace them                  | 1/1   |
| 3. Parents are in denial   | 1/1   |



|  |       |
|--|-------|
| 4. Blamed for child's failures in school                             | 4/4   |
| 5. Teachers are blamed by parents for trying to raise their students | 5/5   |
| 6. Does not feel blamed for trying to raise students                 | 12/12 |

---

**Table 5.1**

TEACHER PERCEPTIONS

INTERNAL FACTORS 18/123

|  |       |
|--|-------|
| That has happened (teacher #5)   | 14/16 |
| Yes, I do. I think sometimes they don't understand that it starts at home - the first teachers are from home and they expect us to work miracles sometimes and it doesn't happen like that (teacher #11) |       |

---

(Table 5.1 outlines 14 separate teacher interviews identified language that demonstrates language 16x that describes teachers feeling Insulted and or Hurt)

**Table 6**

TEACHER PERCEPTIONS

EXTERNAL FACTORS 18/82

- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| A. <i>Parent Perceptions</i>                    | 2/2   |
| 1. Denial                                       | 2/2   |
| B. <i>Systemic Factors</i>                      | 16/21 |
| 1. Classism                                     | 4/4   |
| 2. Racism                                       | 15/15 |
| a. Not sure if they have been accused of racism | 2/2   |
| b. Has been indirectly accused of racism        | 3/3   |
| c. Has not been accused of racism               | 10/10 |
| C. <i>Parental Factors</i>                      | 17/34 |

|    |  |       |
|----|--|-------|
| 1. | Parents rely on school to discipline children                                    | 1/1   |
| 2. | Work-life interference   | 1/1   |
| 3. | Parents feel children need extra love  | 1/2   |
| 4. | Lack of transportation   | 1/1   |
| 5. | Hard-working women   | 2/3   |
| 6. | Lack of time with children   | 3/3   |
| 7. | Parent lack of discipline  | 3/3   |
| 8. | Parents should spend more productive time on their children's Educational needs. | 17/19 |
| D. | <i>Parent Excuses</i>  | 18/25 |
| 1. | They are understandable excuses  | 1/1   |
| 2. | Parents don't make excuses   | 4/4   |
| 3. | Parents don't know how to help   | 4/5   |
| 4. | Parents make excuses for not being more responsible their child's Education      | 12/15 |

**Table 6.1**

TEACHER PERCEPTIONS

EXTERNAL FACTORS

18/82

Yes (teacher #8; #9; #16; #14; #15) I do (teacher #7) (Teacher #18) 17/19

(Table 6.1 outlines 17 separate teacher interviews identified language that demonstrates language 19x that describes teachers feeling that parents should spend more productive time on their child's educational needs)

---

**Table 7**

---

## TEACHER PERCEPTIONS

## PARENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIP

17/84

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| <i>A. Classification of Relationship</i>                          | 10/14 |
| 1. Mutual Understanding   | 1/1   |
| 2. Cooperative  | 1/1   |
| 3. Productive   | 8/8   |
| <i>B. Rapport Building</i>  | 12/35 |
| 1. Teacher must meet parent's comfort level with sharing          | 1/1   |
| 2. Keep parents informed  | 1/1   |
| 3. Normalize parent experience                                    | 1/1   |
| 4. Doing workshops for the parents                                | 1/1   |
| 5. Feedback from mothers and friends                              | 1/1   |
| 6. Teacher's responsibility to initiate relationship with parents | 1/1   |
| 7. Let parents know teachers are on their side                    | 2/3   |
| 8. Sending positive messages                                      | 2/2   |
| 9. Addressing poverty and hunger                                  | 2/2   |
| 10. Black role model  | 2/2   |
| 11. Relate to experiences of parents                              | 3/4   |
| 12. Must develop rapport  | 4/5   |
| 13. Teachers want the best for their students                     | 4/5   |
| 14. Parents understand challenges facing teachers                 | 4/4   |
| <i>C. Difficulties of Parent-Teacher Relationships</i>            | 16/35 |
| 1. Difficult to make parents feel comfortable sharing inform      | 1/1   |
| 2. Finding the right time to meet with parents                    | 1/1   |
| 3. Language barrier   | 1/1   |
| 4. Different ways of conceptualizing professionalism              | 1/1   |
| 5. Parents' bad relationship with school                          | 1/1   |
| 6. Parents don't have time to build relationship with teachers    | 2/2   |
| 7. Racial barrier   | 2/2   |
| 8. Protective parents   | 2/2   |
| 9. Do not connect   | 2/2   |
| 10. Lack of regular communication                                 | 2/2   |
| 11. Too many issues in parents' personal lives                    | 3/3   |
| 12. Feel unable to relate   | 3/3   |

13. Parents don't understand the challenges teachers face in the school 11/13

---

**Table 7.1**

---

TEACHER PERCEPTIONS

PARENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIP

17/84

Yes (teacher #8; #16; #12; #14) Absolutely, yes (teacher #15) Ya, sometimes I really do feel that way; that they really don't get the full picture, you know, with what we are dealing with (teacher #2) 11/13

---

(Table 7.1 outlines 11 separate teacher interviews identified language that demonstrates language 13x that describes teachers feeling that parents don't understand the challenges teachers face in the school)

---

**Table 8**

---

TEACHER PERCEPTIONS

COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION

17/59

- A. *Parent-Teacher Interaction* 3/5
  - 1. Teacher must pay attention to body language of parent 1/1
  - 2. Must make parent feel at ease and relaxed 1/2
  - 3. Feels both are trying their best 1/1
  - 4. Establish communication at the beginning of the year 1/1
- B. *Communication Style* 4/5
  - 1. Tone of voice and questions asked to influence the relation 1/1
  - 2. Speaking from feeling perspective 1/1
  - 3. Enthusiastic 1/1
  - 4. A lot of listening 2/2
- C. *Type of Communication* 9/20
  - 1. Remind 101 1/1
  - 2. Call system 2/2
  - 3. Email 2/2

|    |   |       |
|----|---|-------|
| 4. | Parent-teacher conferences                                    | 2/2   |
| 5. | Attempts to text and email parents                            | 3/6   |
| 6. | Exchange phone numbers  | 5/6   |
| D. | <i>Level of Engagement</i>                                    | 17/29 |
| 1. | Feels they communicate well                                   | 1/1   |
| 2. | Parents do not answer their phones                            | 1/1   |
| 3. | Cannot use emergency contact information                      | 1/1   |
| 4. | Parents might be trying to help children succeed academically | 2/3   |
| 5. | Can't get in contact with parents                             | 3/3   |
| 6. | Wish for more parent-teacher communication                    | 4/4   |
| 7. | Frequently changing number or disconnected phones             | 4/4   |
| 8. | Wish to be a better communicator                              | 11/12 |

---

**Table 8.1**

TEACHER PERCEPTIONS

COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION

17/84

|  |              |
|--|--------------|
| <p><u>Developing trust is kinda of the most- hardest part as a teacher to get across to a parent (teacher #5)</u><br/> <u>_want to communicate with them [parents] more than I am communicating with them. And again, you know, it's a lot of times because I can't reach them for whatever reason (teacher#2)</u></p> | <p>11/12</p> |
|--|--------------|

---

(Table 7.1 outlines 11 separate teacher interviews identified language that demonstrates language 12x that describes teachers feeling they were better communicators with parents)

The next session will restate research questions in the order previously presented and utilize above data to answer each research question separately.

Restatement of Research questions and Analysis:

1. *What emotional stress, anxieties, or worries do the mothers experience when they do attempt to intervene with school officials on behalf of their children's education?*

The Core Variable “**Internal Factors**” has a ratio of 18/102. 18 separate interviews with parents referenced language that appeared to identify 102 internal factors they experienced or didn't experience while interacting with teachers and or school officials. Out of the 18 separate parent interviews 9 used language of being overwhelmed a total of 16x. 4 parents identified feeling angry a total of 10x and 3 parents identified feeling powerless and overwhelmed a total of 6x. Most parents identified not feeling nervous or insulted by interactions with teachers and or not feeling angry. When answering question 1, 9 parents appeared to feel some sort of anxiety or used the repetitive word and or node “overwhelmed” when describing their experience. It could be argued that despite the high ratio of 18/102, many repetitive language (102) appears to identify language such as not feeling angry, not feeling nervous, insulted and or powerless. The Literature Review suggested possible, history of mental health problems with this population. It could be argued that these nodes use repetitive language that may not be associated or seen as indication of a history of depressive or anxiety outside of the present situation. Here are some excerpts from parents:

At one point in time I did (feel angry) When he got switched over to Oxford difference, but when he was they weren't addressing what he needed exactly, they just kept telling me that he's a or reader, he has trouble reading, but it was deeper than that, he hadn't been tested at that time". (Parent 17).

I do not sure if I should say overwhelmed. I do feel overwhelmed, not frustrated, it's been an ongoing thing, it's been a struggle ever since he was younger and I get mixed opinions. Like if my son should have an IEP or if it's just a lack of effort or if we need to try different studying techniques because it's kind of up and down with him. So that's overwhelming with him, when you get a call and you know he's working hard and he's still struggling". (Parent 3).

No, I never feel angry" ... "I don't feel insulted by anything they try and bring to me because I just think it's in the best interest of the child, whether they're telling me maybe if you do such and such. I don't feel insulted, I take it in and try to use what they say, because they are teachers, I mean they did go to school for this. They know a little bit about teaching children, you know what I mean"? (Parent 2)

2. *How is the potential stress of under-employment, perceived racism, economic hardship, and other external factors associated with these mothers' internal sources of distress, and how are they not associated?*

From the Teacher interviews, the potential stress, under-employment, perceived racism, and economic hardship including additional external factors associated with the mothers are outlined in Core Variable "*External Factors*". Emerging themes under this core variable and significant nodes are as follows:

The above data shows 18 separate parents, during interviews, used language 144x that was indicative of perceptions surrounding external factors and the determination of interference with

their ability to intervene on behalf of their son's education. It appears from the lower ratios, the data, from the perspective of parents, is not as substantial as the teachers around personal responsibility on the part of parents. Despite the dominant number of responses in this area by participants there appear to be differences in perceptions. Teachers feel that parents should take more responsibility in taking time with their sons surrounding academic interventions and make too many excuses. (See Themes "Parent Excuses" and "Parental Factors"). The data for the parents on the other hand, don't appear very statistically substantial and evenly spaced when looking at nodes that may stand out as external problems indicative of not being able to get their son's academic needs met. The 2nd research question ask specifics on how under-employment, perceived racism, economic hardship, and other external factors are, in any way, associated with possible internal sources of distress for parents and if these factors are related in any way? For both parents and teachers, Racism doesn't appear to play a role in view of the high degree of references indicating "No Perceived Racism" on the part of either party. And although the teachers feel that there is a high degree externally for the lack of intervention on the part of parents with their children, the data is not reciprocal when looking at what parents perceive. 5 parents made references 7x that their jobs did play a part in their inability to be more effective in the lives of their son's academically. 6 parents made references that teachers don't understand their situation as single mothers and 2 parents cited their home life as interfering with their intervening. About 1/25 of the parent sample in this area identified these external factors in their non-interventions while 3/25's of the teacher sample identifies their perceptions for lack of intervention in the areas of time and parent excuses. In conclusion, it is hard to look at any conclusive variables that are indicative, outside of Racism, whether economic hardship and



under-employment play a factor. And although for several parents these were identified as problems, most the sample didn't appear to reference these areas as potential factors. Here are excerpts from parents and teachers in this area of External Factors:

#### TEACHERS:

Yes, they do make excuses". (teacher # 9 and 1)

Yes, a lot of them; whether it's discipline or whether it's education-no matter what it is. A lot of parents do not want to take responsibility for the failure that has come from the lack of parenting". (teacher # 19).

Yes, definitely make excuses" (teachers, # 5. 13. 14. 15 and 17).

#### PARENTS:

Job Interference as a factor:

My job, no because I always work with my lifestyle. The men that I choose to have kids with altered my ability to spend time with my kids. So, I can't say or blame it on just a job. You know what I mean, I have no choice but to be the provider in the relationship, when you get put in a man's place, you kinda forget the motherly side, the soft side, the part of being a woman being that comforter, sitting down maybe hugging your kids and talking to your kids, cause if you're not working, you're tired and if you're not working at a work, you're working at home and if you're not working at home you're working outside to make sure that they have. So, no, I can't blame my so-called job. I can say It's a decision of who I chose to have kids with". (Parent # 1).

Job Interference as a factor:

Yes" (Parent 15)

Absolutely" (Parent 22)

Teacher Perception of being a single parent

They don't know what I go through and I don't tell them" (Parent 4).

They wouldn't understand because I wouldn't say it will be because you know we hadn't really had any issues so I would say if there's some challenges I would think because of – from the few experiences that we have had where I had to make time for that I don't think there will be understanding" (parent 10).

No, I don't "(Think teachers understand) ". (parent 12)

3. *How do the combination of external and internal risk factors affect how these mothers choose to intervene (or choose not to intervene) on behalf of their sons?*

This question appears to have no real substantial nodes that are relevant. Many parents didn't identify any specific category indicative of expressed negative feelings and or animosity towards teachers. Four parents out of the sample identified feeling angry. Most identified with not feeling insulted, nervous and or angry. Nine identified never feeling powerless and or overwhelmed. Nine, however did identify feeling overwhelmed. This is almost half of the sample which gives some example that there may be lack of reporting by parents when looking at 12 teachers identifying that parents appear to make excuses for not being as responsible in getting their child's academic needs met and that 17 teachers referred to parents needing to spend more time with their child's academic needs. This study is inconclusive as to what exact internal and external factors affect their ability to intervene on their child's behalf. Teachers appear, only in great number to agree that parents need to do more. Again, neither, group identified racism in any major reference.

4. *When male youth of low-income, single head-of-household African mothers experience academic or behavior difficulties in school, in the parent's view, what socio-cultural factors might facilitate the mother's or teacher's willingness to interact with school officials?*

From the Parent Interviews the socio-cultural factors that the data suggests implying their willingness to interact with teachers or other school officials appear to be outlined in core variables *Communication & Interaction* and *Parent-Teacher Relationship*. Emerging themes under these core variables and significant nodes or reoccurring language patterns are as follows:

*Teacher Student Relationship*

6/9

The above ratios outline the highest occurrences of repetitive language (nodes) for those individual themes. For theme, *Classification of Relationship*, **8** separate parent interviews used the term “good relationship” **16** times when describing their relationship with their son’s teachers. For the theme, *Level of Engagement*, **3** separate parent interviews used language “does not initiate” **6** times, appearing to illustrate parents not initiating communication with teachers but waiting for them to initiate communication first to process their son’s progress or lack thereof in school. A total of 15 parent interviews appear to have used repetitive language that defines the theme *Classification of Relationship*. Language (node) such as “To have a more Productive Relationship, was used a total of 11x out of 10 separate interviews.

When answering research question #4 “*what socio-cultural factors that influence the willingness of parents to communicate and interact with their son’s teachers*” appears to be primarily based on their perception of having a positive relationship with that teacher. Their perception can be

argued to incorporate a socio-cultural perspective that can be seen to enhance or impede the implementation of this positive interaction. For example, node “does not initiate” in theme “Level of Engagement” Parent # 1 states:

“I feel if she don’t call me there’s not a problem. She’s not a friend, she’s there to teach my son so if she’s not having any problems with him, then I try not to bother her with any problems or any questions or anything like that. And if she’s having any problems, she knows she is welcome to call me 24/7”. (Parent #1)

Despite this node’s demonstration of language, which was used a total of 6x by 3 different parents, the overall intention to have a positive relationship with teachers appears to dominate theme 1. Theme 2, for the variable “*Parent-Teacher Relationship*,” has lower ratios and number of occurrences. However, it could be argued that this response by Parent 1 is indicative of the class issues and concepts identified by Lareau (1999). Middle and upper-class parents would not necessarily wait for a problem to arise with Teachers and school administrators but demonstrate actions that would either preclude such circumstances or initiate contact for general progress updates so that they could take a more active part.

5. *When male youth of low-income, single head-of-household African American mothers experience academic or behavior difficulties in school, in the teacher’s view, what socio-cultural factors might facilitate the mother or teacher’s willingness to interact with school officials.*

From the Teacher Interviews the socio-cultural factors that the data suggests implying their willingness to interact with parents appear to be outlined in core variables *Communication & Interaction* and *Parent-Teacher Relationship*. Emerging themes under Parent -Teacher Relationship; *Classification of Relationship* and *Level of Engagement* resulted as follows:

The above ratios outline the highest occurrences of repetitive language (nodes) for those individual themes. In the area of Core Variable *Parent-Teacher Relationship and Classification of Relationship*, 8 separate teacher interviews used the term “productive relationship” 8x when describing their relationship with the mothers of their male students. The highest individual ratio for reoccurring language for teachers under Core Variable *Communication & Interaction* was theme *Level of Engagement*, node a. “Wishing to be a better communicator” in which 11 separate teacher interviews used language in this area a total of 12x. The parent and teacher interviews appear to primarily in agreement when answering research questions 4 & 5. The data seems to support the desire for both groups to incorporate more positive relationships with each other. Teacher perception here, can also be argued to incorporate a socio-cultural perspective that can be seen to enhance or impede the implementation of this positive interaction. For example, under the theme “Difficulties” the node “Challenges that Teachers face” illustrates 11 separate teacher interviews expressed probable difficulty with Communication and Interaction with parents using language surrounding these challenges 13x. Here are a couple of teacher excerpts:

Yea, sometimes I really do feel that way; that they really don't get the full picture, you know, with what we are dealing with”. (teacher #2)

Definitely, what most parents don't see, unless they are the recipients of the gift of love those teachers give. What I mean is that often our budget is cut and we're told what we can and can't do, and a lot of teachers that I've been associated with come out of their pockets whether it's for clothes so they can be warm and come to class or lunch or lunch money”. (teacher #19)

For the most part, I feel that most parents do understand the challenges and difficulties teachers are facing because in conversation they have made comments acknowledging the fact that teachers face challenging situations every day” (teacher # 16).

## TEACHERS:

Yes, they do make excuses”. (teacher # 9 and 1)

Yes, a lot of them; whether it’s discipline or whether it’s education-no matter what it is. A lot of parents do not want to take responsibility for the failure that has come from the lack of parenting”. (teacher # 19).

Yes, definitely make excuses” (teachers, # 5. 13. 14. 15 and 17).

## PARENTS:

### Job Interference as a factor:

My job, no because I always work with my lifestyle. The men that I choose to have kids with altered my ability to spend time with my kids. So, I can’t say or blame it on just a job. You know what I mean, I have no choice but to be the provider in the relationship, when you get put in a man’s place, you kinda forget the motherly side, the soft side, the part of being a woman being that comforter, sitting down maybe hugging your kids and talking to your kids, cause if you’re not working, you’re tired and if you’re not working at a work, you’re working at home and if you’re not working at home you’re working outside to make sure that they have. So, no, I can’t blame my so-called job. I can say It’s a decision of who I chose to have kids with. (Parent # 1).

### Job Interference as a factor:

Yes (Parent 15)

Absolutely (Parent 22)

### Teacher Perception of being a single parent

They don’t know what I go through and I don’t tell them” (Parent 4).

They wouldn’t understand because I wouldn’t say it will be because you know we hadn’t really had any issues so I would say if there’s some challenges I would think because of – from the few experiences that we have had where I had to make time for that I don’t think there will be understanding” (parent 10).

No, I don’t “(Think teachers understand). (parent 12)

6. *How do the combination of external and internal risk factors affect how these mothers choose to intervene (or choose not to intervene) on behalf of their sons?*

#### SIGNIFICANT NODES FOR **EXTERNAL FACTORS WITH PARENTS**

*No Experience with Racism:* 13/14

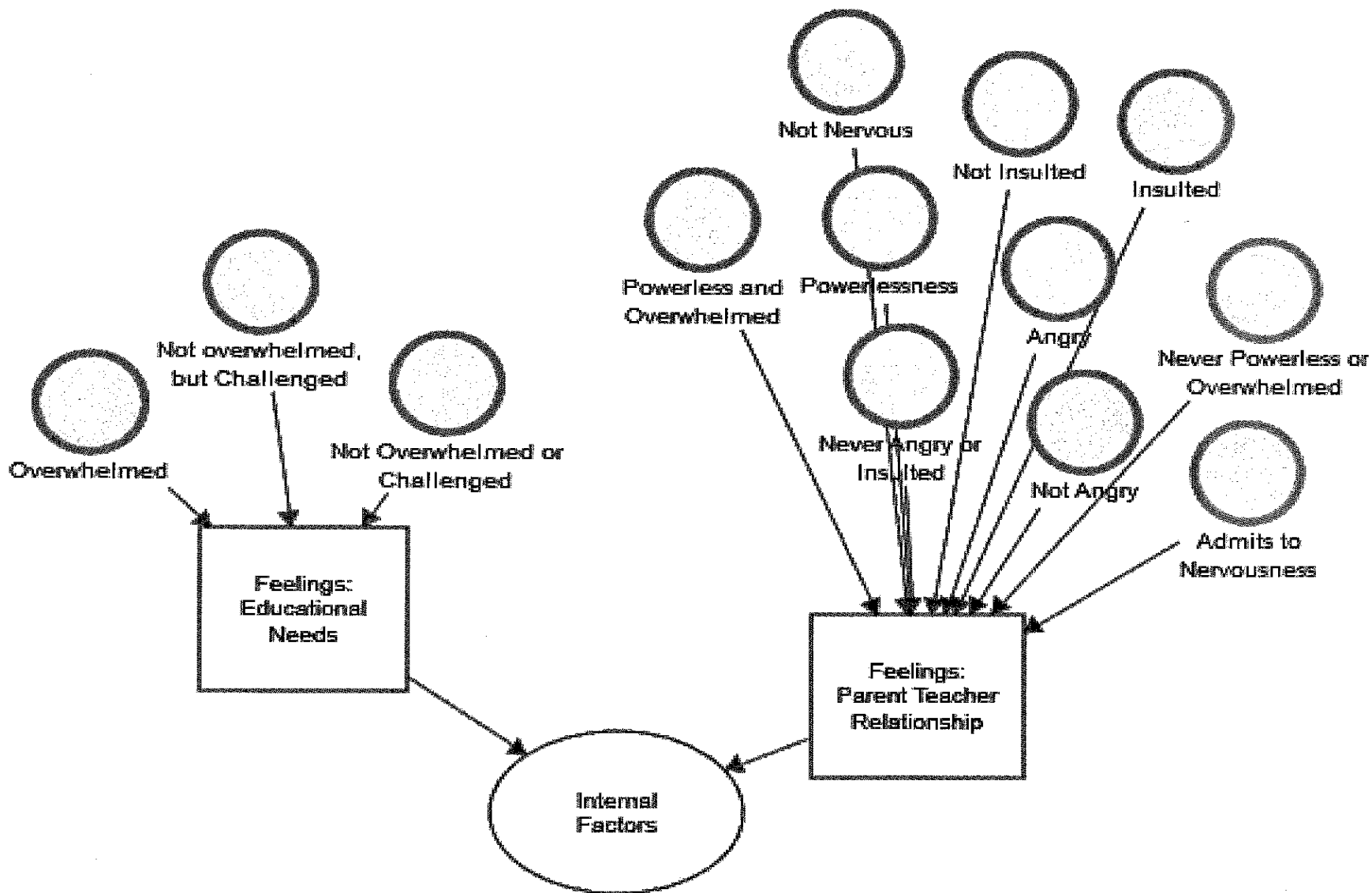
*Experience with Racism:* 5/8

When answering this last research question on *how do these combinations of Internal and External factors affect how these single mothers of male youth choose to intervene or not intervene on their behalf* it appears that the data does not appear to infer a large degree of animosity between this population of parents and their son's teachers. There appears to be no large degree for the perception of Racism with either party and the desire for more mutual and beneficial participation and interaction between the two parties. Both parties appear to demonstrate a high degree of feeling overwhelmed with the ramifications for improving these present conditions. Half the sample of parents appear to feel overwhelmed but may not be very specific in view of the posing of the questions as to what their role should exactly entail in intervening on behalf of their children. The teachers appear to feel that there is too much rationalization with parents for not being more involved and not enough time spent in problem solving in this area. If half the sample of mothers identify feeling overwhelmed and are experiencing external factors that have not been cited or they feel not obliged to make known then their choice to intervene on behalf of their children may be greatly impaired. Chapter 5 will go into further analysis surrounding the Limitations of this study, the connection to the Literature Review and Implications for Future Research. When looking at the overall arching research question "*Do poor/working class African American female mothers who are head of households*

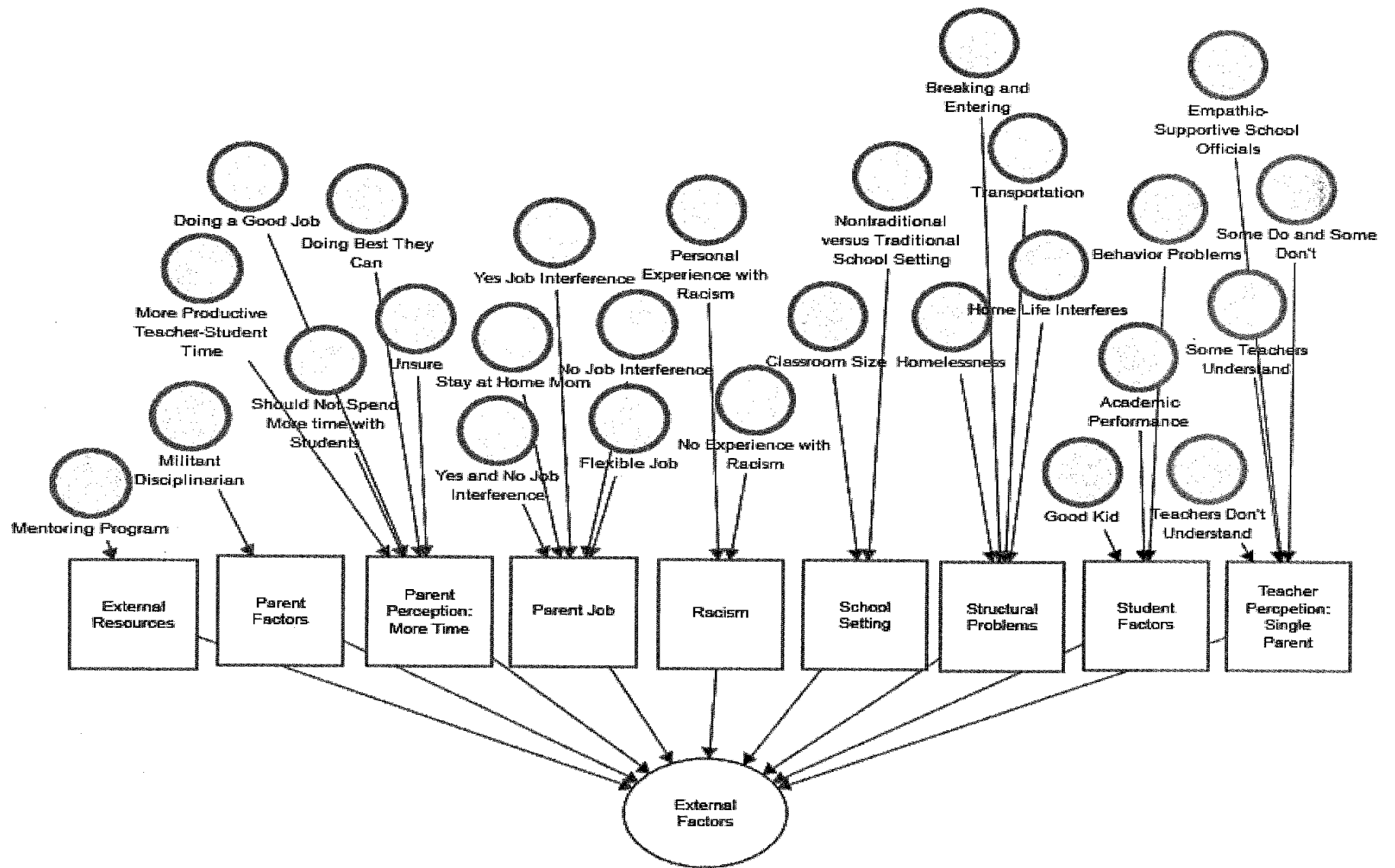
*experience certain internal and external factors that influence relationships with teachers and school administrators when intervening on behalf of their adolescent sons”?* Clearly this study gives rise that most teachers feel that these parents should be doing more to intervene academically on behalf of their sons’. Both groups feel that there should be more communication despite not exactly identifying how this would take place. And although, this study clearly, demonstrates that both groups don’t see racism as a major factor in the intervention of children, it could be argued that more specific, class, variables possibly have much more of a major contributor than this study was able to shed light on.



Parents Perception of Internal Factors



Parents Perception of External Factors



Parents Perception of Parent-Teacher Relationship

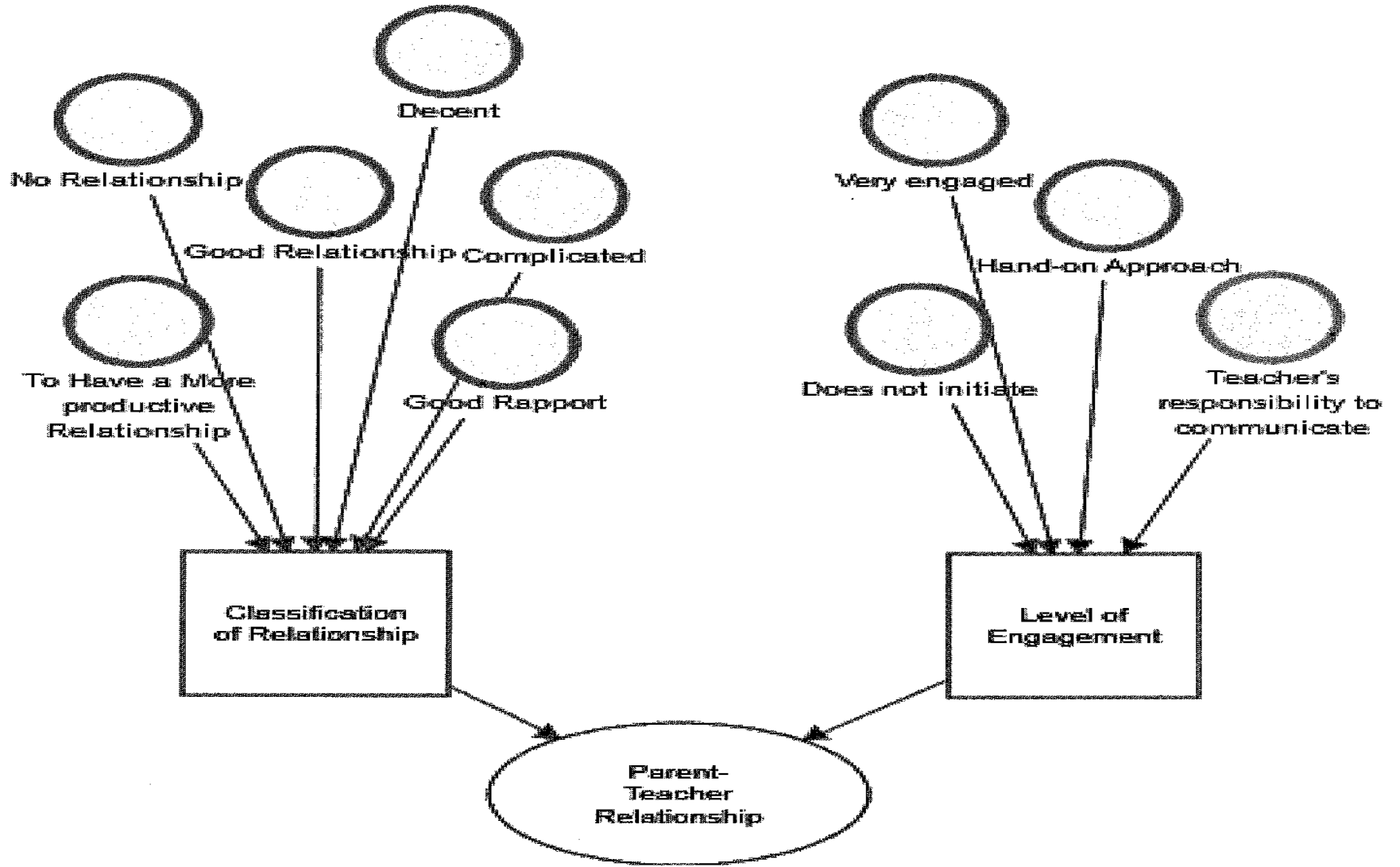


FIGURE 4

Parents Perception of Communication and Interaction

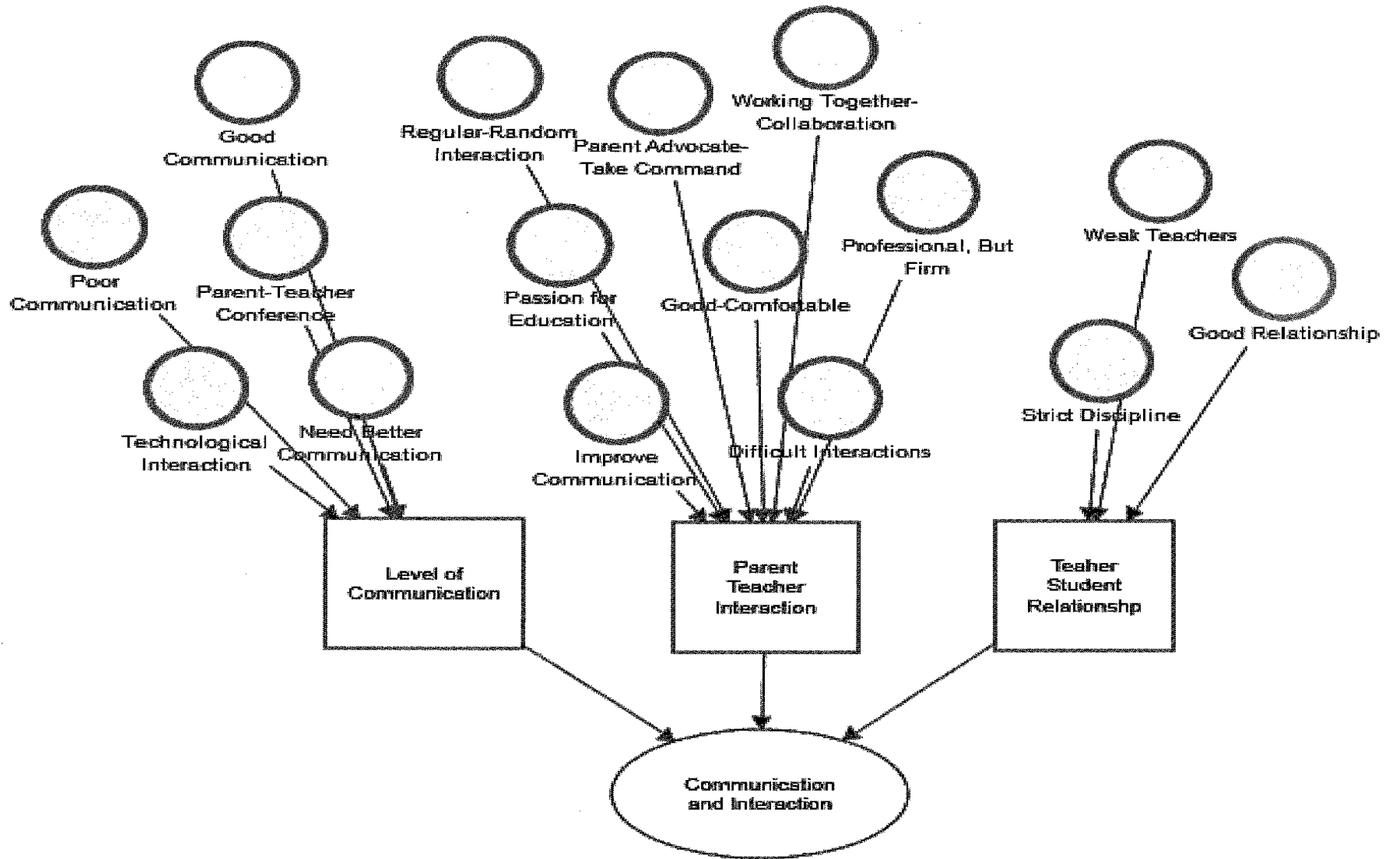


FIGURE 5

### Teachers Perception of Internal Factors

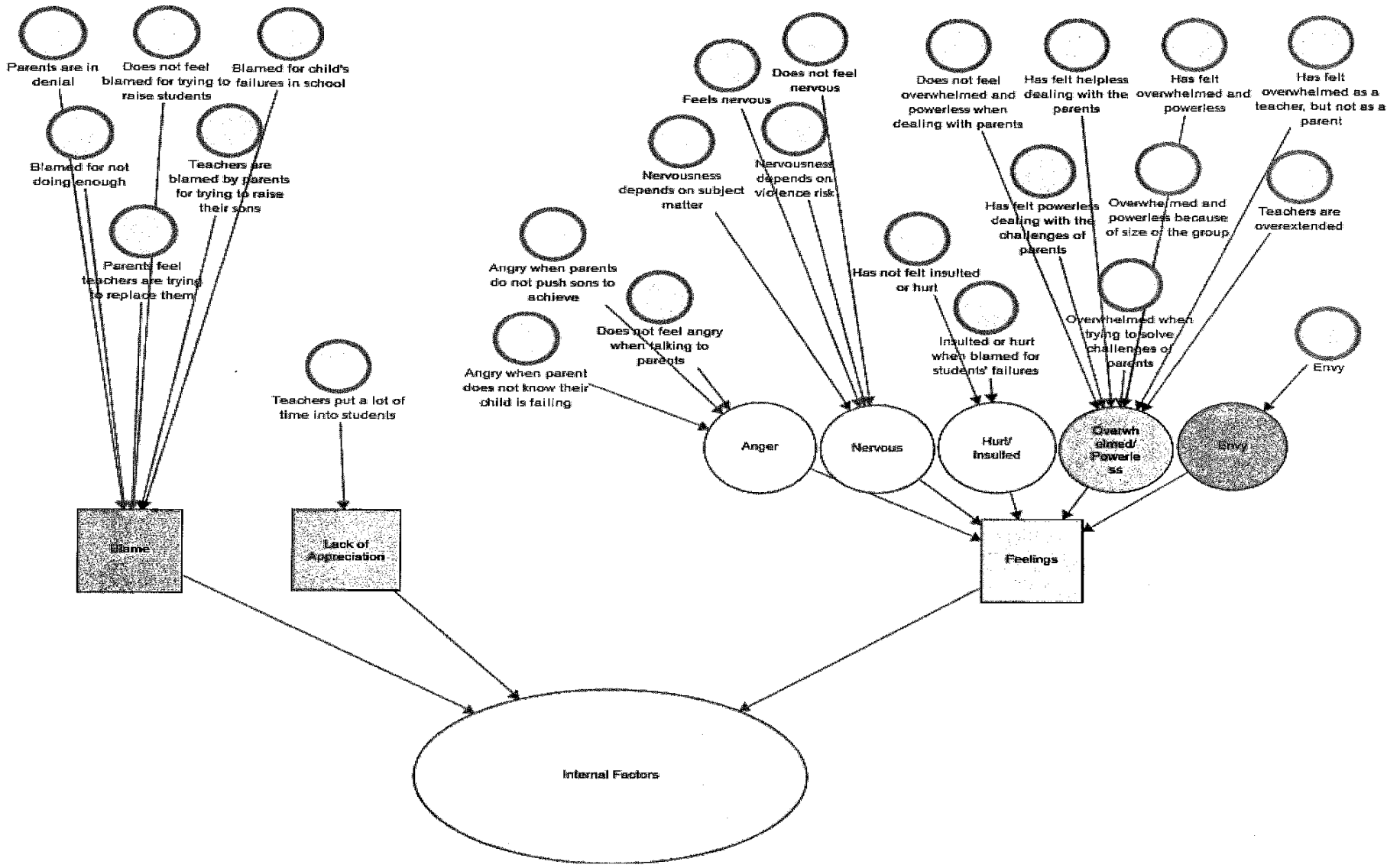


FIGURE 6

Teachers Perception of External Factors

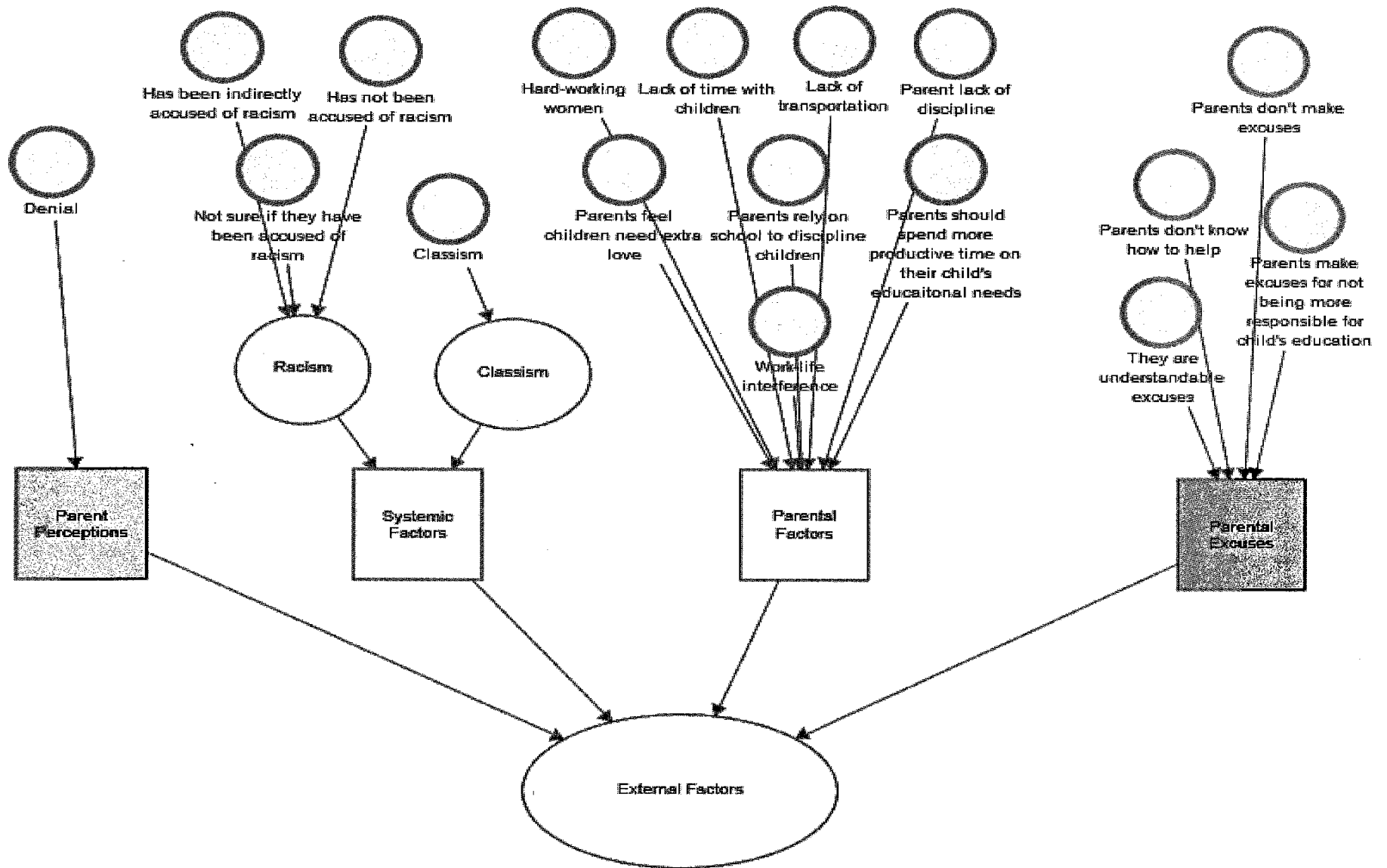
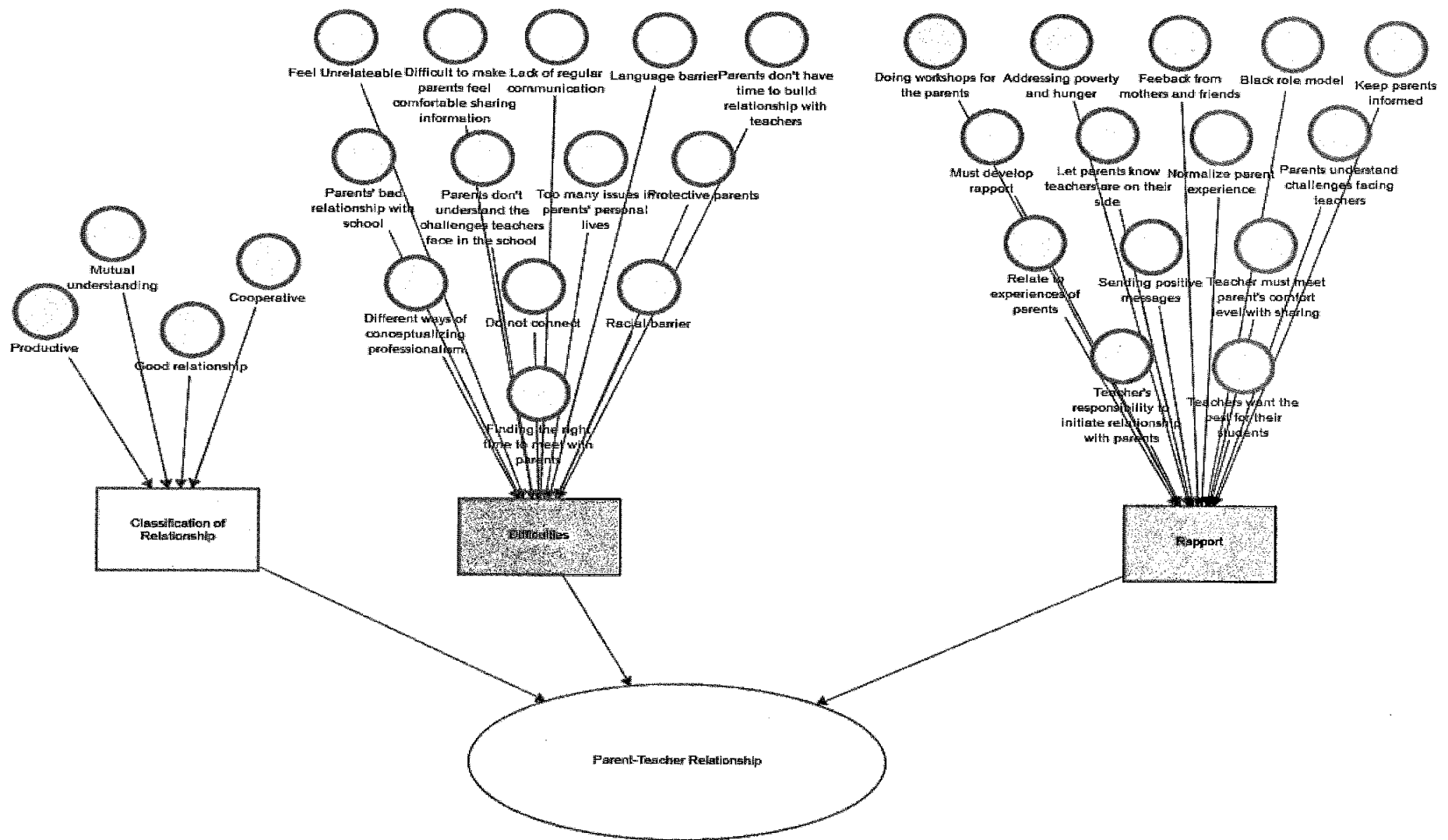
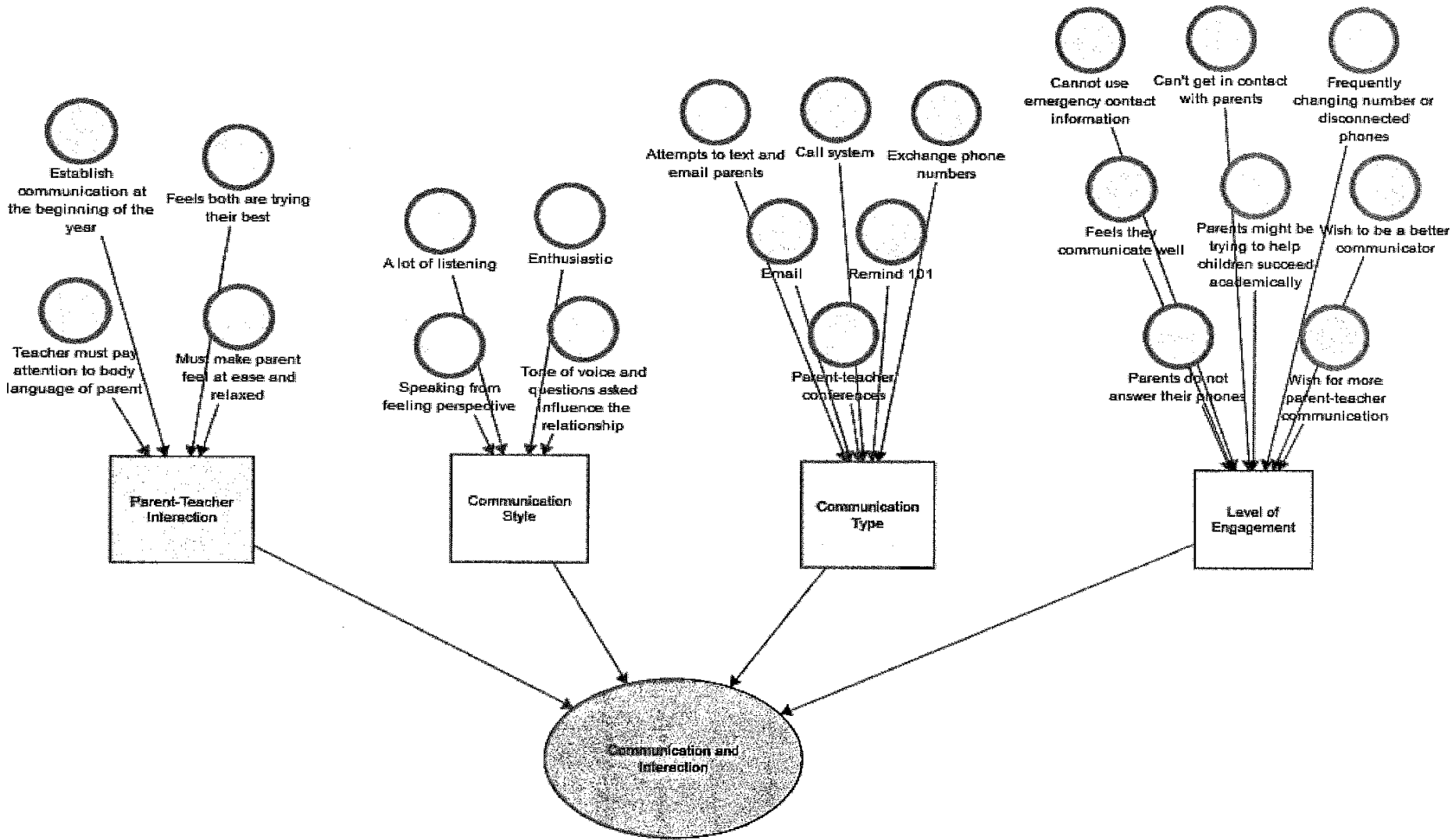


FIGURE 7

### Teachers Perception of Parent-Teacher Relationship



Teachers Perception of Communication and Interaction





## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

When looking at the overall arching research question “*Do poor/working class African American female mothers who are head of households experience certain internal and external factors that influence relationships with teachers and school administrators when intervening on behalf of their adolescent sons?*” The resulting data for this study appears to support this overall question with a definitive “Yes”. This study was an attempt to add to the literature and support the concept that social class (Lareau,2003) appears to be a much more determinant variable within the scope of parent/teacher relationships and academic achievement rates for children from lower SES households. Most teachers, a combination of African American and White males and females in this study all appear to agree that there is a need for improved communication and cooperation within the two groups. Most teachers who were interviewed also appear to agree that there are challenges with dealing with parents in this population and that there is inconsistency in communication and lack of follow through by the parents on behalf of their son’s education. Herein, appears to lie the consistency with previous research which contends that social class and or a family’s ability to have at their disposal, the tools, financial stability, language, time and “Concerted Cultivation,” (Lareau, 2003). Many middle and upper middle

class, families navigate, much more effectively, not only interactions with school officials, but also independent facilitation for the academic achievement success of their children.

The results of this study didn't appear to provide a high percentage of "nodes" and or language that supports concrete evidence for the underlying theories that define class consciousness as the problem. However, there were a few parents and teachers who specifically seemed to align with language that would appear to support differences in class. Parent # 1 earlier stated that she didn't expect teachers to call her if there was no problem; she wasn't the teacher. This appears to follow earlier research stated in the Literature Review (Parsons, 1959; Waller, 1932; Weber, 1947) that implied that teachers know best how to effectively help students achieve maximum results. An argument could be made in view of the Literature cited in the Review that parents in higher SES would not take this position in its totality. Also, the nodes that dominated didn't appear to incorporate a climate of impersonality and mistrust between this population and teachers, unlike as the position of Fisher's theory. But because the nodes did provide greater numbers of teacher perception that parents in this population were not pro-active enough in spending the time necessary with them or their sons in order improve their academic progress. This would appear to support Lareau's lack of resources by parents in this population to meet this challenge. One parent (parent #4) pointed out that she felt teachers didn't seem to understand these challenges. Ogbu (1994) believed that the mainstream culture's implicit and explicit imposition of what is considered acceptable when intervening on behalf of children in school and how minorities may not internalize and incorporate these values which for this parent (parent #4) may account for her not only perceiving that teachers don't understand but that she doesn't even want to process the fact with them. Overall, the nodes in greater number support

most teachers, despite their individual race and or gender, that this population of parents are challenged. These challenges would appear to easily be argued that they incorporate parent lack of resources and differences in perception and therefore these differences and thus failure for the two groups to be more effective fall under ramifications surrounding class.

### **Limitations**

This study was challenged in its attempt at securing more substantial narrative from parents that would more precisely define, in a greater number of individual responses, clearer language that impede these parent/teachers working relationships. Many of the responses were one word responses such as “Yes” and “No” answers. Some of the research assistants appeared stronger than others in probing for more in-depth responses to the research questions. Some interviews were transcribed in a way that seemed to flip “interviewer” and “interviewee”. Also, Member Checking was not part of the process in view of the challenges faced by interviewers surrounding access to participants. But despite these limitations, the study still appeared to yield a high degree of definite teacher frustration and the feeling of being overwhelmed by the challenges that this family type presents despite the majority not feeling antagonistic but a sense of confusion as to how to go about solving the problem. Much of parent responses were indicative of their feeling that they got along with their son’s teachers, and no real hard substantial data suggesting a high degree of any sort of animosity. However, there were responses that some parents made which appeared indicative of their perception that teachers didn’t understand their plight and challenges. One teacher response stated that she had no frame of reference for dealing with the lack of parent intervention because this was not part of her personal experience. Most of the teacher’s in the sample were empathetic to probable external challenges causing barriers to

communication but, again, appeared confused as to how to solve this dilemma. And because the data also incorporated some parents whose sons attended private schools in the area, the sample of parent participants may incorporate a stronger sense of urgency for the need to be pro-active in the intervention with teachers and school officials on their son's behalves. Other limitations include some of the questions were not posed by interviewers to participants which didn't follow interview protocol. Also, some may question the identity and or occupation of the interviewers. Because they were retired and substitute teachers and the possibility of this influencing the results. Because of their occupation, access to participants in this study incorporated less challenges but utilizing a 30-year retired special education instructor may have also had some drawbacks. If the interviewers were ordinary citizens or community members some results may have been different. Teachers appeared very open with their feedback which was more substantial than parent responses. This may have been the result of their feeling comfortable with the knowledge that they were being interviewed by their own. On the other hand, the fact that parents were interviewed by former teachers and substitute teachers, possibly may have limited their responses and possible increased richness of their feedback.

### **Implications for Future Research**

Implications for future research would possibly yield better results in defining the exact nature of internal and external factors by using another qualitative method of inquiry such as Narrative and Historical Narrative. Little to no data was insightful surrounding internal variables which virtually gave no insight as to the challenges stemming from any individual emotional and or mental health ramifications. Much of this study's premise was the possibility of recognizing clearer internal stressors that impeded productive parent/teacher relationships and more defined

external ramifications that would possibly yield more defined class distinctions and differences and barriers. Race was clearly not a factor as stated by both groups which continues to support the Literature. This same size sample, in future studies with African American female heads of household and teachers; male and female; Black and White but utilizing more focused Narrative would serve to provide more concrete variables that impede the interactions of these two groups and thus begin to do the work necessary in research and practical application to reduce those variables.

Politicians, policy makers, the media and educators have continued to express the importance of our culture's ongoing discussions on race. Class also needs to be included as an adjunct to these discussions, especially when you look at the numerous challenges, miscommunication, language distortions and possible false allegations of race by community organizers, police, the liberal/conservative media and the public at large. Including Class in the public discourse can only serve to build greater awareness of pertinent variables that are over-looked when race is the primary variable. Focus groups appear to be a more viable option, as has been the case in some studies previously cited, but incorporating much more direct discourse between teachers, parents and school administrators involving in depth variables in this study in addition to processing solutions. Because distorted language, misperceptions and other challenges that at-risk populations face when navigating our public education system, judicial system and corporate culture systems due to probable variables surrounding class, solution focused applications to these within the scope of class appears paramount.

## **Implications for Counselors & Social Workers**

The federal agency “Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration” SAMHSA, in their policy and treatment directives, have outlined the need for race and cultural implications to be a part of treatment protocol. This protocol has been in place and noted for years. Unfortunately, I suspect that much of this sort of discourse, does not, in fact take place. And when it does take place in mental health, Substance Abuse treatment programs and Social Services, it does not explore these variables in depth but instead incorporates, if any, simple multicultural identifiers, with minorities, that only look at surface protocol and not multifaceted variables that include class. This is the elephant in the room. It has been my personal experience that even in academia there is a reluctance by students, often white students, to process in depth these sorts of discussions in view of what appears to be their lack of individual experience and their being guarded. This guarded position, at times, is misconceived by students of color as being bias in and of itself. If this discourse at the graduate level is difficult then it is easy to see why these standards are not being fully implemented. Implications for Counselors, Social Workers and Academics is to grasp this elephant in the room and courageously adopt these practices with an open mind. Universities may need to be more open to what has been identified as their too liberal a position, so that this cultural dilemma for policy makers, educators, judicial systems and the public at large can take advantage of problem solving many of these “navigating the system problems” for at risk populations such as single Black mothers’ with sons’ in urban areas. This will, in turn help our culture become more relational in its system practices.

## REFERENCES

- Amatea, E., S., Daniels, H., Bringman, N., Vandiver, F., M. (2004). Strengthening counselor-teacher-family connections: The family-school collaborative consultation project. *Professional School Counseling*, 8, (1), 10962409.
- American Community Survey (2008). Cleveland city, Ohio; Retrieved online at: <http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ADPTable>.
- Angelides, P., Theophanous, L., Leigh, J. (2006). Understanding teacher-parent relationships for improving pre-primary schools in Cyprus. *Educational Review*, 58, (3), 303-316.
- Anyon, J. (1997). Ghetto schooling; A political economy of urban educational reform. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Aponte, H. (1976). Under organization in the poor family. *Family therapy: Theory and practice*. New York: Gardner Press.
- Baker, A., (1997). Improving parent involvement programs and practice: A qualitative study of parent perceptions. *The School Community Journal*, 7, (1), 9-35.
- Berk, L., A. (2003). Chapter 2; research strategies. From child development; Boston: Allyn & Bacon / Perarson. Bruckman, M., Blanton, W., P. (2003). Welfare-to-work single mothers' perspectives on parent involvement in head start: Implications for parent-teacher collaboration. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 30, (3), 145-150.
- Bryan, C., J. (2005). Fostering educational resilience and achievement in urban school through school-family-community partnerships. *Professional School Counseling*, 8, 219-227.
- Carreon P., G., Drake, C., Barton, C., A. (2005). The importance of presence: Immigrant parents' school engagement experiences. *American Educational Research Journal*, 42, (3), 465-500.

- Chorney, H. (1977). The Chicago school and contemporary American mainstream of urban theory.
- Cross, E. B. (2003). Learning or Unlearning Racism: transferring teacher education curriculum to classroom practices. *Theory into Practice*, 42 (3), 203-209.
- Delpit, L (1998). *What should teachers do? Ebonics and culturally responsive instruction.* In T. Perry & L. Delpit (Eds.) *The real ebonics debate: Power, language, and the education of African American children*, p. 17-28. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Epstein L., J. (1986). Parents reactions to teacher practices of parent involvement. *The Elementary School Journal*, 86, (3), 277-294.
- Fischer, S. C. (1995). The subcultural theory of urbanism: a twentieth-year assessment. *American Journal of Sociology*, 101 (3), 543-577.
- Fogel, H., & Ehri, L.C. (1999). Teaching elementary students who speak black English vernacular to write in standard English: Effects of dialect transformation practice. *Contemporary Educational Psychology* 25, 212-235.
- Ford, Y. K., Wright, B. L., Grantham, C. T., & Harris, J. J. (1998). Achievement levels, outcomes, and orientations of black students in single and two parent families. *Urban Education*, 33, 360-384.
- Fergusson, M., D., Lynskey, T., M., Horwood, J., L. (1993). The effect of maternal depression on maternal ratings of child behavior. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 21, (3), 245-269.
- Giles, H., C. (2005). Three narratives of parent-educator relationships: Toward counselor repertoires for bridging the urban parent-school divide. *Professional School Counseling*, 8, (3), 228-235.
- Gross, D. (2008, March). Today's culture of poverty. Newsweek. Retrieved April 14,



2008. from <http://www.newsweek.com/id/129681/output/print>.
2009. Godber, Y., E. (2002). School climate: Understanding parent perspectives to strengthen family-school relationships. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, Section A, 63, (6-A),
- Hill, P., H., Gaines, (2007). The consumer culture of poverty: Behavioral research findings and their implications in an ethnographic context. *The Journal of American Culture*, 30, (1), 81-95.
- Helmbold, R. L. (2002). Classless and clueless in NWSA: a history of the poor and working class caucus. *NWSA Journal*, 14 (1), 58-70.
- Hughes, N. J., Gleason, A. K., Zhang, D. (2005). Relationship influences on teachers' perceptions of academic competence in academically at-risk minority and majority first grade students. *Journal of School Psychology*, 43, 303-320.
- Hughes, J., Oi-man, K., (2007). Influence of student-teacher and parent-teacher relationships on lower achieving readers' engagement and achievement in the primary grades. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 99, (1), 39-51.
- Jackson, P., A., Gunn, B., J., Huang, C., C., Glassman, M. (2000). Single mothers in low-wage jobs: financial strain, parenting, and preschoolers' outcomes. *Child Development*, 71, (5), 1409-1423.
- Kitwana, B. (2002). *The hip hop generation*. New York: Basic Civitas Books.
- Knopf, T., H., Swick, J., K. (2007). How parents feel about their child's teacher/school: Implications for early childhood professionals. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 34, (4), 291-296
- Kohl, O., G., Lengua, J., L., McMahon, J., R. (2000). Parent involvement in school

- conceptualizing multiple dimensions and their relations with family and demographic risk factors. *Journal of School Psychology*, 38, (6), 501-523.
- Lareau A. (2003). *Unequal childhoods; Class, Race, and Family Life*. London: University of California Press.
- Lareau A., Horvat M., E. (1999). Moments of social inclusion and exclusion; Race, class and cultural capital in family-school relationships. *Sociology of Education*, 72, 37-53.
- Lawson, A., M., (2003). School-family relations in context; parent and teacher perceptions of parent involvement. *Urban Education*, 38, (1), 77-133.
- Lee, S., (2005). Selective parent participation: structural and cultural factors that influence school participation among Korean parents. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 38, 299-308.
- Liu, M., W., Ali, R., S., Soleck, G., Hopps, J., Dunston, K. & Pickett, T. (2004). Using social class in counseling psychology research. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 51, (1), 3-18.
- Lopez, R. G. (2003). The (racially neutral) politics of education: a critical race theory perspective. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 39 (1), 68-94.
- Lynn, M. (1999). Toward a critical race pedagogy; a research note. *Urban Education*, 33 (5), 606-626.
- Merriam, B., S. (2002). *Qualitative Research in Practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- McGrath, H., W. (2007). Ambivalent Partners; Power, trust, and partnership in relationships between mothers and teachers in a full-time child care center. *Teachers College Record*, 109, (6), 1401-1422.
- McKay, M. M., Atkins S. M., Hawkins T., Brown C., & Lynn L. C. (2003). Inner-city African American parental involvement in children's schooling: Racial socialization and social support from the parent community. *American Journal*

- of *Community Psychology*, 32, 107-114.
- Miretzky, D. (2004). The communication requirements of democratic school: Parent-teacher perspectives on their relationships. *Teachers College Record*, 106, (4), 814-851.
- Mulkey, M. L., Crain, L. R., & Harrington, C. J. A. (1992). One-parent households and achievement: Economic and behavioral explanations of a small effect. *Sociology of Education*, 65, 48-65.
- Noguera, P., A. (2002). The trouble with black boys; The role and influence of environmental and cultural factors on the academic performance of African American males. *In Motion Magazine*. <http://www.inmotionmagazine.com/er/pntroub1.html>.
- Ogbu, U., J. (1994). Racial stratification and education in the United States; Why inequality persists [Electronic version]. *Teachers College Record*, 1-21. Retrieved April 25, 2008 from <http://www.tcrecord.org>.
- Ostrove, M., J., Cole, R., E. (2003). Privileging class: Toward a critical psychology of social class in the context of education. *Journal of Social Issues*, 59, (4), 677-692.
- Padgett R. (2006). Best ways to involve parents. Alexandria: National Association of Elementary School Principals.
- Pearson J., L. (2003). Understanding the culture of poverty. *The Nurse Practitioner*, 28, (4). Retrieved April 14, 2008 from [www.tripj.com](http://www.tripj.com).
- Powell, R., D., Diamond, E., K. (1995). Approaches to parent-teacher relationships in U.S. early childhood programs during the twentieth century. *Journal of Education*, 177, (3), 71-94.
- Reese, J., W. (2005). *America's public schools: From the common school to "no child left behind"*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

- Rogers, A., M., Wiener, J., Marton, I., Tannock, R. (2009). Supportive controlling parental involvement as predictors of children's academic achievement: Relations to children's ADHD symptoms and parenting stress. *School Mental Health*, 1, 89-102.
- Rong, X., L., Brown, F. (2002). Socialization, culture, and identities of black immigrant children: What educators need to know and do. *Education & Urban Society*, 34, (2), 247-272.
- Rowley, S. J., Helaire, L. J., & Banerjee, M. (2010). Reflecting on racism: School involvement and perceived teacher discrimination in African American mothers. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 31(1), 83-92.
- Simon, A. C. (2007). Public policy; Preferences and outcomes. New York: Pearson & Longman.
- Shaw, B. L. (1982). High school completion for young women; Effects of low income and living with a single parent. *Journal of Family Issues*, 3, (2), 147-163.
- Smitherman, G. (1998). *Black English/Ebonics: what it be like? In T. Perry & L. Delpit (Eds.) The real Ebonics debate: power, language, and the education of African-American children p. 29-38*, Boston: Beacon Press.
- Trumbull, E., Rothstein, F., C., Hernandez, E. (2003). Parent involvement in schooling- according to whose values? *The School Community Journal*, 13, (2), 45-72.
- U.S. Census Bureau (2000). DP-3 Profile of selected economic characteristics. Retrieved online at: <http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/QTTTable>.
- Useem L., E. (1992). Middle schools and math groups; Parents involvement in children's placement. *Sociology of Education*, (65), 263-279

Wong, W., S., Hughes, N., J. (2006). Ethnicity and language contributions to dimensions of parent Involvement. *School Psychology Review*, (35), 645-662

## **APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX A

### Consent to take part in a research study: Parent-Teacher views and opinions of their relationships in urban schools

Dear Teacher:

Hello, my name is Mr. Darryl Mason. I am inviting you to take part in a research study. This study looks at parent's thoughts and feelings about the relationship they have with their children's teachers. Also, it looks at the teachers' thoughts and feelings about the relationship they have with the parents of their students.

The reason for the study is to offer a better understanding about the interactions between teachers and parents in urban schools. My study will be supervised by Dr. Justin Perry.

You will be asked to answer questions in a one on one interview with me. This will happen at a place that is fitting for you, like a coffee shop or a library. The questions are made to explore your thoughts and feelings about your relationship with your student's parent(s).

The interview will be recorded on an audio-recorder. It will take about 1 hour to do. Your answers to the questions will be kept completely private (confidential). Your name will not be identified in any report that talks about the results of the study.

Taking part in the study is completely optional. There will be no reward or payment given to anyone who takes part in the study. You may leave at any time without any consequences. At any time, if you do not want to be in the study anymore, you can leave right away without any consequence whatsoever.

A possible risk that may happen while you are taking part in this study is that you may feel a little discomfort while answering the questions. This feeling will not be worse than the discomfort that you would feel on a normal day. Also, there is a very small risk that your confidential information could be violated. We will take all the proper measures to protect your confidential information, but it cannot be promised (guaranteed).

Once the interview is over the audio-recorded answers will be written out (which is known as transcribing). The names of the teachers and parents in the study will be replaced with number codes. The audio-taped recordings, the transcriptions, and the consent forms that have your name on it, will be kept on a password-protected computer at Cleveland State University. The number code that connects your name with the number on the transcript will be kept in locked areas in Dr. Justin Perry's office at Cleveland State University.

The results of this study may be shown at professional organizations or conferences. They may also be published in a scientific journal or book. When we show these results, we will not include any of your identifying information.

If you have any questions about this study, please call Darryl Mason at 330-554-8598 or Justin Perry at 216-875-9778.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Darryl M. Mason, MSW, LSW, LCDC-III  
PhD Candidate, Doctoral Program in Urban Education  
Cleveland State University

Justin Perry, Ph.D.  
Chair and Associate Professor  
Department of Counseling, Administration, Supervision and Adult Learning (CASAL)  
Director, Center for Urban Education (CUE)  
Cleveland State University

---

Please return this portion to Darryl Mason

I have read and understand this informed consent document.  
I understand the reason for this study and what I will be asked to do.  
I understand that I may stop participating in this study at any time.  
I understand that researchers will keep the information that they gathered, confidential.  
I understand that I should keep copy of this document for my personal records.

*I understand that if I have any questions about my rights as a research subject, I can contact the Cleveland State University Institutional Review Board at (216) 687-3630.*

Please write below if you would like to take part in this study. We would appreciate your signature and the return of this signed consent form to Mr. Mason.

**I understand that by signing this form, I am 18 years or older and give consent for my participation in this research study:**

Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## APPENDIX B

### **CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY: PARENT-TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR RELATIONSHIPS IN URBAN SCHOOLS**



## Cleveland State University

College of Education and Human Services

Dear Parent or Guardian:

Hello, my name is Darryl Mason. I am a Counseling PhD Candidate. I am asking you to participate in a research study. The goal of the study is to better understand parent-teacher interactions in urban schools. My study will be supervised by Dr. Justin Perry.

In this study, you will be privately interviewed. Questions concern your thoughts and feelings about your son's teachers at his school. The interview will be audio-recorded. It will last about 1 hour. Your name and responses will be kept completely confidential. Participation is voluntary. You may withdraw at any time without penalty.

Potential risks include mild discomfort related to the interview questions. These risks do not exceed those experienced in normal daily living. There is also a minimal risk that your participation may be exposed. Measures will be taken to protect your information, but it cannot be guaranteed. There are no direct benefits for participating in the study.

Once completed, the interviews will be transcribed. Number codes will be substituted for participant names. Audio-taped recordings, transcriptions, and consent forms will be kept on a password-protected computer at CSU. The code linking your name with the transcript will be locked in Dr. Perry's office.

The results of this study may be presented at professional organizations or conferences. They may also be published in a scientific outlet, like a journal or book. When we present these results, no identifying information will be used.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact Darryl Mason at 330-554-8598 or Justin Perry at 216-875-9778.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Darryl M. Mason, MSW, LSW, LCDC-III  
PhD Candidate, Doctoral Program in Urban Education  
Cleveland State University

---

Please return to Darryl Mason

I have read and understand this document.

**I understand:**

The purpose of this study and what I will be asked to do.

That I may stop participation at any time.

That my information will be kept confidential.

That I should keep copy of this informed document for reference.

*If I have any questions about my rights as a research subject, I can contact the CSU Institutional Review Board at (216) 687-3630.*

Please indicate below whether you want to participate.

**I understand that by signing this form, I am 18 years or older and give consent for my participation is this research study:**

**Name (please print):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_