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A Qualitative Case Study to Investigate How Educators Promote Parent Collaboration and Involvement for African American Elementary Males with Learning Disabilities

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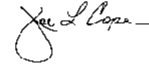
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Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership



Dr. Joey Cope, Dean of the
College of Graduate and
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School of Educational Leadership

A Qualitative Case Study to Investigate How Educators Promote Parent Collaboration and
Involvement for African American Elementary Males with Learning Disabilities

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Derek E. Pierce

February 2020

Dedication

I dedicate this study to a host of friends and colleagues, but most importantly, to my family. We all know too well the true definitions of mountain highs and valley lows. During those times, neither of you ever doubted or questioned my ability or capacity to obtain this doctoral degree. To my future children, let this inspire you to dream big and achieve any goal you set in life. To the children and families I served throughout my career, thank you for being my muse and daily doses of inspiration to be a better me, educator, and service provider. Lastly, I dedicate this study to any Black boy whose light was sifted before his time. I pray this study promotes change for everyone to be better parents and educators to all our children world-wide.

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Personally, I would like to thank everyone who has expressed their resounding support of me during this journey to those members of RLOC and other Ph.D. support groups. I would like to share my appreciation to my team, who has shown me so much support during this process. You all have been a beacon of light that I have never experienced before. I would like to express my appreciation to other colleagues, students, school families, staff, and friends for their unknown moral support. I would like to express my appreciation to my sponsor and brothers of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. Lastly, I would be remiss to forget to express my gratitude and love for my dad, Edward E. Pierce, my sisters, Doria N. Pierce, Jeana Pierce, and Lisa Jones, my aunts, Aubra Henderson and Rosalyn Fountain, and a host of cousins for being so supportive, loving, and always allowing me to put my education first. Thank you so much for believing in me.

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Abstract

The disproportionate identification and achievement gap of African American students and their peers are inexhaustible. African American students continue to lag tremendously behind their Asian and Caucasian peers. There is limited research of African American students with disabilities as it relates specifically to various components of special education. To understand the narrative surrounding African American males, their achievement, and the collaboration between their parents and educators, the researcher will evaluate various components in conjunction with educators' composition and characteristics and various parent's attributes and behaviors. The purpose of this qualitative case study is to investigate how educators promote parent collaboration and involvement through (a) home visits, (b) parent-teacher conferences, (c) Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings, and (d) school-based activities and events to serve urban elementary school African American males diagnosed with learning disabilities. The target population will include educators and parents of African American males with learning disabilities in urban elementary charter schools in Washington, D.C.

Keywords: African American males, disproportionate, learning disabilities, parental involvement, and parent-educator collaboration

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The plight and prospects of African American males and their education have grown as a social, economic, and historical conversation in recent years. In the early years of the 1950s and 1960s, education policy changed to address a number of interconnected concerns for a variety of students. Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibited any discrimination in public schools because of race, religion, sex, national origin, or disability. The mandate directly after the Supreme Court ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) articulated how segregation is a violation of the 14th amendment of the Constitution. Brown (2015) and Kirby (2017) claimed *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) was created to improve the condition to desegregate area schools and articulate that separate is inherently equal.

Public and charter schools, committees, and task forces determined the outcomes of general education students and students with disabilities (New York State Special Education Task Force, 2019; Valerie Hewitt & Martin, 2013). Specifically, these various organizations identified the outcomes of students by race, gender, disability, individual academic progress, and achievement. Bécares and Priest (2015) stated having a clear understanding of how academic and nonacademic outcomes are patterned differently by race, status, and gender is an important research area as it can broaden educators' comprehension of various pathways and explanations for discrimination and needs, and it informs educators how to address differences or inequalities.

For example, Washington, D.C.'s public charter schools use a performance measurement framework (PMF) to measure the academic performance of each charter school by evaluating five specific indicators. These indicators are (a) student progress, (b) student academic achievement, (c) gateway indicator, (d) school environment, and (e) mission-specific measurement. *Student progress* is an indicator that evaluates the individual student's academic

improvement. *Student academic achievement* determines the academic performance and level of proficiency or advancement of students throughout a year (Public Charter School Board [PCSB], 2018). Whereas *gateway indicator* evaluates the academic performance of specific grades and subjects, specifically third and eighth grade and reading and math, as the student performed on the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessment. The *school environment* is a comparative measurement between the students' achievement, progress, and attendance, reenrollment and provides a projected measure if students are on track for high school graduation. Lastly, *mission-specific* measures the individual performance level of each school mission statement, early childhood performance, and various differing methods for each school (PCSB, 2018). Though these indicators evaluate outcomes of students within this charter system, a closer analysis and use of similar factors can be used to evaluate and summarize the performance of African American males with disabilities (PCSB, 2018).

The sociopolitical position and education of African American males are informed by the past 300 years of American history. African American males have faced harsh realities directly related to their education, academic performance, and achievement. Reflecting on the problem of educational underachievement within recent years, society and media have primarily focused on the following: school failure, educational dropout, the overrepresentation of African American males in special education, and low test scores (Graham, 2016). Amemiya and Wang (2018) noted that African American male outcomes vary in complexity. The underachievement of African American males is perpetuated by the results of higher rates of suspensions, lower academic success, the position of discrimination, and a lack of behavioral expectations.

Many African American male students disproportionately perform lower than their peers. More so, African American males perform academically below their White peers and Black

female peers regardless of the testing or controlled environment (Brown, 2015; Henfield, Owens & Moore, 2008). Pollard (1993) shared that the gender difference in academic achievement has proven that African American females perform at higher levels than African American males. Pollard continued by explaining that African American males were likely to perform lower because they were more likely not to attend school or were misjudged, behaviorally, by classroom teachers. Similarly, Rowley et al. (2014) stated African American males continue to perform toward the bottom of the index, earning lower grade point averages (GPA) and are more likely to create social injustices and face challenging family dynamics. Equally important, students who are Black, male, and poor are more likely to be identified or classified as an individual requiring special education services (Moore et al., 2008; Rowley et al., 2014).

African American males are represented in news stories with traditional and negative imagery of inferiority and limited positive representation (The Opportunity Agenda, 2011). The continued episodic coverage of African American males, the narrative of African American males, and their education has been retold as education has been reformed to better the educational outcomes of varying students with or without disabilities. The overhaul and sound implementation of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) and the Individual Education Act of 2014 has been slow and impacts why African American male students continue to grapple with their educational experience today. David Francis (2018) spoke directly about the large achievement gap between Blacks-Whites and its troubled history. Further, the author noted the effects of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) and how the case has been overshadowed by a slow and long process to bring quality education to children of color.

African American male students continue to be overrepresented in disciplinary actions, special education referrals and programming, criminal contexts, and incarceration. According to

the National Center of Education Statistics 2015 report, African American males were 12.3% more likely to fight than their non-African American peers and 11.9% more likely to be involved in a physical altercation than females, both on and off school property. Irvine (2012) declared the disproportionate representation of students of color in special education continues to be a critical and persistent problem. The overrepresentation of African American male students has unfair academic outcomes and is some of the causes of the achievement gap (Celinska, 2018).

Sami Kitmitto of American Institutes for Research (Kitmitto, 2018) identified aggregated measures of racial disparities related to the achievement gap and the continued disproportionate lack of academic achievement with African American male students compared to their White peers. Kitmitto conducted a comparative analysis, which evaluated the achievement gap using the school composition categorized in two categories: high density (60% or greater of the student population is African American) and low density (20% or less of the student population is African American). The researcher noted the composition and achievement gap between low- and high-density schools remained the same among Black and White students; however, in the high-density school, African American males continued to perform lower than those African American male students in low-density schools. The last point of analysis evaluated the same data, but compared gender. The data yielded similar results among White males; however, between females and males, Black males continued to perform lower disproportionately (Kitmitto, 2018).

Michelle Alexander (2010) compared the Jim Crow laws to the prison industry with the overrepresentation of African American male students in special education programs. In her book, *The New Jim Crow*, Alexander (2010) identified the racial caste system through conceptualized mass incarceration. The challenges with race and education have been a historical

dilemma. In 2015, Patton documented and mentioned many causes of disproportionality are indicated by race, disability, and gender; therefore, a holistic conversation about how educators can educate every child soundly, support families, train and support teachers, empower leaders to participate actively, and address these areas of concerns for students identified as African American males with disabilities is imperative.

Further, the research surrounding African American males with disabilities and their academic achievement should evaluate how the characteristics of educators directly impact these students (Gardner, Lopes Rizzi, & Council, 2014). A research-based teaching framework addresses the need to evaluate the characteristics of educators, parents, other staff, and, most importantly, students. The Danielson Teaching Framework is a research-based teaching framework that uses a specific rubric to evaluate educators across the states. Under two specific domains of the Danielson Teaching Framework, communicating with students and families directly addresses how educators should be evaluated in these areas. It is essential to understand that curriculum, standards, learning styles, and various teaching groups such as math, English Language Arts, and special education teachers impact the academic progress of scholars (Danielson et al., 2009).

Many of these components, such as disproportionate and disparity of African American males with or without learning disabilities is a phenomenon that has been engraved into the inner workings of the United States. Bowman, Comer, and Johns (2018) noted that the systemic challenges of African Americans continue today with African American children, their parents, and their parent's parents which are centered around racism and classism and are reasons why African American males continue to lack continuity with strong educational tenets such as high expectation, high-quality instruction, and social (home) support. The systemic challenges not

only regard race and gender but also include the wealth gap between Blacks and Whites. Though not all African American families struggle with disparity and inequity, far too many continue to be faced with unfair challenges (Bowman, Comer, & Johns, 2018).

Statement of the Problem

African American males with disabilities are disproportionately identified and have performed infinitesimally lower than their peers. African American students with the propensity to perform lower on standardized assessments or lower class grades are more likely to be identified as students requiring special education services than those peers who are racially different and academically perform higher on the same assessments (Cruz & Rodl, 2018). The disproportionate identification, the achievement gap of African American male students, and their peers are complex. Since 1990, African American students have continued to lag behind their Caucasian peers with an unchanged discrepancy (Kitmitto, 2018; Vega, Moore, & Miranda, 2015).

In recent years, schools have begun to revert into segregated schools, which further illustrates the need to understand the interplay between African American students and the disparity of their academic achievement. The educational process of African American students with disabilities has duality in two historically marginalized groups (Banks, 2017). Therefore, critical steps must continuously be made toward the development of research and guidelines to decrease the overrepresentation of African American males who receive specialized instruction; researchers must evaluate what and how these students with academic differences are making academic progress (Gardner et al., 2014). Most research that surrounds African American students with disabilities is in postsecondary settings (Alqarni, 2016). Banks (2017) stated there

is a lack of research that specifically focuses on African American males with disabilities and other components of special education.

To understand the connection between African American males, their achievement, and the achievement gap, researchers must evaluate these components in conjunction with school composition, which includes teachers' and parents' characteristics and behaviors. Gage, Adamson, Macsuga-Gage, and Lewis (2017) shared various tools to assist with further research to determine how teachers' characteristics and parental involvement impacts students with disabilities. Gardner, Lopes Rizzi, and Council (2014) noted that these factors (teachers' characteristics and parental involvement) used practical instructional strategies and made data-driven decisions, thus maximizing instructional gains for minority students. Additionally, evidence can be collected through an assortment of interviews and identify how teachers demonstrate appropriate modeling, utilize performance feedback, and if they attend appropriate professional development on best practices and instruction (Brock, Seaman, & Downing, 2017). Not understanding these factors will continue to speak to the negative narrative and delimit the full potential of our education system for African American male students with learning disabilities (Alqarni, 2016).

Purpose Statement

With several components guiding this study, the use of conceptual frameworks, special education laws, theories, best practices, and the development of research questions could interchangeably assist with determining how educators promote parent collaboration and involvement using some best practices to serve African Americans males with learning disabilities. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative case study is to investigate how educators promote parent collaboration and involvement through (a) home visits, (b) parent-teacher

conferences, (c) Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings, and (d) school-based activities and events to serve urban elementary school African American males diagnosed with learning disabilities. Conducting this research will assist in providing an understanding of the experiences and needs of educators of African American male students with learning disabilities (Mayes & Moore, 2016). The target population will include educators and parents of African American males with learning disabilities in urban elementary charter schools in Washington, D.C. Educators and parents will participate in interviews and focus groups on outlining their individual experiences as parents and educators of African American males with learning disabilities.

Research Questions

Parent and school leadership or teaching team collaboration have become increasingly important as society recognizes that schools alone cannot educate students (Archer-Banks & Behar-Horenstein, 2008). Banerjee, Harrell, and Johnson (2011) suggested that parental involvement in education is strongly associated with positive gains in a child's academic and cognitive outcomes. Therefore, conducting this study can potentially assist with disaggregating and synthesizing the impact of collaborative efforts between educators and parents of African American male students with learning disabilities.

To find out how educators and parental collaboration directly promote progress among African American male students with learning disabilities, this study will seek to answer the following research questions:

Q1. How do educators promote parent collaboration and involvement through home visits to serve urban elementary school African American males diagnosed with learning disabilities?

Q2. How do educators promote parent collaboration and involvement through parent-teacher conferences to serve urban elementary school African American males diagnosed with learning disabilities?

Q3. How do educators promote parent collaboration and involvement through IEP meetings to serve urban elementary school African American males diagnosed with learning disabilities?

Q4. How do educators promote parent collaboration and involvement through school-based activities and events to serve urban elementary school African American males diagnosed with learning disabilities?

Definitions of Key Terms

The following terms are used to support the study's position.

Academic achievement. Academic achievement is the specified level of attainment or proficiency in academic work as evaluated by teachers or standardized tests, or the combination of both (Franky & Chamundeswari, 2014).

African American males. According to the 2010 census, African American and Black refers to a person having an origin in any of the Black racial groups of Africa. These persons are the focus of this study and are male and range between the ages of one year to 18 years old (United States Census Bureau, 2010).

Baumrind's typology parenting style. Diana Baumrind has classified and identified three parenting styles based on parental demandingness and responsiveness: authoritative parenting, authoritarian parenting, and permissive parenting (Ewing, 2006).

Danielson teaching framework. The Danielson Teaching Framework is a set of teaching standards to evaluate the effectiveness of teachers across a continuum of experience, from new to experienced educators (Alvarez & Anderson-Ketchmark, 2011).

Disproportionality. The disproportionality phenomenon is the overrepresentation of minorities, males, and economically disadvantaged students into any special education program or categorization (Reschly & Applequist, 2013).

Ecological systems theory. Ecological systems theory (EST) is based on the assumption that humans interact with five different environmental systems. Each of these systems affects an individual's life, relationships within the community, and the relationship between global cultures and communities. The systems include microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem (Kamenopoulou, 2016).

Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA; P.L. 89-10) was developed to equalize education opportunities for all children and direct federal funds for disadvantaged children. Since 1965, ESEA has been reestablished eight times through No Child Left Behind (NCLB) of 2001.

Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015. Under the Obama administration in 2015, Every Student Succeeds Act was passed to govern the United States K-12 education system beyond its NCLB of 2001 predecessor. The new law retained the NCLB's hallmark of standardized testing and provided more control to states and districts surrounding specifics regarding standards students are held to; determine consequences for low-performing schools; and regardless of race, income, disability, or ethnicity, providing college, transition, career counseling, and advanced courses for all students (United States Department of Education, 2015).

Home visits. Home visit programs are historically used to increase student participation and parental involvement and to cultivate a seamless school-to-home relationship (Smith, 2013; Lusse, M., Schooten, E., Schie, L., Notten, T., & Engbersen. (2019).

Individual Education Plan (IEP). As a part of the Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Act (IDEA) of 2004, the individual education plan (IEP) is the plan or program that outlines the specialized and related services a person with a diagnosed disability will receive (Phillips, 2013). Individual Education Plans contain documentation developed within the special education process. The IEP is a document that addresses the individual needs of the student, whether physical, social, academic, or emotional. The IEP team includes the student's general educator, parent(s), any related service provider(s), school leadership, the student (depending on the age), and the student's data.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2001 (IDEA). In 1975, the United States government developed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, which directed public school systems to educate children with disabilities. In 1990, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 was reauthorized as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990 (Hague, 2013). This act protects the rights of students with physical, mental, and social and emotional disabilities. This act additionally mandates these students receive free and appropriate education, including transitional services for life after school (Harmon, 2018b). Since the implementation of IDEA of 1990, there have been three other subsequent amendments during the years of 1997, and with the most recent amendment as the Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Act of 2004. These amendments all enhance their policies to continue to augment the needs of children with disabilities.

Learning disabilities (LD) and specific learning disabilities (SLD). Learning disabilities and specific learning disabilities share similar commonalities between the two words. The United States federal law identifies LD/SLD as a disorder in one or more psychological processes, spoken or written, which may impact an individual's ability to speak, listen, read, write, spell, and compute mathematical calculations, including perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia (Tilly, 2004).

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. In an effort to focus on students, accountability, parent choice, and to seek high-quality education for all students and bridge the achievement gap, the NCLB Act was established out ESEA of 1965 and at the recommendation of the National Commission of Education Excellence of the 1980s. This law wanted to yield positive outcomes, such as higher scores and improved urban schools (Diorio, 2017).

Parent styles. According to parental socialization style theory, parents are categorized into one of four parenting styles based on the degree to which they maintain a warm versus hostile and restrictive versus permissive relationship with their children. The styles include authoritative, neglecting, indulgent, and authoritarian (Mikeska, Harrison, Carlson, & Coryn, 2017).

Parent-teacher conferences. Parent-teacher conferences are set times during the school year for the teacher and parent to discuss student academics, social interactions, and a child's emotional state (Walker and Legg, 2018).

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The purpose of this law is to provide equal access to students who may not meet the criteria for a disability under IDEA. Additionally, 504 plans support students in and during extracurricular activities and focus on discrimination against individuals with a disability in the various areas (Caffery, 2019). In some cases, local

public schools develop a 504 plan to help address medical or physical needs, which impedes the students' ability to access the general education environment.

Special education. Special education is specialized instruction and support given to students with diagnosed mental, cognitive, learning, social, physical, and emotional disabilities (Harmon, 2018a). Under the title of IDEA, the educational rights of students diagnosed with those disabilities are protected and are entitled to receive a free appropriate public education that meets their individual needs. To receive special education services, a student must be found eligible in one or more of the following disabilities:

- autism spectrum disorder;
- blindness or visual impairment;
- traumatic brain injury;
- deaf-blindness;
- deafness or hearing impairment;
- developmental delay;
- emotional disturbance;
- intellectual disability;
- multiple disability (a combination of disabilities);
- orthopedic impairment;
- other health impairment;
- specific learning disability; or
- speech or language impairment (Diorio, 2017; Harmon, 2018b).

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to investigate how educators promote parent collaboration and involvement through (a) home visits, (b) parent-teacher conferences, (c) Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings, and (d) school-based activities and events to serve urban elementary school African American males diagnosed with learning disabilities. The history of educators, parental involvement, and African American male students has been a steady discussion that has not yielded significant reversals in the ideologies, identifications, or the underrepresentation of African American male students performing lower than their White peers and similar female peers their age (Celinska, 2018; Kitmitto, 2018).

Chapter 1 outlined the historical challenges of African American male students, their education, and their academic achievement. The chapter visits the research of Kitmitto that addresses the comparative analyses of academic achievement, gender, and race (Kitmitto, 2018). Chapter 1 provides an overview of the problem, the purpose, and the research questions for this study. The chapter includes research questions that directly address each construct within the purpose statement.

Chapter 2 will concentrate on outlining the various uses of best practices that will make up the collaborative relationship between parents and educators. The researcher synthesized the discussion surrounding parental involvement, African American male achievement, and the educator's involvement, along with other topics through scholarly journals and resources. Chapter 3 describes the methods and procedures that will be used to investigate how educators promote parent collaboration and involvement through (a) home visits, (b) parent-teacher conferences, (c) Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings, and (d) school-based activities and

events to serve urban elementary school African American male students with learning disabilities.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this study is to investigate how educators promote parent collaboration and involvement through (a) home visits, (b) parent-teacher conferences, (c) Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings, and (d) school-based activities and events to serve urban elementary school African American male students with learning disabilities. Therefore, it was essential to review relevant and current literature to examine several facets that directly relate to African American male students with learning disabilities, academic achievement, school-family-community collaboration, parental involvement, and other ecological factors. First, it is essential to understand the duality and challenges African American males with learning disabilities face and how the identification of disproportionality is not singular because they do not perform as well as their peers (Emmanuel, 2018). This literature review examined how African American males continuously perform significantly lower than their peers. Second, previous and current literature determined how African American males with learning disabilities perform and reported the implications of academic achievement, school-family-community collaboration, parental involvement, and the factors of ecological theory effect and significantly impacted this population of students. The review of this literature focused on the contribution and lack of effective leadership, the participation or willingness of parents, and the achievement gap of African American males today. Last, this study review investigated the Bronfenbrenner (1979) ecological systems theory to determine the possibility of how African American male students' surroundings impact them.

Achievement Gap

African American males, in most learning environments, have grappled with many issues such as high school dropout rates, academic failure, low graduation rates, low reading and math

assessment scores, and lower grade point scores (Ford & Moore, 2013; Kim, Joo, & Lee, 2018; Moon & Singh, 2015). Moon and Singh concluded that the achievement gap is the politically correct term that identifies the significant difference between African American males and their White peers. Elementary educators are challenged daily with teaching phonics, math literacy, and reading comprehension because African American males do not achieve at their academic potential as their counterparts (Ford & Moore, 2013). African American males perform up to four years behind White students in reading and math (Moon & Singh, 2015). The achievement gap is a factor that drastically affects African American males and their communities. The performance between African American students and White students must be situated in finding and rectifying causal and correlational factors (Ford & Moore, 2013).

Despite these situated factors, the research and identification of the achievement gap have outstanding potential, and researchers hope to further regulate racial disparities in education for African Americans with the creation of more educational opportunities for children of color. The achievement gap has such a negative impact on students of color, specifically those students who identify as African American and male. Moon and Singh (2015) shared the consequence of the achievement gap and its direct connection to the school-to-prison pipeline linked to those identified students. Moon and Singh (2015) identified the school-to-prison pipeline as a direct correlation between the educational system of discipline actions of at-risk students and the various discipline policies that may lead to the potential and likelihood of those students being imprisoned. The growth of the achievement gap is the connection to how African American males are more likely to drop out of school, and they are eight times more likely to be incarcerated than their educational counterparts (Moon & Singh, 2015).

Most issues with how the achievement gap impedes the progress of African American males and other students of color are evident with the inequivalence of academic and financial resources for those students and their counterparts. Ford and Moore (2013) spoke of the achievement gap between Black and White students and how the best resources outlined those in more affluent areas identified as a predominantly White area. Moon and Singh (2015) continued to analyze the achievement gap through the use of critical race theory (CRT) that examined the social and academic inequalities between White and marginalized groups of students challenged with the achievement gap. Moon and Singh (2015) pointed out how CRT was helpful from a proper theoretical viewpoint that offered insight, perspective, and methods that altered structurally to the cultural aspect between Black and White students. Further, the research continued to question the experience of African American males as it related to the achievement gap.

African American Males with Disabilities

Researchers, educators, and lawmakers have written about education reform to ensure all children alike experience a better education experience with the hopes for a better future; however, the reform of education has been slow. In 2018, Chicago schools acknowledged how their systems were contending with expeditiously reform education, while many of their schools were severely underresourced (Emmanuel, 2018). Emmanuel outlines how the districts and many local education agencies (LEA) have failed to effectively communicate with parents regarding the services their students with disabilities have qualified. However, school systems in Chicago have failed at being fair and providing resources to parents and students with disabilities (Emmanuel, 2018).

The overhaul and implementation of *Brown v. Board of Education* have impacted students of color; for this study, African American males who continue to grapple with receiving a fair, resourceful educational experience will be examined (Brown, 2015). *Brown* was developed to end the ideologies of segregation within education. Even though segregated schools continued trying to fight for civil rights and equal and better education opportunities, it was not until 1954 when the Supreme Court overturned *Plessey v. Ferguson* that created more diverse opportunities for all Americans such as separate but equal; however, today individuals continue to struggle with the decision made many years ago.

Overall, African American males continue to perform significantly below their peers in nearly all categories. Brown (2015) and Gardner et al. (2014) noted that African American females and their White peers, despite their learning environment, continue to perform higher than their African American, Latino, and Native American peers. Lynch (2017) stated a direct connection between African American males, special education, and the rates of incarceration. African American males overrepresented in areas of disciplinary actions, referrals for special education programming, criminal courts, and jails. Lynch further argued the improving educational outcomes could actively improve rates of incarceration of African American males. Irvine (2012) explicitly notes that the “disproportionate representation of students of color in special education continues to be a critical and persistent problem” (p. 273).

President Obama acknowledged the persistent problem with individuals with weak academic skills by developing two critical initiatives that address the overall outcomes of African American and Latino males (Gardner et al., 2014). For African American males with disabilities to make any improvements, they must have access to the general education curriculum and a variety of resources, both in and out of the general education classroom. These

resources provide a balanced and robust review of the curriculum. Furthermore, this issue will assist with changing the narrative of this problem for African American males with disabilities by teaching them a variety of ways to attack and solve challenging assignments and how to advocate for themselves within a society not built for individuals with disabilities.

The conversation surrounding the school achievement gap versus the identification and overrepresentation of students with learning disabilities were discussed and explored as it relates specifically to the narrative, skills, and achievement of African American males with disabilities. The overrepresentation of African American students has terrible academic outcomes and somehow causes the achievement gap (Celinska, 2018). African American males with disabilities are at a higher risk of being disproportionately placed in special education programs and having a higher achievement gap (Gardner et al., 2014). Lawrence-Brown (2004) and the collaboration of writers, community moderators, and educators stated that the use and benefit of differentiated instruction, supportive teaching strategies, and the setting of high expectations in an inclusive classroom are beneficial for students, including those students with disabilities.

The narrative between African American males and their peer counterparts continues to impact the outcomes of individuals with disabilities negatively. Nuru-Jeter, Thorpe, and Fuller-Thompson (2011) declared the difference between Black (African American) and White disability outcomes are mixed and the disparities between the two groups are more progressive among one group of individuals (Black people). Data from the Nuru-Jeter et al. (2011) study further stated that African American males (8.2%) are significantly more likely to struggle as at-risk students with having memory and learning issues than their White male peers (7.3%) with a difference of 0.09% between the two groups, and African American females and their White

female counterparts. Females with similar disabilities and similar memory and learning concerns experience less of a challenge with the aforementioned areas of concentration.

Nuru-Jeter et al. (2011) further highlighted how males are more likely to experience bouts of amnesia and dementia, which causes issues with memory and learning in African American males. Nuru-Jeter et al. (2011) suggested that African American males are more likely to have to deal with the challenges of dementia and other learning and memory issues. In the article, “African-Americans and Alzheimer’s Disease: The Silent Epidemic” (2015) concluded African American males demonstrated to be more challenging than their White peers. Moreover, disabilities continue to grow tremendously within each disability category.

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory (CRT) evolved with methodological, conceptual, and theoretical constructs to examine race and racism and how it influences the education of African American males. Reynolds (2010) noted minimal research surrounding African American males, their parents, and their involvement and engagement with school personnel. The achievement gap, critical theories, racial inequities, and educational achievement required examining of CRT (Reynolds, 2010). The intersectionality of race, education, parental involvement, and gender are aspects of CRT (Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2016). Gillborn and Ladson-Billings further formed an understanding that the narrative of intersectionality had common assumptions related to CRT. Critical race theory has a variety of notions that address how racial inequities are shaped. Intersectionality is explained as social science research, which is further interconnected with race, class, gender, and disabilities (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2016).

When used correctly, CRT promotes an understanding of the historical background and outlines how the theory operates. Gillborn and Ladson-Billings (2016) noted the difficulties with historicism and the need to comprehend racism within social, economic and other contexts, such as education. Globally, we have seen some similar challenges with race, class, gender, and disabilities. In the United Kingdom (UK), the conversation about the assumptions has shaped education research, policy, and practice where the middle-class is assumed to be White and Black (Black African and Caribbean) and working-class (Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2016). Blacks in the UK grapple with similar narratives as African Americans with similar connections to the intersectionality of race, class, gender, and disability. Reynolds (2010) specifically shared the oppression middle-class Black individuals are faced with as it relates to race, class, gender, and disability. The author acknowledges the roles to identify the historical legacy of racism (Reynolds, 2010). Reynolds further clarified how CRT assisted with understanding the complexities with the confluence of race, class, gender, disabilities and even sex as it relates to African American males in schools.

Further, Reynolds mentioned that the knowledge of individuals of color and their experience should be allowed to be told through the use of storytelling. Manglitz, Guy, and Merriweather Hunn (2006) and Reynolds (2010) identified counter-storytelling as a methodological tool that communicates the stories and struggles of the nondominant group not often told. This method has been used to analyze and challenge others in power and unbalance the dominant group's discourse (Manglitz, Guy, & Merriweather Hunn, 2006; Reynolds, 2010). Many stories and experiences of individuals who are African American males go untold or are not told because individuals of privilege or in power wanted to suffocate their positionality and voice.

Reynolds' (2010) study evaluated how African American parents responded to racism, which resulted in frank conversations with their sons regarding race and gender and the potential effects on the educational process they might experience. Similar to many studies reviewed for this literature review, Reynolds documented the continued disparate treatment African American parents face with school officials. Reynolds shared the issues affecting African American males as it relates to discipline policy and procedure, which demonstrated an increase in African American males dropping out of school and becoming involved in the penal system. Additionally, CRT was used by Reynolds to examine the criminalization process against young men of color in school today and how parents disregarded wanting to know about the racism they had experienced through microaggression (Reynolds, 2010).

Disproportionate Representation of African American Males

Disproportionate representation of students in various cultural and educational backgrounds have been categorized and logged for years among the educational platform. Banks (2017), in concert with many other writers and educators, stated African, Latino, and Native American students are overly labeled with a disability, specifically those with intellectual and learning disabilities. "Disproportionate representation of students of color in special education continues to be a critical and persistent problem" (Irvine, 2012, p. 273). Gardner et al. (2014) outlined disproportionality of African American males by noting the concerns that prompted the Office for Civil Rights, which reports to the National Academy of Sciences, to conduct a study on the causes of disproportionality among African American males. Gardner et al. further stated the roots of disproportionality affected by the school in ineffectively implementing the least restrictive environment (LRE) and placing African American males with disabilities in self-contained classes and their peers in general education classrooms.

Disproportionality is a severe epidemic for African American males in special education (Banks, 2017). Banks explored DisCrit and the intersectionality of race, gender, and socioeconomic status of African American male students with learning disabilities. The author identified how other scholars investigated factors affecting African American males with disabilities and others who investigated the historical trends of our society. The Individual with Disabilities Education Act (2014) has provided tremendous monitoring and enforcement to address disproportionality among students who fall within the subgroup population directly. Banks' (2017) study aimed to investigate the interdependence of racism and ableism in a school setting and to examine the educational opportunities of African American males with learning disabilities in high school (Banks, 2017).

Banks pointed out that 21% of African American males have been affected by disproportionality and how scholars continue to identify the various possibilities of contributing and broadening the understanding of this disproportion in special education. Banks concluded disproportionality as a consequence through the voice of African American males, which leads to a variety of narrative such as how to know a result in labeling African American students against the education experience of students of color. Banks highlighted how great bodies of work acknowledged the overrepresentation in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, *Larry P. V. Riles*, *Diana v. Miles*, and how IDEA developed a less restrictive environment to prevent some of these challenges with disproportionality affecting students of color (Banks, 2017). President Bush proposed the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) with the purpose that all students should receive a quality education (Gardner et al., 2014).

The disability critical race (DisCrit) theoretical framework analyzes two social constructs: race and disability (Banks, 2017). This framework identifies the characterization of

students as less intelligent and the oppression of their abilities compared to other people who are deemed more able (Banks, 2017). Other critical theories with similar aims as DisCrit examine race/ethnicity, gender, and disability, which influence the learning chances of African American males with learning disabilities. Some limitations of Banks' study are the opportunities students experience when they are learning and the detailed consequences from the students' experiences that mischaracterize African American males with learning disabilities as it relates to behavior, determination, and self-sustained education (Banks, 2017).

Some of the reasons why African American males have continued to experience disproportionality are due to assessment bias, cultural differences, classism, and institutionalized racism. Wedl, Trewick, and Erickson (1998) provided an outline that proves how African Americans students under three different disability categories (emotional disturbed [ED], learning disability [LD], and multiple disabilities [MD]) are overly identified and how African American students' placement rates in special education is a third higher than other identifying groups (American Indians, Whites, etc.). Assessments used to evaluate students with disabilities or African American males do not include variety factors (e.g., culture, language, dialect differences), and without the consideration of these factors, this can negatively impact the validity of the assessment given to African American males or students with disabilities.

Institutional racism is the lack of fair distribution of resources, power, and opportunities, which impacts housing, criminal justice, public health, education, and banking (Lietz, 2018). Additionally, institutional racism demonstrates explicit attitudes and racial bias against African American students in education (Lietz, 2018). Therefore, outside of equal and fair access to high-quality education, institutional racism is continuously shown when states provide unequal access choice programs through taxpayer-funded vouchers that promote the perpetuation of the

disparity among low-performing scholars, African American males, and low-income families (Lietz, 2018). The disproportionate representation of Black males is due to the direct connection between generations of low reading and low math scores and overall low academic achievement, all of which lead to higher high school dropout rates (Artiles & Bal, 2008). Additionally, this is a direct connection to the narrative during slavery days, when Blacks were not allowed to read or receive an education.

Therefore, this study is essential to the education field because it adds to the ongoing conversation about how education must acknowledge that African American males with learning disabilities continue to experience being marginalized based on race, gender, and disability status. Banks (2017) noted educators need to teach these students self-advocacy skills to be able to fight and ask for help during their individual times of need. These thoughts are true for students with various disabilities from elementary through individual professional experiences.

Discipline

Mayes and Moore (2016) stated African American male students are even less likely to be acknowledged as a twice-exceptional learner because the behaviors associated with twice-exceptional learners are more likely to be identified as a student with a disability. Roberts, Pereira, and Knotts (2015) defined a twice-exceptional learner as students who are dually identified as a gifted student and require special education services. Many students in elementary and middle schools in urban cities are faced with this challenge. This discrepancy leads to the overrepresentation and overidentification of African American males. Darenbourg, Perez, and Blake (2010) stated African American males suffer from less time in an academic classroom due to exclusionary discipline, dropout rates, and involvement, which leads to the contribution of the overrepresentation of African American male students in special education programs.

African American males are suspended and disciplined at a significant rate and are less celebrated as exceptional. African American male students in equitable classrooms experience being suspended three times more frequently than other students (Darensbourg, Perez, & Blake, 2010; Augustine, 2018). Lynch (2017) highlighted that 18% of African American males students are in preschool programs and half of those students experienced suspensions. Additionally, in America, two-thirds of African American males are suspended, with 75% of all students arrested in Chicago being African American. With the increased identification of African American males in special education programs and raised incarceration rates, developing other options for African American males with learning disabilities to attend college or to participate in a transition program is needed, as proposed in Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which could potentially decrease these numbers.

Previous policies attempting to clarify the reasons for the overrepresentation of African American male students have continued long after the development of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the Civil Rights Act, and the American Disabilities Act (ADA) policies and procedures. No Child Left Behind and the school-to-prison pipeline are interconnected because these policies outline how African American students are being pushed out of schools for discipline concerns and keep those lower-achieving scholars away during testing (Augustine, 2018). Augustine supported that NCLB has failed regarding specifics to accountability and success for students. Lynch (2017) identifies facts about African American males, in general, who are incarcerated six times the rate of other races and how decreasing this rate could improve the educational outcomes of these students in America. Currently, in several states, including Washington, D.C., local governments are imposing the implementation of federal educational policies that encourage school leaders to utilize other

discipline frameworks such as restorative practices to reduce suspensions and assist students who are low achieving and happen to be African American students and help them remain in school for equal opportunity of instruction (United States Department of Education, 2015).

Under the federal special education law of IDEA (2004), students with disabilities who are disciplined by way of suspensions for more than 10 days must face a standardized IEP review meeting, called a manifestation determination review (MDR; IDEA, 2004). The MDR meetings are held to ensure that students with disabilities do not experience an increased form of discrimination based on disciplinary charges and adverse behavior actions. These meetings are required, as are all IEP meetings, which team members are required to attend, including general education teachers, special education teachers, school officials, parent(s), the psychologist, and the student (if age appropriate). The meeting is held to determine the direct connection between the student's disability and action to be taken to make a sound manifestation determination. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act notes the determination is sound when the requisite individuals are present to make the decision and review all related information. Despite the reconstruction of the IDEA of 1997, which initially improved the law to include MDR, neither MDR theory or practice are explored, nor is there enough empirical data to examine the MDR decision-making process.

Gage et al. (2017) expressed before 1997 the special education law had no discipline provisions; however, all disciplinary actions are entitled to due process under the 14th amendment, according to *Goss v. Lopez* of 1975. Following *Goss*, courts made decisions about students with disabilities and the challenges that ensued with many school systems. Additionally, *Stuart v. Nappi* (1978), in a Connecticut court, identified a lack of educational programming and the student's behavior can impeded the student's ability to be successful in the classroom. The

Stuart case determined that the disability and action of the child must be justifiable before the court or MDR team can take any disciplinary consequences.

Courts across the nation have determined students with disabilities and other students who fall under section 504, after a trained and knowledgeable team can measure the student's misconduct in conjunction with the students' disability category, could experience expulsion (Gage, Adamson, Macsuga-Gage, & Lewis, 2017).

The disparity of minority groups and school discipline is a severe problem in education (McIntosh, Elwood, McCall, & Girvan, 2018). Discipline and disproportionality seem to have a direct correlation between African American and White males and students with disabilities. Disproportionality is a more significant concern for students of color with disabilities and a significant problem (McIntosh et al., 2018). Growing rates and challenges among various races, student dropouts, students with disabilities, and school suspensions have consistently grown without any regard. Racial discipline gaps have grown consistently, and data for students with disabilities and their rates for suspensions have grown significantly with African American males with disabilities at a 26.5% rate; whereas, their peers had a rate of 4.8% (McIntosh et al., 2018). Data continues to suggest the overrepresentation of minority groups such as African American males with disabilities are discriminated against and are highly more likely to experience bias. McIntosh, Elwood, McCall, and Girvan (2018) stated racial and special education discipline gaps increased suspensions and school and home outcomes. However, to decrease disparities in discipline related to African American males could potentially decrease the achievement gap. To improve the discipline outcomes of marginalized individuals, McIntosh et al. (2018) acknowledged and used positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) and a three-step educational problem-solving model: problem identification, problem analysis, and plan

implementation. Despite such, the lack of expectations at home and school increased discipline among marginalized groups. Positive behavioral interventions and supports focus on identifying the problem and various behaviors and tries to reduce the repetition of consequences (McIntosh et al., 2018). Discipline is an area that continues to be impacted by various factors. Despite the data that supports the narrative of disproportionality of African American males with disabilities and discipline, educators and administrators forego traditions and find effective ways to provide and document discipline provided to students of all abilities.

Ecological Systems Theory and Factors

Bronfenbrenner (1979) stated the ecological systems theory determines how children learn and grow based on their interactions, education, and social structures that affect individual students as cited in Ruppap, Allcock, and Gonsier-Gerdin (2017). Ecological systems theory or factors focuses on six overlapping and interrelated systems that influence an individual (Ruppap, Allcock, & Gonsier-Gerdin, (2017). These systems are self, micro-, meso-, exo-, macro-, and chronosystems. The author explains that the relationship between the systems is interconnected and how each system is influenced by the other. Therefore, any change in one system can impact other systems, opportunities, and experiences (Ruppap et al., 2017).

As children grow and develop, they become more complex, and therefore, the impact of each system response can impact each student differently. The Bronfenbrenner ecological systems theory concentrates on the age, disabilities, and race of the child, which will further assist them in how they interact with complex environments surrounding them. The microsystem of EST concentrates on the individuals who directly influence the student. For example, general and special educators, related service providers, paraprofessionals, and other noninstructional staff (Ruppap et al., 2017). These individuals' influence is significant because if the student

perceives their teachers or related service providers as being cynical, then it is less likely the student will invest time in trying (Ruppar et al., 2017). One major area is the acknowledgment that peer influence has on a student with disabilities in the microsystem. Ruppar et al. (2017) supported the idea that peers assist with increasing academic achievement and social skills among students with disabilities.

Mesosystems look at the interrelations between two or more microsystems that influence students with disabilities. It has been identified that the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team specifically describes this system well. These varying individuals identify strengths and weaknesses based on school-related data, developed goals, accommodations, modifications, and conduct and discuss whether the student with a disability requires related services. The power of this team, the development, and the implementation of the IEP are critical.

The exosystemic reviews how and what the student is impacted by (Algood, Hong, Gourdine, & Williams, 2010; Ruppar et al., 2017). The macro- and chronosystem review the how (cultural blueprint) and change of the individual as it relates to the environment surrounding them. The authors stated schools must determine how students with disabilities are going to learn and grow (Ruppar et al., 2017).

Specifically, for this study, I will exam the relationship with educators and parents through the lens of the microsystem of the ecological theory. This awareness assists in determining how African American male students with learning disabilities are impacted by those in the microsystem and the potential impact of those in the mesosystem. This theoretical framework will assist this study design by identifying how the relationships with the adjoining stakeholders, environment, individuals, and surrounding supporters may promote collaboration, involvement, and progress. Ruppar et al. (2017) mentioned that paying “attention to the way

student's ecological system influences his or her access to the general education content and context can help researchers identify specific barriers" to include student achievement (p. 18).

Home Visit

As part of parental involvement, home visits are a best practice many educators use to establish a home-school relationship with the student's families to set school norms and expectations. Wright, Shields, Black, and Waxman (2018) shared that home visit programs are used in schools to build relationships, increase parental involvement, and increase student achievement. As it relates to home visits, educators use this as a form of communication to connect with families about students' academic progress, social development, or a generalized way to communicate with parents. Wright et al. (2018) attributed the tremendous success of students to the use of home visits by educators.

Schools today utilize home visits as a best practice, and educators have seen a decrease in students' negative behaviors. Researchers noticed a gross number of educators who linked home visits to improved student classroom behavior (Wright, Shields, Black, & Waxman, 2018). Students whose parents are reluctant to participate in home visits were the students whose teachers would potentially experience more behavioral concerns, parents who resistant in visits, or parent(s) who are single parents and work long hours at multiple jobs (Faber, 2016; Wright et al., 2018). Faber (2016) expressed how home visits are a great way to communicate with teachers and parents, so both stakeholders can quickly deal with academic concerns or before behavior concerns get out of control. However, the achievement gap is affected by the range of poverty and single-parent homes.

From experience, students have been elated about having their teachers visit their home despite the concerns of parents. African American parents in low-income areas were unlikely to

participate in home visits because of various issues and concerns. Most of Wright et al.'s (2018) data did corroborate the positive outcomes of students whose parents participated in home visits and were about to determine how various indicators (e.g., attendance, positive classroom behavior) impacted home and school interactions. Wright et al. (2018) stated to focus on the importance of getting parents and teachers to continue being participative with home visits as they significantly have a positive impact on student outcomes.

Though there are some reasons why families and educators do not want to engage in home visits, there are a significant number of benefits as to why this best practice continues to yield great outcomes across a variety of schools that implement it. Corr, Spence, Miller, Marshall, and Santos (2018) outlined some positive impacts of home visits as early intervention (EI). The authors shared these results after reviewing the relationship between schools and families who lived in urban or low-income areas. Benefits of this study are outlined in the following categories: collaboration, coaching, family resilience, and self-care (Corr, Spence, Miller, Marshall, & Santos, 2018). Promoting collaboration by connecting families with a variety of resources can assist families in working with community leaders to help their children and help the school understand other medical needs of the child or concerns of the parent (Corr et al., 2018). The authors further shared how home visits can be an excellent chance to develop individual family service plans (IFSP), which are for a child under the age of three requiring related services. Second, coaching is a strategy that directly assists parents to be the best support of their child. This strategy assists the parent in learning about emotional support and effective communication skills (Corr et al., 2018).

The teacher home visits have been found to improve ties between schools and families (Wright et al., 2018). Wright et al. (2018) noted the positive impact on student attitude and

reported a 61% improvement in the student's attendance. The authors shared the "effects that teacher home visit programs have on students' classroom behavior, academic achievement, parent involvement, and student attitude and motivation" (Wright et al., 2018, p. 71). Further, the studies above have proven that home visits between schools and families can provide educators an opportunity to receive professional development to better the school's home visit program and assist teachers in strengthening and building their relationship with their students and families (Corr et al., 2018, Faber, 2016, Wright et al., 2018).

Lastly, though the components of home visits are complex, it is imperative that all stakeholders understand the challenges, benefits, and best practice serve all students. All studies and journals have shared the importance of building a strong relationship with school personnel and families. The studies further stress improving the struggling areas such as the achievement gap, attendance issues, and much more. Wright et al. (2018) illustrated how the "increase in positive behavior, the school's home visit program determined a significant difference in student outcomes verse students not exposed to home visits" (p. 72).

Learning Disabilities/Specific Learning Disabilities

According to the IDEA of 2004, there are 13 disability categories. From these categories, emotional disturbance, other health impairment, and specific learning disabilities are among those highly identified within the United States. The Colorado Office of Special Education (2018) defines 14 disabilities; however, a specific learning disability is a disorder in one or more psychological processes. A learning disability is an impairment or imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations. There are eight academic domains of specific learning disabilities: oral expression, listening comprehension, written

expression, basic reading skills, reading fluency skills, reading comprehension, mathematical calculation, and mathematical problem-solving.

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (P.L. 94-142) attempted to address the needs of infants and youths with disabilities and their family members. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (P.L. 113-95) governs how state and public local education agencies provide early intervention, special education, and related services and make available a free appropriate public education for eligible students with disabilities. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 establishes the rights, rules, procedures, and protocols for special education programming, eligibility, and provision of specialized and related services. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act falls under section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Some typical differences between 504 and IDEA are the flexibility between procedures. In section 504, there are minor procedures criteria, unlike for a child found eligible for services under IDEA. However, for the lifespan of a child under 504, there are safeguards and protections for the rights of the disability. Roberts and Hyatt (2019) identified the relationship between 504 and IDEA and how the terms inclusively assist an individual with a disability that adversely affects their educational performance. Students' education that is negatively impacted by unforeseen challenges is determined under IDEA and section 504. Services are funded by the state and federal government for those students identified and found eligible for any of the 13 disabilities (IDEA, 2004). Roberts and Hyatt (2019) noted that IDEA and section 504 provides a guarantee for a free and appropriate education. Both section 504 and IDEA were developed to protect families, and more importantly, students with disabilities, providing them with appropriate services and access to general education.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act outlines how IEP meetings are conducted. Further, there are some overlays between a 504 plan and an IEP, specifically as it relates to disabilities related to medical concerns such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and others. Both 504 and IEP meetings require similar participation of a general education teacher, parent(s), child (if of age), a special education teacher, and any related service providers that deliver specialized services to the student with a disability. There continue to be some students overrepresented and classified in various disability categories such as other health impairment (OHI), emotional disturbance (ED), and specific learning disabilities (SLD). Roberts and Hyatt (2019) shared how students are suspended daily and noted how IDEA developed a ‘max’ 10-day restriction for suspensions to protect students with disabilities.

Furthermore, IDEA states many LEAs must be able to justify suspensions because some students with disabilities display behaviors representative of their disability (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). Students with learning disabilities can fall under many domains. Commonly, SLD and a few other disability categories are disproportionately identified but strongly protected by federal law. These laws and procedures are monitored by a plethora of agencies, compliance specialists, special educator coordinators, and directors. Spiel, Evans, and Langberg (2014) spoke of the appropriations of IDEA, and section 504 defines the purpose to “ensure a free and appropriate education for children with a disability that falls within one of the specific disability categories as defined by law” (p. 2). Further, Spiel et al. hinted that federal regulations require diverse team and other personnel to identify services and develop plans for students requiring 504s and IEP plans. Many of these plans require goals and related aids to service the specific needs based on the identified strengths and weaknesses of the individualized student.

School-Family-Community Collaboration

Booth, Butler, Richardson, Washington, and Henfield (2016) identified the relationship among the school, family, and community, which provides some resilience and enhancement to the academic, social, and college-career outcomes of children in our systems. This type of explicit collaboration has shown an improvement for students with disabilities with postsecondary transitions. Booth et al. (2016) stated that collaboration between various agencies could increase educational equity and postsecondary opportunities for students with disabilities.

Booth et al. noted some challenges with the collaboration of school-family-community stakeholders and specifically how special education services are rendered (Booth, Butler, Richardson, Washington, & Henfield, 2016). However, depending on the relationship between educators, the parent, and the type of activity to assist with developing the relationship, the results can lead to positive outcomes in children (Hunter, Elswick, Perkins, Heroux, & Harte, 2017). The strengths and weaknesses of parental and educational collaboration are perceived that if parents are disinterested in their scholar's education, the less likely the home to school connection would be substantial (Hunter et al., 2017).

Many implications with these studies are the lack of knowledge of available resources to dissipate the challenges that come with educational and societal norms (Booth et al., 2016). Continued barriers with school-family-community collaboration are noted with matters of special education, poor perception by school staff and parents, ineffective policies and procedures for specific processes, and other various constraints (Booth et al., 2016; Hunter et al., 2017). Schott Foundation for Public Education (2014) reported that 43% of African American homes consist of single-mother homes as compared to their peers, who represent 12%. These challenges impact the educational outcomes of students with and without disabilities in various settings (Hunter et

al., 2017). Therefore, it is recommended to examine the interdisciplinary connection between school and home.

The exploration of school engagement has demonstrated that families who support school engagement are minimal but necessary (Sheldon & Jung, 2015). The Family Engagement Partnership (FEP) or the Flamboyant Foundation (2018) is an intervention designed to support student success through transformative collaboration, input, and feedback between families, teachers, and school leaders (Sheldon & Jung, 2015). The Flamboyant model has three primary practices (a) build trusting relationships with families, (b) engage families as partners in their students' academic success, and (c) communicate consistently and meaningfully with families (Sheldon & Jung, 2015). Many results of these Flamboyant practices lead to teachers increasing their capacity to communicate with families effectively and to overall development of better outcomes for students and educators (Sheldon & Jung, 2015).

The Flamboyant Foundation (2018) model demonstrated how families who participate and engage in home visits have students who are more likely to attend school regularly, and their local reading assessments are 1.5 times higher than other students (Sheldon & Jung, 2015). Educators who effectively participate ensure best teaching practices, thus ensuring family engagement and student success. Executives, foundation leaders, and researchers mention that educators involved in the Family Education Plan (FEP) tend to earn higher ratings on the teacher evaluation tool and promote a functional, learning, and supportive classroom (Sheldon & Jung, 2015). To promote continued success and high teacher effectiveness, the results of this study suggest that future studies could be considered by evaluating the number of observations conducted by a teacher as it relates to a previous teacher's effective rating and the effects of the FEP intervention.

Parental Involvement

Parental involvement leads to student academic progress. Hines and Holcomb-McCoy (2013) claimed that research and theory suggest parenting is an important determinant of behavior among adolescents in general and young African American males in particular. In many African American families, the mother remains the matriarch and head of the house. According to The Annie E. Casey Foundation (2015), 66% of African American children in the United States reside in single-parent homes. African American males are responsible for assuming other parental responsibilities at home because many African American males reside in single-parent households. African American males raised in single-parent homes are often affected by limited interactions, which can cause a language development discrepancy. Currently, in Washington, D. C., an urban area, the data shows a despairing difference: 49,000 (79.6%) African American children live in single-parent homes, as compared to 3,000 (10.2%) of their non-Hispanic White peers.

Most of the research was surrounding African American males who came from affluent homes where parents and educators were more likely engaged than those African American males raised in poverty and a single-parent household. Skiba et al. (2008) noted that poverty-associated risk factors directly connect to academic and behavioral challenges that contribute to the disadvantage of African American males.

Brooks-Gunn and Markman (2005) stated that students in rural areas or high socioeconomic backgrounds have hundreds, if not thousands, of conversations, which lead to the language discrepancy between African American males and their peers. Marks-Johns (2006) stated that language disparity is a contributing factor in school readiness and African American males' achievement. Darenbourg et al. (2010) supported the idea that parental involvement

promotes positive parental interaction, which enhances student achievement and fosters motivation and engagement in school. Baker and Wright (2017) noted that parents of African American males are encouraged to socialize their children toward academic success. Parents of African American males are faced with significant behavioral issues, educational difficulties, economic difficulties, and underrepresentation of their children in honors programs.

Hines and Holcomb-McCoy (2013) asserted the population of poorly educated African American males is becoming more disconnected from the mainstream. Moreover, African American males are overrepresented in juvenile and special education classes and underrepresented in honors and advanced classes. All of this is likely because many parents of African American males were isolated from a good education. In various frameworks and studies, Baker and Wright (2017) and Hines and Holcomb-McCoy (2013) articulated that parental involvement can have a significant impact on the academic progress of African American males.

Three other common areas related to parental involvement are parent-teacher collaboration and two types of parental involvement: home-based and school-based. First, parent-teacher collaboration is considered a necessary best practice used by school systems all over the world. Bang (2018) stressed that parent-teacher collaboration is an essential factor in education today. The impact of parent-teacher collaboration has a significant outcome on a student's socio-emotional development, academic achievement, school independence, self-esteem and adjustment, and attitude and behavior during the school day. Bang (2018) and Rusnak (2018) further articulated the greatest need is for a parent's cooperation and expressed the need for the parent to feel satisfied with their child's education and teacher's capacity.

Parent-teacher collaboration impacts many facets (e.g., the parent's education level, socioeconomic status, and parent's personal previous experience with education) that can directly affect the communication and efforts between the parent and teacher. Bang (2018) outlined similar barriers surrounding parent-teacher collaboration and interactions as parent-family, children factors, and societal factors. These factors assist educators in how to better develop, communicate, and establish a foundation with parents or families. This level of understanding assists with increasing the teacher's perception of the parent and decreasing the marginalization of parent contributions and their level of trust (Bang, 2018; Rusnak, 2018).

Bang (2018) noted that parent-teacher interactions are often unpredictable, requiring the discernment of appropriate decisions and actions of both parties. Therefore, Bang's study attempted to determine how best to promote parent-teacher collaboration in practice. After conducting individual interviews, the results of the parent-teacher relationship suggested the following as major impacting factors: sensitive parents, concerns about a teacher's disinterest, limited communication, passive parents, an unreasonable parent, and direct reports to administration. The findings of Bang's study suggested that parent-teacher interactions establish an understanding based on facts, individual views, experiences, and clear communication. Otherwise, the lack of such can cause misunderstanding and conflicts between parents and teachers. Further, both parties should respectfully articulate their best intentions and expectations to enhance formal communication and build a relationship with each other. Lastly, Bang (2018) noted how further research could assist in reducing the perceived gap between parents and educators.

Rusnak (2018) addressed the responsibility of educators and how educators should develop structure and processes that promote cooperation, dialogue, and trust among parents as it

relates to their child's education. Rusnak did directly address the inclusiveness of both parties and how it plays a crucial role in parent-teacher collaboration.

Parental involvement over the years has had a profound connection associated with school success and achievement (Hayes, 2011). Parents involved with their students' academics and school adjustment encourages the student to perform well. Hayes (2011) reported that despite the association between parent involvement and school outcomes, parent and school involvement declines between elementary, middle, and high school. Further, parent involvement is determined by the attendance, participation, interactions, and communication with school personnel and the investment of these indicators promote school outcomes (Hayes, 2011).

Consistent communication with the parent, alerting them of their child's strengths and weaknesses, increases the trust factor between the parent and school personnel (Bang, 2018; Hayes, 2011; Rusnak, 2018). Hayes stated a higher level of education for parents leads to higher educational aspirations for students and increases the parents' participation in various events and attendance. From the perspective of home involvement, researchers noted that involvement at home leads to parents attending more school activities and has a substantial effect on academic achievement (Hayes, 2011). Some educators have lower expectations and feel that many parents are not invested in their child's education due to their socioeconomic status. Active parental home involvement requires a consistent level of communication between the parent-child to identify any problematic educational challenges (Hayes, 2011).

Archer-Banks and Behar-Horenstein (2008) expressed the importance of parent involvement and developing a variety of ways to promote their participation, such as setting high expectations for students, creating flexible meeting locations, and establishing homework workshops for parents. Developing these strategies assists in developing a culture that allows

parents to want to increase their parental involvement. When looking at African American parents, it has been recognized that these parents are not as active and participative in their student's academic experiences as their counterparts (Archer-Banks & Behar-Horenstein, 2008). However, with direct support and given strategies to best support their students, African American parents can have a more considerable influence on their child's academic experience.

Archer-Banks and Behar-Horenstein (2008) specifically expressed that African American students in middle-class families whose income and resources (financial, social, and cultural) make the experience more beneficial for the student. Parental involvement, regardless of whether home, school involvement, or collaboration combined, help improve the academic outcomes for their students and assist with the achievement gap among African American and White students (Hayes, 2011). Hayes further spoke of the collaborative efforts required between schools and parents to achieve positive educational outcomes.

According to Mueller (2014), educators must understand the collaboration and opportunities between the parent-school partnership and to further understand the impact between the relationship of IDEA and parent participation. In the development of IDEA, parent and school conflict have been an ultimate challenge for all parties involved. However, Mueller (2014) noted how parents, educators, and the IDEA reauthorization have worked toward lobbying for parental involvement and increased regulations for parents throughout the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process. Despite these improvements, parents are continuously met with challenges not to be participative during an IEP process. Mueller insisted on how hard Congress worked to make parents and educators active members of the IEP through the implementation of state and local mandates. However, barriers that prevent parents from being active may include them being single parents, their work schedules, the lack of educational

interest, or having additional children with more challenging concerns. These barriers could result in parents becoming easily overwhelmed, lacking trust, minimizing communication, and causing various conflicts with school staff that can further lead to challenges with a sound school-to-home relationship (Mueller, 2014). To elevate the challenges with the conflict between educators and parents of students with disabilities, Congress has developed multifaceted approaches for a parent to work through the issues with the school as it relates to servicing their child.

Mueller (2014) listed three IDEA dispute resolution procedures for parental mediation, state complaint procedures, and due process. Many processes deal with egregious parent concerns or issues regarding the district or services provided to their child. Further, many of the parents' concerns were facilitated through a shared understanding of the information provided by both parties (mediation) with using the latter two processes for more complex issues (Mueller, 2014). These conflict resolution strategies are used to empower all parties and allow individuals to be heard and involved with resolving issues at the local schools (Mueller, 2014). Lastly, parent involvement has proven to be a tremendous asset toward the development of many processes as it relates to student success and academic achievement but is armed with a number of barriers and challenges in the same regard.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate how educators promote parent collaboration and involvement through (a) home visits, (b) parent-teacher conferences, (c) Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings, and (d) school-based activities and events to serve urban elementary school African American males diagnosed with learning disabilities. This section on the review of the literature provided an outline on the study by examining various

components, which included parental involvement, educator collaboration, school-family-teacher collaboration, learning disability, critical race theory, home visits, and the academic achievement of African American males. Chapter 3 describes the methods and procedures that will be used to investigate how educators promote parent collaboration and involvement through (a) home visits, (b) parent-teacher conferences, (c) Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings, and (d) school-based activities and events to serve urban elementary school African American male students with learning disabilities.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this study was to investigate how educators promote parent collaboration and involvement through (a) home visits, (b) parent-teacher conferences, (c) Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings, and (d) school-based activities and events. The focus population of the study was urban elementary school African American male students who have been diagnosed with learning disabilities. This study intends to contribute to the existing knowledge and research aimed to serve and educate African American males with learning disabilities. I used a case study analysis to investigate the how and why of a phenomenon as it relates to a real-life situation. Yin (1984, 2017) expressed using an empirical inquiry to investigate a contemporary phenomenon, real-life context, and the use of multiple resources.

The qualitative case study for this dissertation facilitated an exploration of this phenomenon using a variety of data collection sources. The use of a variety of resources ensured that the exploration of the phenomenon was singular (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Using a single explanatory case study assisted with understanding the issues presented throughout the research and intrinsic case studies (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The study collected data through interviews and a focus group for triangulation purposes.

Research Design and Method

For this study, a qualitative case study served as the primary design. This section will describe the background of the case study research, population, how sampling is used, potential data collection analysis, limitations, delimitations, and summary. Case study researchers such as Robert Yin, Sharon Merriam, and Robert Stake, used a variety of techniques to write and organize their research (Yazan, 2015). For this qualitative case study, I used a single explanatory case study; however, I outlined the differences between the various modern case study designs.

Based on its purpose, exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory case studies are all suitable approaches for this study (Yazan, 2015). An explanatory case study informs research surrounding how or why with minimal control over the outcomes, and a descriptive case study aims to analyze various events over a period of time (Yazan, 2015). Yin (2017) stated for each case study, research approaches can be single or multiple case studies where cases are replicated and not sampled. For case designs, there are four different case study strategies (Yin, 2017).

Those four case study research designs are single-case (holistic) design, single-case (embedded) design, multi-case (holistic) design, and multi-case (embedded) design (Yin, 2017). There are several differences between single- and multi-case, holistic, and embedded case studies. For this study, the research utilized a single qualitative case study. The purpose of a single-case study research design is to obtain an in-depth description and analysis of the case (Yazan, 2015). Therefore, the use of a single explanatory case study for this research answered some questions about the experience, meaning, and perspective from the standpoint of the participants (educators and parents of African American male students diagnosed with learning disabilities; Hammarberg, Kirkman, & deLacey, 2016).

For this single explanatory qualitative case study, a variety of sources can be used to collect all necessary data to directly answer this study's research questions (Yazan, 2015). Yazan identified the benefit of the case study methodology, which is flexibility regarding data collection methods. Additionally, documents were reviewed and provided by the parents and educators who participated and are directly connected to the local charter school. Hammarberg, Kirkman, and deLacey (2016) stated qualitative research techniques include small groups discussion, in-depth interviews, private knowledge, essential information, and analysis of texts and documents. Qualitative research methods are used to answer specific questions about

experience and meaning and provide a detailed perspective of the individuals involved in the study (Hammarberg et al., 2016).

One of the aims of this study was to investigate how Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory can be utilized to answer some of the interview questions and to analyze the collaboration and involvement between educators and parents using the microsystem and mesosystem to determine how the participants best served urban African American males with learning disabilities. Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory (1979) evaluated four environmental levels that showed the impact of the development of the central individual. This study investigated the microsystem and mesosystem levels of the student. The microsystem investigates the immediate environment of African American males with learning disabilities, which include their parents, educators, and other stakeholders included on the IEP team. Bronfenbrenner (1979) defined the microsystem as a pattern of roles and interactions experienced by the developing person (African American male with a learning disability). The mesosystem investigated the interactions and connections between the context of the microsystem and the relationships between the family and school experience. For this study, I investigated how the immediate environment closely interacts between the student, their home, and their classroom. Bronfenbrenner's theory can be used to help assist this qualitative research and apply it across various fields (Onwuegbizie, Collins, & Frels, 2013). This theory allowed me to investigate the interconnections and relationships of African American males with learning disabilities and the two systems (micro- and meso-) among parents and educators. The exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem of Bronfenbrenner's theory could be considered for later research. For the purpose of this qualitative case study, these methods assisted me with collecting data to answer specific questions as to how educators promote parent collaboration and involvement through (a) home

visits, (b) parent-teacher conferences, (c) Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings, and (d) school-based activities and events in order to serve urban elementary school African American male students with learning disabilities.

Research Questions

The research case study questions used for this study examined the following:

Q1. How do educators promote parent collaboration and involvement through home visits to serve urban elementary school African American males diagnosed with learning disabilities?

Q2. How do educators promote parent collaboration and involvement through parent-teacher conferences to serve urban elementary school African American males diagnosed with learning disabilities?

Q3. How do educators promote parent collaboration and involvement through IEP meetings to serve urban elementary school African American males diagnosed with learning disabilities?

Q4. How do educators promote parent collaboration and involvement through school-based activities and events to serve urban elementary school African American males diagnosed with learning disabilities?

The qualitative questions focused on the collaboration between educators and parents of African American male students with a learning disability. Additionally, these questions serve as a component to examine the purpose of this research and address how best practices impact collaboration between parents and educators.

Participants of the Study

For this qualitative case study, I collected and disaggregated data to develop outcomes from the population of parents and educators of urban elementary African American male students with learning disabilities. Participants in this study had experience as either educators or parents of African American males with learning disabilities between the ages of 6–13 years old. All participants volunteering to participate in this study were residents of the metropolitan area. The relationship between the identified students, their educators, and their families resulted in the collection of data. Purposeful sampling is used in most case studies to define the characteristics of the case (Creswell, 2015). Idowu (2016) stated a sample, regardless of the number of cases, does not transform to the multiple cases into a macroscopic study. Therefore, a single case study is acceptable and appropriate to establish an objective of the explanatory case study. To obtain data saturation, I interviewed 10 to 12 elementary and middle school educators, and five to six parents served as the focus group for the sample. Many case studies center their study on many subjects or cases versus the control number or experimental group. Collective case studies allowed me to investigate two or more cases via individuals or groups (Yin, 2017). Therefore, despite the variability, this sample allowed me to collect a variety of information for a small number of individuals (Elechi, Piper, & Morris, 2014; Yin, 2017). The location for data collection took place in Washington, D.C. and within local charter school systems with educators. The parents and elementary and middle school teachers were recruited from a network of educators within the local public and charter school system. With the use of effective communication and relationship development, educators and parents will be recruited to participate without coercion.

Materials and Instruments

Methodological triangulation uses a variety of methods, such as interviews and focus groups to determine if the research outcomes are valid (Guion, Diehl, & McDonald, 2001). Baxter and Jack (2008) stated case study research uses a multitude of data sources to enhance data credibility. The data collection sources for this case study were interviews with 10 to 12 elementary school educators and a focus group with five parents (see Appendix A). Yin (2017) outlined six sources of evidence: documents, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observation, and physical artifacts. The IEP documents were used to outline the frequency of parental attendance and consistency of collaboration involved in achieving the ongoing participation of parents within these mandated meetings.

Specific educators who had provided specialized instruction and maintained IEPs were interviewed to speak directly to the impact of the parent's collaboration with the teacher throughout the student's IEP process. For my focus group, participants were those parents of African American males with learning disabilities who have or were currently working directly with elementary school educators to better the academic achievement of their sons.

I obtained some general understanding of the parent's participation and engagement with the school-based team as part of the informed consent with the understanding that the IEP documents are confidential. The development of an IEP and the appropriate documents require a significant amount of collaboration between the local education agency, educators, and parents. Individual Education Plan documents are developed over a student's educational career, which can speak to how educators are proactive and communicative with parents.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

The cluster method did not use specific instruments to measure the metrics of validity and reliability; therefore, the research determined the trustworthiness of the study's credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability. Trustworthiness is established based on identifying patterns among sources of evidence and principles of data collection (Yin, 2017). I created a database to collect case study notes, documents, a range of open-ended answers from participants, and a chain of evidence that links directly to the initial study questions and procedures with a connection to the data collection (see Appendix B).

For this qualitative case study, the organization of the data collection used the coding process. As a significant component of the qualitative case study, Patton (2015) explained the importance of coding and developing manageable classification, or coding themes, and how much they are needed. To discover the issues or concerns from the study, I had to collect data and code, identify any irrelevancies and inconsistencies, and link concerns that directly impacted the collaboration between parents and educators. For this study, I used the process of open and axial coding to investigate comparative analysis and any other overarching themes. Specifically, for this study, I coded each population (parents and educators) separate from each other, which allowed each group's data to independently direct my attention toward the themes, feelings, and thoughts of the specific phenomena within each research question and best practice. Independently coding each group speaks to the credibility and validity of the information and data used to evaluate participants' experiences. When coding respondents or participants, a researcher must be able to develop sound ideas through relationships from the narrative data shared.

For the analysis procedure and case, the protocol contained an overview of the study, which includes the study's questions, objections, assumptions, literature, and previous research (Yin, 2017). Additionally, Yin (2017) provided general analytic strategies and analytic techniques. For data collection, there are three principles of data collection: use multiple sources of evidence, create a case study, and maintain a chain of evidence. The use of multiple sources of evidence increases the trustworthiness of the study. For the interviews and focus group, I used open-ended questions. Like most interviews and focus groups, the development of data is primarily limited to verbal responses.

Morgan (2012) identified that focus groups could produce significant data on a variety of topics; however, groups allow participants to be explicit and highly interactive when sharing their opinion and experience. During this study and focus group, parents were encouraged to be as transparent as possible. I obtained consent and informed participants they were allowed to discontinue their participation at any time. For this case study, I used the focus group as a secondary method of data for triangulation. The flexibility of being able to interview groups of individuals across traditional lines is a direct strength (Morgan, 2012). A researcher must be clear with the ideas and objectives of the focus group (Dilshad & Latif, 2013).

Triangulation involves a variety of data collection, including the use of different methods of observation, focus groups, interviews, and qualitative research (Shenton, 2004). Shenton explains that triangulation uses a variety of data sources to inform the range and production of the organization or individual. Therefore, I interviewed educators and conducted a focus group for parents to examine, evaluate, and discuss their school attendance records, parent conference logs, and current IEP documents, which were produced by the local charter school to answer the research questions; see Appendix B).

To field test this study, a researcher must strategically examine the research questions and study focus as it relates to the study. Conducting a field test provided me with specific corrections and improvements to the questionnaire for the focus groups and the interview questions. Additionally, conducting a field test for this study reduced repetition within the questions and identified any ambiguity and bias (Powers and Knapps, 2010). Shenton (2004) stated questions and observations, such as field-testing, can provide a greater understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the research design. Therefore, I conducted a field-test with two or three participants from the study's population to sample and practice the interview and focus group interview questions. Shenton stated that field-testing allows a researcher to determine any contradictions and false representations.

I provided an opportunity for a professional to review the protocol as the research continued throughout the study. To assist with the authenticity of this study and to ensure meaningful discussions and evaluation, I employed an unrelated, disinterested individual to explore the data responses and analysis (Hail, Hurst, & Camp, 2011). Having an unbiased individual assess and review this study allowed me to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the information and themes presented within the study (Hail et al., 2011). This review of data, responses, and analysis assisted me to better understand the phenomenon (Hail et al., 2011).

According to Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, and Walter (2016), member checking is a technique that is used for qualitative research studies to explore the credibility of the results and participant validation. Member checking may also provide an opportunity for the interviewees, focus group participants, and researchers to discuss other points that may arise, other thematic biases, or other challenges presented during the interviews. For this research, member checks allowed for a high level of transparency between the body of work, participants (parents and

elementary school teachers), and myself in the study. Since I am the data collector and analyst, it is essential that I am unbiased and transparent throughout the study (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016). Therefore, I selected an educator and a parent who assisted with validation, verification, and assessment of the trustworthiness of the research (Birt et al., 2016). I scheduled two fellow researchers to review the dialogue during the interviews, focus group, and data collection to determine whether an accurate representation was developed. If, during data collection, I noticed a pattern in their interview, I could clarify their answer for a more formative understanding (Shenton, 2004).

Boeije (2002) stated that comparison is used as a primary tool to analyze qualitative research with various types of interviews. I gathered and familiarized myself with all data points, coded the interviews, determined themes in each interview, and determined particular patterns with an educator's interview pattern. I reviewed themes and aligned them with data and research questions, then developed a cohesive analysis by naming and defining the themes into a concise document. From gathering and developing data and materials, I was able to compare each piece of data to another part as it was relevant (Boeije, 2002). Boeije further stated that constant comparison directly correlates with purposeful sampling. Of the different steps of the constant comparative analysis procedure, this study used the first type of comparison within a single interview, using open coding, summarizing the core of the interview, and finding consensus on the interpretation of fragments (Boeije, 2002).

The findings and results were cultivated from insights and commonalities in parent and educator responses. I selected open and axial coding because their comparative nature makes summarizing better for interpretation. I am better informed by research about the use of axial and

open coding and how well the two work together; this further allowed open codes to be broken down into other significant categories (Ivankova, 2015).

Open coding is defined as “labeling concept defining categories based on their properties and dimensions” (Khandkar, n.d, p. 7). The data and components of Khandkar’s (n.d.) study were analyzed using qualitative data analysis (QDA), which is similar to grounded theory (Khandkar, n.d.). There were three major parts of QDA that were used to help with data analysis: notice things, collect data, and analyze data (Khandkar, n.d.). Some critical steps for this data collection and analysis were to take detailed notes, record interviews, and gather documents. The first step to QDA is open coding, which breaks down the data into various ideas and concepts that make the data more accessible for me to understand (Khandkar, n.d.). This study, being qualitative, required specific attention to detail and the use of open coding.

From the several categories of open coding, axial coding will further break down open coding’s broader concepts and categories. Allen (2017) shared that in axial coding, links between data are created, emergent, or overarching. Data collection in this study was done through face-to-face interviews. Archival IEP data was used to triangulate the interview and focus group findings. Axial coding is useful in this context because it enhances the theoretical claims and can be used in a variety of settings (Allen, 2017).

Ethical Considerations

It was incumbent upon me to consider the various issues, concerns, and methodological strategies that may have arisen during this process. The relationship between researchers and participants in a qualitative study can raise a variety of ethical concerns, such as respect for privacy; therefore, all individuals had to maintain a sense of honesty throughout all communication during the study (Sanjari, Bahramnezhad, Khoshnava Fomani, Shoghi, &

Cheraghi, 2014). Roberts and Hyatt (2019) stated ethical researchers must accurately and honestly record data, and that researchers must keep in account three significant components when completing qualitative research: anonymity, confidentiality, and informed consent (Sanjari et al., 2014).

Specifically, with this case study, it was imperative to minimize the possibility of intrusion because of the highly sensitive issues and documentation with individuals and stakeholders who work with children with disabilities. Sanjari, Bahramnezhad, Khoshnava Fomani, Shoghi, and Cheraghi (2014) stated that the researcher identifies who has access to the study, its information, and the data. This addresses the ongoing responsibility of the researcher to inform all participants about all the various aspects of the research (Sanjari et al., 2014). Ethical issues related to those participating in this research are considered according to the Human Research and Institutional Review Board at Abilene Christian University. Roberts and Hyatt (2019) stated IRB procedures increase autonomy and respect and safeguard those who are vulnerable.

Additionally, a statement of confidentiality was included as part of the interview to convey an ethical commitment to the privacy of each participant during the development of this study (Kaiser, 2009). As an ethical researcher, it is crucial that the findings from the study, populations, and settings are not generalized (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). To analyze this study, I used a constant comparative method (CCM). This, paired together with theoretical sampling, constitutes the core analysis in a case study as previously developed by Glaser and Strauss (Boeije, 2002; Glaser, 1992).

During the last several years, I have served as a special education teacher. I am currently a compliance inclusion specialist. A compliance inclusion specialist is a dual role in which the

educator is responsible for the articulate implementation of IEP plans, laws, and policies and is also responsible for providing specialized instruction hours in addition to several other responsibilities that best serve those students with disabilities. As it relates to this study, it was important that I was thorough and unbiased as I analyzed, conducted, and coded the interviews and focus group responses.

Assumptions

For this single explanatory qualitative case study, I identified the assumptions of educators who promote parent collaboration and involvement through (a) home visits, (b) parent-teacher conferences, (c) Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings, and (d) school-based activities that serve urban elementary school African American male students diagnosed with learning disabilities. Assumptions regarding a students' home rely on the passive and biased ideologies of educators visiting the home of students during after-school hours. Some educators feel these visits will increase and empower the relationship of all students during the school day. The Flamboyant Foundation (2018) mentioned it assists in helping families understand how to best support their student's learning at home. Another direct line of communication for parents and educators, often underutilized, is parent-teacher conferences.

This statement is presented as an assumption because it is often assumed that parents want to remain informed of the positive and negative statements. This previous statement applies to IEP meetings and school events, although federally mandated participation is required by educators and parents during all parts of IEP meetings and several school events. Furthermore, in the Washington, D.C. area, there are many local public and charter schools that are low performing and struggle with school culture and clear expectations for school and family norms. Many school leaders and families do not have the skill sets to support students with various

disabilities. These components of this study assume that every school in the Washington, D.C. area has experienced low family engagement and low collaborative efforts from educators. For this qualitative case study, I assumed that educators and parents would reflect and answer research and interview questions in an honest manner.

Limitations

For the nature of this qualitative case study, data points, the potential participant's involvement, and the attributes or conditions will be reviewed. The following information is the limitations of this qualitative case study.

- The participant may present an inability to be subjective or provide a significant level of transparency.
- Interviews may not be scientific due to the potential for limited understanding of federal guidelines and basis for disability.
- Participants' blarney or persuasive speech may make the interview perfect, or answers appear rehearsed. These interviews or focus group responses may unintentionally force the educator to question the subject's personality or other personal details.
- Interviews and focus groups can be time-consuming, which could result in inconsistent patterns of behaviors or responses due to the participants' efforts or energy levels.
- This study consists of me potentially making errors that culled from my experience and the participant's responses. Roberts and Hyatt (2019) stated that limitations are usually areas over which a researcher has no control.

- Other limitations are the sample size, methodology constraints, length of the study, and response rate (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019).
- I may encounter some results that align with the parents' inability to open up to the interviewer's questions or have the willingness to respond effectively.
- Parents may have some residual emotional distress from their experience with previous former LEA. The parents' emotional discontinuity may result in heightening or play down statements and results.

Delimitations

Delimitations of this study are the controlled factors (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). The following information is the delimitations for this qualitative case study.

- Only those students and families who are enrolled in a local charter school will be involved in this activity.
- Only those families and educators of African American males with learning disabilities will be observed and interviewed to collect data.
- Various forms of communication, documentation, and interviews are included that will outline collaboration with parents and educators of African American male students with learning disabilities.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate how educators promote parent collaboration and involvement through (a) home visits, (b) parent-teacher conferences, (c) Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings, and (d) school-based activities and events to serve urban elementary school African American males diagnosed with learning disabilities. Having conducted this research, an extracted conclusion should assist in providing an understanding of

the experiences and needs of educators of African American males with learning disabilities (Mayes & Moore, 2016). The target population was the educators and parents of African American males diagnosed with learning disabilities. Educators participated in interviews and parents participated in focus groups to outline their individual experiences with African American males with learning disabilities.

Chapter 3 described the methods and procedures used to investigate the study purpose and research questions. This chapter discussed the research design and methods, population, sampling, qualitative data collection and analysis procedures, ethical considerations, assumptions, limitations, delimitations, and a summary of the chapter.

The purpose of Chapter 4 is to produce a product that analyzes the research problem, research, interviews, and focus group questions. Chapter 4 will begin to address and reveal any reflection from the design, interviews with educators, and the responses from parent focus groups. Chapter 5 will surmise the purpose of the problem, the methodology, data collection and analysis of all information presented, as well as discuss the results, recommendations, and conclusions regarding the current study for future researchers.

Chapter 4: Findings

The purpose of this study was to investigate how educators promote parent collaboration and involvement through (a) home visits, (b) parent-teacher conferences, (c) Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings, and, (d) school-based activities and events in order to serve urban elementary school African American male students with learning disabilities. The research findings presented in this chapter address the following research questions:

Q1. How do educators promote parent collaboration and involvement through home visits to serve urban elementary school African American males diagnosed with learning disabilities?

Q2. How do educators promote parent collaboration and involvement through parent-teacher conferences to serve urban elementary school African American males diagnosed with learning disabilities?

Q3. How do educators promote parent collaboration and involvement through IEP meetings to serve urban elementary school African American males diagnosed with learning disabilities?

Q4. How do educators promote parent collaboration and involvement through school-based activities and events to serve urban elementary school African American males diagnosed with learning disabilities?

This chapter will present the responses from the prepared interview questions (see Appendix A) and report the themes that emerged. To further support the findings of this study, the voices and experiences of the participants are highlighted via direct quotes from their interviews.

Description of the Participants

Educators and parents were provided with a demographic questionnaire form (see Appendix C). The purpose of the demographic questionnaire was to collect general information about the two categories of participants (educators and parents) interviewed. Participants included 14 educators based on their teaching experience and perspectives of six parents of African American males with a specific learning disability.

Educators involved in this study participated in semi-structured interviews. Parents participated in a focus group where they answered similar interview questions regarding how educators promote parental collaboration and involvement and how this serves elementary school African American males with learning disabilities in the urban community. Parental perceptions were recorded and transcribed during the interview.

Additionally, participating families were provided with a narrative description, the number of children, educational attainment, and other imperative information related to this study. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to maintain confidentiality and allow the reader to connect with their story and experience. For this study, I advertised for educators and parents of African American males with learning disabilities in Washington, D.C., to participate in the data collection. None of the participants were both an educator and a parent of an African American male student with a specific learning disability. Many of the participants had volunteered, lived, or taught in Washington, D.C. Washington, D.C. is considered a territory and consists of four quadrants: Northwest (NW), Southwest (SW), Northeast (NE), and Southeast (SE). Some of these quadrants predominantly consist of Black or African American citizens who many earn less than the minimum wage and may have met minimal high school requirements. The community receives minimal resources from Washington, D.C.'s government, unlike other

quadrants in the District of Columbia. Many of the participants were educators, and parents of African American males with learning disabilities were residents of Washington, D.C.

For this study, the demographic questionnaire chart was disaggregated with educators' information. General demographic information from participant responses regarding years of experience for educators is provided in Figure 1. Educators who participated in this study had a range of teaching experience from less than three years to over 20 years. Much of the educators' experiences aligned with this study and further supported the development of the study's themes: progress, engagement, and collaboration. Educator interviewees and focus group parents were coded, and themes emerged independently. Lastly, all family names used in this study are pseudonyms. Pseudonyms are used to represent family names to protect the confidentiality of the participants.

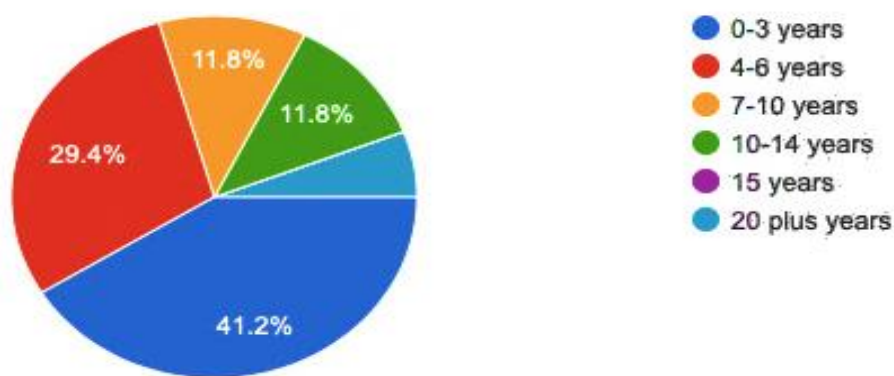


Figure 1. A pie chart illustrating educators' years of experience.

The Franklin Family

The Franklin family consists of a mother, father, and three children (ages 10, 11, and 15). The 10-year-old child is an African American male in the fifth grade. The children attended public school until three years ago when their parents enrolled them in an urban public charter

school. Prior to their enrollment, the children struggled academically (especially the son). Their son was diagnosed with learning, speech, and language disabilities. The family shared that at the previous school, their son often would have several emotional breakdowns. They expressed that the teacher turnover rate was detrimental to their son's education. More specifically, the son's class went weeks and even months without an educator during his first-grade year. Additionally, breakdowns happened when a new educator would meet their son but could not understand him academically because of his paralleling speech impairment. Only one parent participated in the interview; however, both previously expressed the challenges they faced getting their son to make appropriate progress.

The Jones Family

The Jones family consists of a father, mother, and four children. Of the children, the son is 10 and in the fifth grade. The Jones's son was diagnosed with multiple disabilities (MD), meaning the scholar's ability to learn is impacted by more than one disability category, one being specific learning disability (SLD) and the other being attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Initially, the son did take medication to assist with balancing his ADHD; however, they noticed some adverse side effects and later solely relied on behavior interventions to encourage their son to focus. Because of their decision to delay removing him from medication, their son's academics were impacted, and he was performing significantly lower than his peers.

The Henderson Family

The Henderson family's son and the Jones's son were very similar. However, the grandmother raised the son in the Henderson family. Ms. Henderson is currently 80-years-old, and her grandson had recently begun high school. However, he attended the same school from first through eighth grade. The son was also identified as a student with MD, although, he was

dually identified with specific learning and speech and language disorders. His ability to learn was severely impaired by several external factors, speech and language concerns, and other occupational issues, which may include motor skills, cognitive processing, visual or perceptual problems, sensory input and out, and disorganization. These varying speech and language and occupational concerns have necessitated the Henderson's to require speech and occupational therapy as related services.

The Chambers Family

The Chambers family is native to the Washington, D.C. area and school system. The Chambers family dynamics are unique. After the mother relinquished her rights, the Chambers adopted the son. Unknown to them, their son had some phenomenological difficulties and other complicated learning challenges. The Chambers's had their son enrolled in a variety of neighborhood public and charter schools. The results of their son's academic achievement were minimal. The father did not participate in the interview; however, they both shared worries regarding their son's education.

The other families opted not to describe their family dynamic within this narrative description. However, all the families involved in this study and the sons are African American males with specific learning disabilities (SLD). Educators involved in this study all came from vast cultural backgrounds, upbringing, educational attainment, and experience. All shared the commonality of having educated African American males and specifically those with SLD. For this study, a process of emergent thematic coding was employed. Each group of participants was coded by hand individually. Throughout this process, I was able to review the educator interviewees and parent focus group. Once I transcribed all the interviews, the data from each transcription was reviewed twice. After using the tenets of the study to assist with coding,

themes began to emerge, and the second coding was completed using the qualitative data analysis software. To assist with the final round of coding and development of themes, I used NVIVO to create nodes or codes based on the four tenets used for this study. From those nodes, themes emerged and were categorized into themes for home visits, parent-teacher conferences, IEP meetings, and school-related events for educators and how they promote academic success for African American males with learning disabilities. Themes emerged differently for the parents (see Table 1).

Table 1

Emerged Themes for Educator Interviewees and Parent Focus Group Participants

Categories	Emerged Themes for Educators	Emerged Themes for Parent Focus Group
Home Visits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build Relationship/ Communication • Teacher Perceptions • Student Progress/ Lack of Experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Relationship/Communication • Identifying Positive and Negative Factors Affecting Parent's Participation • Parent Expectations for Educators
Parent-Teacher Conferences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive and Negative Factors Affecting Educators' Participation • Importance of Parents' Participation • Parent Influence 	
IEP Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IEP Participation/ Progress Monitoring • Preparation and Participation • The Role and Impact of an Educator 	
School-Related Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parental Attitude 	

The listed themes in Table 1 were developed over several opportunities after reviewing the data points from educator interviews and parental focus groups. In the first observation of the

educators' interviews, parental focus group, and coding, the themes did not emerge as quickly for many research questions. The second coding and analysis worked in favor of the study and revealed themes according to the specific practices, needs, and capacity of home visits, parent-teacher conferences, IEP meetings, and school-related events. Though independent themes emerged for each best practice for each participant, there were some commonalities that emerged across participants and best practices. These commonalities will be identified later in this chapter. Table 2 notes the educators' demographic information, their years of classroom experience, and the number of years teaching students with disabilities.

Table 2

Educators' Demographic and Teaching Experience

Educators	Age	Gender	Years of Classroom Experience	Number of Years Working with SWD
Educator 1	36	Female	13	13
Educator 2	40	Male	10	5
Educator 3	26	Male	3	3
Educator 4	41	Male	17	16
Educator 5	28	Male	2	2
Educator 6	37	Female	3	3
Educator 7	37	Female	8	8
Educator 8	24	Female	5	5
Educator 9	26	Female	6	6
Educator 10	27	Female	7	7
Educator 11	36	Female	14	14
Educator 12	27	Female	5	4
Educator 13	41	Female	20	20
Educator 14	36	Male	16	13

Note: Some demographic information was not included to maintain the

confidentiality of the participants.

In this study, parents participated in the focus group. One general observation made before individually coding their data was that the parents shared many commonalities and often

reflected similar responses. The themes that emerged from this focus group are building relationships and communication, identifying positive and negative factors affecting parent's participation, and parent expectations for educators. Much like the educator participants, parent participants were asked similar semi-structured interview questions, but they were tailored to facilitate the parent focus group (see Appendix B). The themes coded from participating parents emerged from both the educator interviews and the parent focus group.

Collaboration and Involvement Through Home Visits

The first research question addressed within this study investigated how parents promote collaboration and involvement through home visits to serve urban elementary school African American males diagnosed with learning disabilities. To answer this question, educators and parents engaged in a conversation about the challenges and rewards for educators and families participating in home visits. The following subtitles are the themes for this research question and outline the strengths and weaknesses of home visits.

Building relationships and communication. One of the first major indicators and themes that were strongly articulated at the onset of disaggregating the data was *building relationships and communication*. In this study, educators shared their thoughts, feelings, and aspirations for parents as it related to home visits. Some of the ideologies behind the best practices of home visits did vary depending on the educators' teaching experience and practices of their current employer.

Educator 2 shared:

the purpose of home visits...is to find out more about 'the family' outside of school so that we can build a relationship with the parent and to find out what their kids like to do at home, and what they like to do outside of school. (personal communication, October 6, 2019)

From this statement emerges one of the major building blocks for home visits. Building relationships is the purpose and major foundation for schools to conduct home visits. Educators throughout the interview sessions shared that “a willingness to build a relationship with parents [and] children without judgment” promotes accessibility for parents into the school and provides educators an opportunity to “break down barriers by conducting home visits outside the home and school environment” (Educator 5, personal communication, October 6, 2019). They further elaborated that this might “dispel assumptions by educators” (Educator 3, personal communication, October 13, 2019). Other educators shared that home visits provide parents an opportunity to review and share school and home expectations. One educator shared “parent dialogue about their scholar’s needs and current information allows the local education agency (LEA) to put supports in place and provide additional support to ensure a student’s success” (Educator 6, personal communication, October 6, 2019).

Educator 1 mentioned, “educators can determine parental involvement through home visits to increase parent involvement with educators—allowing them to a build strong relationship with the families and teachers” (Personal communication, October 6, 2019). Educator 4 stated, “the use of home visits builds the school culture, which reduces disciplinary issues, truancy, and builds relationship” (Personal communication, October 6, 2019). Educator 11 added that home visits encourage parents to share information and resources. The data collected dually identified that these visits increase and promote higher levels of communication between the school, the educator, and the family. Educators noted home visits encourage open communication between educators and parents, allowing [parents] to ask and answer challenging questions. Lastly, parents noted that home visits and communication promote parental

involvement through increased academic talk. Scholars make rapid progress because of student buy-in and increased parent-teacher engagement.

The following themes were reflections from the parent focus group with building relationships and opening communication that shared common threads between a parent's ability to build relationships and communication between parents and educators. A parent mentioned they previously "would not actively participate in building relationships with educators because the school's culture was not structured the same as their current school, and the school [teacher] only called for behavior issues with their son" (Educator 12, personal communication, October 6, 2019). According to other parents in the focus group, this was the primary reason the parent sought a different school for their sons to attend; other reasons included a lack of instruction, communication, and lack of progress in all areas. Parents further expressed the desire to continue developing their relationship with educators; they would send emails and conduct "pop-up visits" on their sons to check out the school structure. Attending various school events allowed parents to improve their relationships with the schoolteacher and staff members. Parents continued to add that their level of "communication and [attempts] to build a relationship with the school staff is an integral part of parental and teacher collaborations and involvement" (Educator 8, personal communication, October 6, 2019).

Teacher perceptions. Educator 4 and 13 articulated about the strength of home visits by stating:

Home visits are the basis of building a foundation of trust...home visits, though a personal experience for both educators and parents, open [a] dialogue that leads to the educator becoming more sympathetic and understanding [of] the lack of support. [They] cause the prevention of what] could lead to a contentious relationship because of the unknowing factors or issues with the family. (personal communication, October 6, 2019)

Participants reported that their individualized perceptions were some of the reasons why they would not participate in home visits. However, some educators shared reasons for not participating were due to “lack of understanding of the benefits of one-on-one visits,” “confrontational relationships,” implicit biases found with both the educator and parents, and “lack of prioritizing” (Educator 4, personal communication, October 6, 2019). Additionally, lack of prioritizing may be the cause of a variety of family limitations, which includes low parental support, parents who work two or more jobs, and perceptions of neighborhoods. Whereas some positive perceptions included conducting home visits despite how “uncomfortable” and “awkward” they may be. It was expressed that home visits develop an opportunity for “engagement and collaboration for parent and teacher teams” to create “higher hopes and clear expectations for parents, children, and the school” (Educator 3, personal communication, October 6, 2019).

Student progress or lack of experience. For these themes, educators determined that their collaboration with parents did promote success in a variety of ways. One major contributing factor was the increase of “student buy-in,” which becomes “transformative into academic success” (Educator 3, personal communication, October 6, 2019). Educators 4 and 9 indicated they could determine what student success or progress could be by the level of the student’s academic talk with their parents. Educators 2 and 7 noted that student progress could lead to building better relationships with parents and could increase family engagement opportunities. Several educators shared that parents are more likely to engage in a conversation about student progress if there is something positive regarding the student’s academics or behavior.

Some negative responses indicated by educators were student progress, their “independent experience surrounded by a lack of investment,” “parent and student perspective,”

and “teacher buy-in/push back” (Educator 10, personal communication, October 6, 2019). Educators summarized how a lack of parent investment and teacher buy-in or push back does impact home visit participation. Educators 4 and 11 noted parents had a “lackluster disposition to participate in home visits because they did not trust individuals coming into their home” (personal communication, October 6, 2019) regardless of those individuals being from the school. Furthermore, educators noted that most parents indicated they would want some “level of compromise wanting to participate in home visits between administration, educators, and parents” (Educator 6, personal communication, October 6, 2019). Educators 1 and 9 noted parents were still reluctant to “participate with home visits because the parent(s) were private individuals and wanted various components of home and school separated” (Personal communication, October 6, 2019).

Collaboration and Involvement Through Parent-Teacher Conferences

The second research question addressed within this study examined how educators promote parent collaboration and involvement through parent-teacher conferences to serve urban elementary school African American males diagnosed with learning disabilities. To answer this question, educators engaged in a conversation about the challenges and rewards for educators and families participating in parent-teacher conferences. The following themes for this research question outline the strengths and weaknesses for parent-teacher conferences.

Positive and negative factors affecting educators’ participation. After conducting the interviews with various educators from varied backgrounds and teaching thresholds, participants identified a variety of factors, both positive and negative, that impacted their participation during parent-teacher conferences. When educators and parents found themselves involved in parent-teacher conferences as it relates to African American males with learning disabilities,

participants found several positive factors that motivated their involvement. One educator declared, “seeing the impact family engagement could have on a student’s success is probably the biggest motivator” (Educator 8, personal communication, October 6, 2019). Another participant stated that working with families to see student’s success was a tremendous impetus in their decision to participate.

Throughout other interviews, participants shared assisting parents, helping parents to understand the strengths and weaknesses of their student, and seeing scholars making progress were other supportive ways the participants’ engagement was affected. Participants continued to share that positive factors were the ability to “build bonds with families, relationships with students,” build “personal connection with students and families,” and support “building self-confidence” among students and parents (Educator 5, personal communication, October 6, 2019). Participants felt their “persistent proactive actions to participate in parent-teacher conferences came from positive communication” and “encouraging parents to understand their student’s strengths and weaknesses” (Educator 4, personal communication, October 6, 2019). Valuing students and their self-awareness was another motivating factor mentioned. Negative factors discouraging participation in parent-teacher conferences were vast; however, they were familiar to those common throughout urban schools in the Washington, D.C. area.

Educators gave an account of how the “parent’s work schedule” could impact their participation since some parents work two or three jobs and are unable to visit the school for such conferences. Educators 4, 9, 11, and 13 continued to note that “legal issues,” “safety concerns for the students,” “confrontational interactions between parents and teachers,” and other “negative parental perspectives of education” impacted participation (personal communication, October 6, 2019). Through several interactions and the tenants of this study,

educators expressed that parents often had their own literary concerns, language barriers, challenges sustaining healthy relationships, or challenges respecting authority positions. Educator 5 explained that some parents were intimidated by parent-teacher conferences because of other lack of or negative experiences with education.

Finally, for this theme, the disaggregation of participants' data revealed one commonality that occurred all too often: "substance abuse" or "poor life choices." Participants explained how their ability to educate other individuals' children was limited to parent ability to participate in meetings and conduct "well-rounded conversations about their student's strengths and weaknesses" (Educator 12, personal communication, October 6, 2019). They insisted how this could not happen if substance abuse and other poor life family choices impeded the educators from communicating and working with the parents. However, in most cases, students have been assigned other guardians to advocate for their well-being.

Identifying positive and negative factors affecting parent involvement. Parents participating in this focus group reviewed the same four tenants as educators. As it related to home visits and parent-teacher conferences, parent participants shared similar results throughout their focus group. They asserted that many attributes leading to the success of their sons' academics were due to the positive characteristics of home visits and parent-teacher conferences. Results of the home visits and parent-teacher conferences demonstrated strong relationship ties between the special educator and general education teacher, the fruits of which were borne in the form of good progress reports and cohesive, concise IEP meetings.

Nevertheless, some parents mentioned negative factors responsible for why participants would not be proactive in participating in home visits, parent-teacher conferences, or IEP meetings. Those negative factors were "hectic work and school schedule; lack of teacher

continuity, which leads to a lack of instruction; or unstructured school environment” (Henderson parent, personal communication, October 27, 2019). Other factors parent participants shared that affected their willingness to participate in home visits, parent-teacher conferences, or IEP meetings were the level of student progress, initiated communication, and collaboration between themselves and the teachers to understand the strengths and weaknesses of their African American male with a learning disability. The Chambers parent shared:

Teachers letting me know my son’s education is secure, teachers knowing I’m human and things happen, self-checking and to take responsibility for my actions and doing my part for my son’s education, being positive, and engaging and collaborating with teachers who have warm energy, respectful [and] non-hostile environment promotes a tremendous learning environment for me as a parent and [for] my scholar. (Chambers parent, personal communication, October 27, 2019)

Importance of parent’s participation. Educators collectively shared some strong points about why parent’s participation in parent-teacher conferences for African American males with learning disabilities is important. Several educators intensely noted, “parents are the first teacher” and their participation “keeps parents informed in a meaningful way [that] could support their scholar at home” (Educator 2, personal communication, October 6, 2019). Educators further stressed parent participation employed a sense of accountability for the parents and promoted collaboration with educators to develop the student into a global learner that makes connections with various “complex concepts at home and school” (Educator 8, personal communication, October 6, 2019). One participant sharply noted, “their participation in things like parent-teacher conferences indicates that they’re a part of the equation” (Educator 6, personal communication, October 6, 2019).

Others shared the importance of parent participation is needed because it provided the local education agency (LEA) with a perception [of the student] through the parent’s lens and

promoted teamwork between the parent and educator, thus creating belief support. However, one participant felt parent-teacher conferences had no need/value because they communicated so often with the parents that it did not require a specific meeting. Despite this being the case, some participants continued to share that parent-teacher conferences were “valuable resources in the relationship in helping the child succeed” (Educator 11, personal communication, October 6, 2019). They voiced that it would allow a parent to receive “information they need in order to assist their child at home further” (Educator 9, personal communication, October 6, 2019). It is the belief this shows the child that the “parent [is] invested in their education” (Educator 12, personal communication, October 6, 2019).

Parent influence. Educators shared the effectiveness of parent influence and involvement and its impact on African American males with learning disabilities. Educator participants stated, “parent involvement is pretty much one of the biggest keys to success because the more involved a parent is, the more that they can understand how their child is learning” (Educator 2, personal communication, October 6, 2019).

The lack of parent involvement “impacts the student’s ability to perform.” Parents and educators must understand the importance of parental support and the importance of being “their cheerleader” (Educator 4, personal communication, October 6, 2019). Educators continued to share that parental influence impacts “students’ expectations” and how students are “supported inside and outside of the classroom” (Educator 5, personal communication, October 6, 2019). Educators often understood what it takes for parent(s) of a student with or without a disability to be successful; therefore, one participant articulated, “inactive parent(s) promote lazy learners,” which can “impact a student’s confidence” (Educator 4, personal communication, October 6, 2019). Moreover, “when parents can understand what the school dynamic looks like, then they

can support the child more at home—identifying various triggers, behaviors, and student thinking for the school team” (Educator 7, personal communication, October 6, 2019).

The overwhelming result from participants regarding parent influence suggests the importance for parent(s) to be involved in parent-teacher conferences to further promote academic success among urban African American males with learning disabilities. Educators expressed the importance of parent(s) being proactive about understanding a student’s academic [progress], spotting a student’s difficulty in believing in themselves and their self-esteem, and acknowledging the need for empowering students with disabilities. Despite some of the challenges the parent-teacher team may endure, it would indeed behoove parent(s) to understand the magnitude of their support for these students. The data collected revealed the importance for students with varied needs to understand who is in their corner and to value them as students.

Collaboration and Involvement Through IEP Meetings

The third research question addressed within this study revolved around how educators promote parent collaboration and involvement through IEP meetings to serve urban elementary school African American males diagnosed with learning disabilities. To answer this question, educators engaged in a conversation about the challenges and rewards for educators and families participating in IEP meetings. The following subtitles are the themes for this research question and outline the strengths and weaknesses for IEP meetings.

IEP participation and progress monitoring. In addition to the actions of home visits and parent-teacher conferences, there are other ways educator(s) may be participative in their students’ educational careers. Educators acknowledged their participation in and throughout any IEP process requires their full participation. Though educators’ active participation comes mandated by federal laws and guidelines, it was highlighted as a significant form of

collaboration and involvement with parents. For IEP participation, the participants indicated are in two time-frame categories as it relates to their participation in IEP meetings throughout the school year: rarely and often.

During the interviews, educators noted attendance at IEP meeting as fewer than three meetings a year. Of the 14 interviews conducted with participating educators, seven indicated they rarely participated in IEP meetings. This is possible because some LEAs utilize their interventionists as their general education teacher during IEP meetings. Those interventionists must have PK-12 licensure from Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE; the state governing body for education in Washington, D.C.). Other educators noted they participated in IEP meetings several times throughout the school year.

Progress monitoring was quantified into three different categories for the level of progress monitoring teachers provided for urban African American males with learning disabilities: none, weekly, or other. For none, educators indicated two references to this category stating they had “no structure, no rhythm” or they were “less likely to progress monitor those students” because it was a task the participant left for the special educator to conduct; however, these participants had aspirations to be more involved with their progress monitoring in the current school year (Educator 9, personal communication, October 6, 2019). More so, parents spent much time “[following up] on their son’s teacher’s feedback, requests, or directions,” which assisted with addressing their “lack of confidence and trust in the school system” (Educator 9, personal communication, October 6, 2019). These worries further lead to accompanying concerns regarding how well the student was making progress and as it related to their IEP goals and report cards.

Parent participants described spending a tremendous amount of time communicating with educators and teaching teams, addressing behavior issues, and checking on the level of progress their student with a disability was making toward his IEP goals and grade-level content. These focus group participants noted they would “check for understanding” daily to determine or highlight “the students’ data, daily activities, and behaviors” (Educator 5, personal communication, October 6, 2019). Other parent participants jointly stated they would “often attend IEP meetings, which they highlighted as their strongest way to build relationships with the school team.” Parent participants counted IEP meetings occurred “two or three times a year,” depending “on the direct needs of the students” (Jones parent, personal communication, October 6, 2019). Parents noted how effective IEP meetings were and how they lead to their son’s academic success.

Preparation and participation. This theme addresses explicitly how the participants prepared urban African American males with learning disabilities for specialized services or to participate in IEP meetings. Naturally, it is inappropriate for those students younger than middle school age to participate in the meetings and may not have an overall capacity to understand IEP meetings. However, some participants who educate younger African American males with learning disabilities acknowledged they prepared their students with disabilities by “finding out their interests,” “providing scaffolded and differentiated assignments and additional support” and “providing [those] scholars interventions” (Educator 5, personal communication, October 6, 2019). For older students, participants found it was necessary to conduct a “one-on-one conversation” that “educated their students about their disability, empowered them on how to self-advocate for themselves, reminded them how to appropriately utilize their services, and

assist them in understanding the data constructed about them” (Educator 3, personal communication, October 6, 2019).

Educators shared that planning for accommodations and materials created a safe place for learning and building confidence with those students with learning disabilities. Another participant articulated they “do not coach their students to participate in IEP meetings;” however, they will “provide feedback from the student and report to the IEP team about their previous conversation regarding their interests, wants, hopes, and dreams” (Educator 12, personal communication, October 6, 2019). Other participants felt having students participate in these meetings encouraged a growth mindset after previous experiences of being faced with various fixed mindset outcomes.

The role and impact of an educator. This theme addresses three micro areas that recognize how an educator’s role may impact the involvement and collaboration with parents to promote the success of urban African American males with learning disabilities. Those micro areas include communication, relationship, and understanding of student data progress. Educators shared that federal law dictates a parent be notified to participate and attend a meeting within a significant amount of time. Additionally, educators expressed how individuals such as the special education teacher, school administration, and parents must also be in communication about attending an IEP meeting; therefore, the meeting must be of an open and clear nature in order to supply the parent with various opportunities to participate. One educator felt the “educator’s role does impact or foster parent’s participation by encouraging educators and parents to work together which leads both to build[ing] a relationship with [various] stakeholders that encourages collaboration [to] meet the needs of African American males with learning disabilities” (Educator 10, personal communication, October 6, 2019). Educators further

understood how their roles impacted their relationships with the parents of these students when they understood the data in detail and were prepared to discuss a student's progress. This statement ensures the students receive all necessary services and specialized instruction to continue their success further and that parents and teachers continue to collaborate.

Collaboration and Involvement Through School-Based Activities and Events

The fourth research question addressed how educators promote parent collaboration and involvement through school-based activities and events to serve urban elementary school African American males diagnosed with learning disabilities. To answer this question, educators engaged in a conversation about the challenges and rewards for educators and families participating in school-related activities and events. The following subtitles are the themes for this research question and outline the strengths and weaknesses for school-related activities and events.

Parental attitude. Participants concluded how parents' attitudes show up in the students by promoting a "lack of motivation and lack of effort [or] lack of parent modeling of appropriate behavior(s)." Moreover, "a parent's attitude has a negative impact on the scholars' outcome. Whereas, if positive, students may experience greater opportunities and better student outcomes" (Educator 4, personal communication, October 6, 2019). Educators mentioned, "a strong relationship between the parent and child [and respectively educators] was more favorable to getting more successful outcomes" (Educator 7, personal communication, October 6, 2019). Others felt "a parent's attitude depends on their interactions with the school and their teacher's level of open communication" (Educator 5, personal communication, October 6, 2019). One of the negative indicators participants stated was when "parents have a fixed mindset as it relates to school" (Educator 3, personal communication, October 6, 2019). Educators continued by stating if "parents should shift their attitude toward teachers" this could lead to better student success

since participants noted a “correlation between how students perform academically and parent involvement” (Educator 3, personal communication, October 6, 2019). Another factor affecting parental attitudes was the “number of limited events planned for parents to attend and students to participate in” (Educator 11, personal communication, October 6, 2019). This thought is imperative because all stakeholders should have a sense of belonging, and school events surrounded by the interest and commonalities of the student body provide this opportunity, but a narrowly limited amount of occasions automatically limits possibilities for the blooming of stakeholder relationships.

Parent expectations for educators. Many parents interviewed expressed that positive culture and the environment at the school promoted healthy conversations and allowed them to engage freely with educators. The focus groups highlighted how home visits could assist the school’s team with correcting issues with students. Focus group participants also identified that clear expectations came from direct and open communication with educators, and they felt these “clear expectations allow the parent(s) to relax, promote trust among school staff, and watch their student make the needed academic progress” (Franklin parent, personal communication, October 6, 2019). Equally, clear expectations allow families and educators to discuss their sons’ strengths and weaknesses as it relates to various school data. Parents stressed they expected educators to be supportive of them by “providing support to the parent [and] helping the parent understand the details of their student’s data” (Henderson parent, personal communication, October 6, 2019). Parents suggested it was also important for educators to communicate with them regarding their student’s behavior.

Chapter Summary

This case study used interviews with educators and parents to investigate what avenues educators may take to promote parent collaboration and involvement. The methods that might serve urban elementary school African American male students with learning disabilities discussed were (a) home visits, (b) parent-teacher conferences, (c) Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings, and (d) school-based activities and events. All of the participants were either educators or parents who were a part of the public charter school system in Washington, D.C. After the disaggregated data from educator and parent interviews were coded separately, the second coding revealed how educator and parent collaboration and involvement were used in home visits, parent-teacher conferences, IEP meetings, and various school-based activities for urban African American male students with learning disabilities. The findings from educator interviews revealed individual themes for each best practice used to investigate the relationship between educators and parents. Several themes cultivated an understanding that a healthy relationship between school and home is strongly necessary.

Educators indicated that parent involvement was an integral component in the success of urban African American male students with learning disabilities. Concurrently, parents shared a similar belief that the incidence of communication and relationship building between themselves and educators was very significant in promoting healthy relationships and academic outcomes for their families and students with disabilities. Educators identified more factors that impede a cohesive collaboration between themselves and parents than parents did. Parents did not voice similar thoughts as educators about factors challenging their ability to participate in collaborating or being actively involved in their son's education.

After obtaining perceptions from both educators and parents, I concluded that both groups had similar ideologies about how the collaboration and involvement of parents and educators promote the success of African American male students with learning disabilities. According to the educators who participated in this study, they felt that out of the four tenants, home visits, parent-teacher conferences, and IEP meetings were more effective than school-based activities and events. However, parents felt if their sons could receive even more additional support, this would further promote academic success in standards and their IEP goals.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Recommendations, and Implication

The purpose of this study was to investigate how educators promote parent collaboration and involvement through (a) home visits, (b) parent-teacher conferences, (c) Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings, and (d) school-based activities and events to serve urban elementary school African American male students with learning disabilities. This chapter includes a discussion of significant findings as related to the aforementioned literature on how educators promote parent collaboration and involvement to serve urban elementary school African American male students with learning disabilities. Following the study's discussion, the chapter concludes with a discourse on the implications and recommendations that will further build on the components of collaboration and parental involvement as it relates to African American male students with learning disabilities.

This chapter's discussion will expound on previous conversations and determine how future research can help assist in answering the research questions.

Q1. How do educators promote parent collaboration and involvement through home visits to serve urban elementary school African American males diagnosed with learning disabilities?

Q2. How do educators promote parent collaboration and involvement through parent-teacher conferences to serve urban elementary school African American males diagnosed with learning disabilities?

Q3. How do educators promote parent collaboration and involvement through IEP meetings to serve urban elementary school African American males diagnosed with learning disabilities?

Q4. How do educators promote parent collaboration and involvement through school-based activities and events to serve urban elementary school African American males diagnosed with learning disabilities?

Overall, some of the commonalities that emerged between the interviewed educators and the parent focus group addressed how relationships are built and the need for high levels of communication for the success of their son's academic progress. Educators shared that a lot of their time at the beginning of the school year is often spent engaging parents in home visits, conducting "welcome" phone calls, and sending emails to assist with continuing the relationship or establishing the foundations of relationships with new families.

Educators who participated in this study were employed by a public charter school, unlike an alternative schooling opportunity to regular public schools. Educators, in this case, noted that school and grade level teams had developed several opportunities for parents to participate in events or home visits before scheduling a traditional home visit since most families had voiced their disdain for having school visitors in their homes. Parents who participated in the focus group did share their openness for having a teacher conduct a home visit if they had an established relationship. Some parents did state their present hesitation regarding educators visiting because of their previous negative experiences with schools and teachers.

Despite their previous experiences with education, or how schools did or did not properly service their children, parents cared deeply about the level of collaboration, participation, communication, and academic progress of their sons. Both educators and parents appreciated the open door policy their LEA implemented with various forms of communication used to keep parents informed of data, school-related activities, clubs, and other relevant information for parents. Educators shared how communication between home and school was a pillar of one

school's best practices. Parents stressed that communication was vital to them because they would instead handle challenging or difficult situations with their son as soon as possible, instead of letting them undergo similar challenges to what they experienced growing up.

In short, educators and parents evaluated school-related data that pertained to a student's educational profile. Educators shared an understanding of the student's strengths and weaknesses. Additionally, they explored how providing appropriate accommodations and modifications to the grade-level curriculum in a students' IEP goals were essential to making certain that scholars can participate in their least restrictive environment. Parents were provided with equal opportunities to access student data; however, they tended to review it less frequently and often solely during the annual IEP meeting for the student.

Discussion of Findings

Findings from this study came from investigating two different types of participants: educators and parents of urban African American male students with learning disabilities. With these findings between educators and parents, it is essential to understand the study results showed common knowledge, outcomes, and expectations.

Promote Parent Collaboration and Involvement Through Home Visits

Educators within this study encouraged parent collaboration and involvement through home visits, a verdict that agrees with the literature indicating schools that use home visit programs to build relationships improved parental involvement and student achievement (Wright et al., 2018). Participants in this study concluded similar outcomes cited in literature above when it came to the possible challenges of home visits that may impede the parents' ability to participate in home visits for a variety of reasons (i.e., hectic work and school schedule, reluctant and private home life, etc.; Faber, 2016; Wright et al., 2018). All participants, educators, and

parents expressed an understanding and willingness to actively participate in any structured framework that may involve improving their son's abilities in school.

In this study, educators acknowledged collaboration as more of a priority than other participants. Those educators who did not participate in home visits did express how important it was to engage parents as it relates to how well the student was improving. Moreover, throughout the interviews, educators continued to express other outcomes highlighted in the literature regarding student progress academically and behaviorally and how collaboration empowered families in the school environment (Corr et al., 2018). According to the findings between educators and parents, home visits are a significant and effective practice for encouraging both participants to actively engage in building relationships between school and home, being communicative, and monitoring student academic progress, which aligns with Corr et al.'s study. Lastly, results and themes from parents and educator interviews addressed how home visits decreased school behavior concerns, a conclusion which challenges Reynolds' (2010) CRT notion that African American male students have an issue with disciplinary policy and procedure. In this study, home visits have been shown as a practical tool for communication for both schools and families. This has been described throughout my study and the literature review, which noted how home visits are the best practice educators and parents used to fortify relationships between home and school, improve parental involvement, communication, increase student achievement, and monitor behavioral progress. Within my study, conversations and stories were commonly shared between educators and parents that resulted in similar outcomes regarding home visits.

Promote Parent Collaboration and Involvement Through Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent participation in parent-teacher conferences was encouraged to assist in building a school-family relationship. This was highlighted in the literature, which stated relationships between educators and parents lead to positive outcomes in children (Hunter et al., 2017). One significant fact that resulted from the findings was some educators disagreed with having participants being required to participate in the parent-teacher conference as a useful best practice. It should be noted that those educators who have taught over 10 years disagreed and felt participants should participate in parent-teacher conferences. Other similar factors identified in this study aligned with the aforementioned literature, increased the teachers' perceptions, and decreased the marginalization of parent contributions (Bang, 2018; Rusnak, 2018). Findings from this study further aligned with Bang's findings regarding communication and experiences and how these conclusions assist with decreasing the perceived gap between parents and educators.

Rusnak (2018) discussed the inclusiveness that is required between parents and educators, and further findings from this study stress the importance of educators developing systems that promote parent collaboration and involvement as it relates to the success of urban African American male students with learning disabilities. In terms of the parent-teacher conference, this study had an understanding of how educators' participation, communication, and collaboration with parents operate and led to further discussions regarding how educators promote parent involvement and collaboration as often as possible.

Promote Parent Collaboration and Involvement Through IEP Meetings

The school follows the federal laws and policies regarding how educators and parents must participate in IEP meetings for those African American male students with learning

disabilities. During the interviews and focus group, participants were very concise when answering questions about IEP meetings. Parents expressed that attending and participating in these meetings was non-negotiable. The meetings served as a bridge between grade-level content discussed during parent-teacher conferences and the progress being made by the student in their individual IEP goals. Educator participants were noted to utilize the IEP documents more frequently than parents. In the IEP, a list of the student's service hours for specialized instruction, related services, various classroom and state accommodations, and present levels of performance is enclosed, which includes local and state data and areas of concerns or goals. Accurate usage of this document is necessary for the precise implementation of IEPs for those students with disabilities. Though parents participate in IEP meetings, they rarely review the IEP throughout the year. One participant indicated she had to check the number of hours the student was granted for services during the IEP meeting.

Previous literature and federal regulations require mandated participants from the local education agency to act as team members. These members include (a) general education teachers, (b) parents, in some cases, (c) the student, and (e) other related service providers. Though several different types of meetings can occur throughout the school year, the frequency of IEP meetings depends on the severity of the student's disability. Archival IEP documents indicate the participation of both educators and parents. These documents cite their required participation. Apart from this process, parents and educators understand and determine the level of progress monitoring that is required to meet the specific needs of the student. Lastly, the preparation of an IEP meeting is not the responsibility of the general education teacher, aside from providing work samples from the student's area of concern. Special education coordinators and teachers are responsible for scheduling the team meeting with the parent as defined by

law. The representative of the local education agency must be knowledgeable about the general education curriculum, availability of resources, and have knowledge of the student (United States Department of Education, 2017).

Promote Parent Collaboration and Involvement through School-Based Events and Activities

Often schools find it necessary to develop programming that includes requiring or requesting parents to attend events and activities. Events and activities such as sports events and honor roll programs are some of the events that are easier to attend. However, a parent's perception and disposition regarding the school does impact their willingness and openness toward attending various school events and activities outside typical events. Hayes (2011) stated that involvement at home leads to parents attending more school activities, which has a substantial effect on academic achievement.

This study displayed evidence that the more parents participated in school-related events, their scholar's academic and behavioral performance improved. However, events and activities for older students besides sports were few and far between, which minimized their opportunity for their parents to be participative. The lack of opportunities and resources for those students presented a challenge for parents to see their students in other settings outside of school and home. The Flamboyant Foundation (2018) provides a model or intervention designed to support student success through transformative collaboration, input, and provides feedback between families, teachers, and school leaders (Sheldon & Jung, 2015). The Flamboyant model resulted in student success through a variety of tenants, one being transformative collaboration and feedback between families. This practice shares the responsibility of school engagement between schools and families. In order to continue to increase educator and parent involvement and collaboration,

schools should continue to expand parent involvement programming such as developing family grade band groups or parent-teacher organizations.

Interconnection Between Parents and Educators in Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory

For this study, I reviewed the mesosystem of Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory. Mesosystems examine the duality, linkage, patterns of activities, roles, responsibilities, and various interactions between two settings (home and school), and between adults (parents and educators), which may impact the academic progress of African American male students with learning disabilities. Educators and parents were individually interviewed as it relates to how educators impact parent collaboration and involvement in promoting success among those students, as mentioned above. The interviews and review of data showed some direct connections between those who perceived they carried the responsibility for engaging parent involvement and collaboration.

In reviewing the results of the focus group and the interactions between educators and parents, I discovered the themes connected to the mesosystem. More specifically, those themes related to how relationships between educators and families are built, how well communication is conducted, how educators perform progress monitoring, and how well all actors conducted IEP meetings to review school-related data for urban African American male students with learning disabilities. The mesosystem of African American male students with learning disabilities seems to require the support of Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory to ensure appropriate development. This ideology is similar to the idea that a school must provide wraparound services for students with multiple areas of concern. The ecological systems theory determines how children learn and grow based on their interactions, education, and social structures, affecting individual students (Ruppar et al., 2017). Therefore, many of these points

align with some of the constructs of Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory outlined in the study's literature review.

Implications of the Study

The findings of this study have the following implications for how educators should promote parent collaboration and involvement through (a) home visits, (b) parent-teacher conferences, (c) IEP meetings, and (d) school-related events and activities for urban African American male students with learning disabilities. First, educators in local urban schools, whether charter or public school, must exhibit a thorough understanding of the home life of these students to assist educators in forming sound action plans for communication and family engagement between the educators and parents. The findings of this study indicated home visits are a better tenant that yielded better results for building relationships and maintaining communication and are more likely to promote academic success in participating students and families. The second implication of my study is derived from being able to show how educators promote parental collaboration and involvement, thus producing academic success. This is imperative because this study focused on how educators can build capacity surrounding productive parental collaboration and involvement.

Furthermore, it should be noted that not all educators are taking similar steps to build relationships with parents, and some educators are not building relationships with those students with disabilities during the school day either. This is quite a notable oversight in taking the initiative to build a better classroom culture. Lastly, the third implication of this study stems from the number of areas of focus in the body of the work. After several hidden challenges and entangled problems, this last implication could have been avoided within this study with a few tenants as the focal point. Therefore, in the interest of parents, educators, and those students with

disabilities, narrowing the focal point of the study could yield even more transparent data pertaining to how educators encourage parent involvement and collaboration.

Implications for Future Research

Based on the findings of this study, I have concluded there are three implications for future researchers to explore. The first recommendation is to examine how Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory could best serve schools as a framework for students with disabilities in grades PK3 to eighth grade. While I understand the initial purposes of Bronfenbrenner's theory, I conclude that some of its uses and practices do not change simply due to the student's age. For example, even as adults, we each have our own ecological systems that are our support systems. Second, researchers may want to examine other correlating factors that may better serve parent and educator collaboration and involvement to promote further security of academic success for urban African American male students with learning disabilities. Third, there may be additional opportunities for future researchers to examine any component of this study.

Researchers can later examine all the supporting systems of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory as it relates to African American males with learning disabilities in various urban and rural communities.

Reflection

In my career as an educator, I have taught all types of students, subjects, and grade bands. Many of the students have been African American students with various disabilities. These students, as indicated, have been students from various socioeconomic situations, single- and two-parent homes, and adopted. I started out as an aspiring counselor who had just graduated with a Bachelor of Science and no teaching experience. Nineteen years later, I find myself in my fourth year as a doctoral student and writing the reflection for my dissertation is genuinely a task

of disbelief for me. Given the state of education, specifically Black boys and Black men in today's society, I found it crucial that I defeat what others thought was inevitable. I am an example, a leader, and a representation of faces like mine. I want young Black boys to learn that they are capable and have all the potential and abilities to meet any challenge life brings them.

During this process, I have been more conscious of how I was raised and conscientious of how I raise and teach other people's children. This notion has encouraged me to lift my voice, regardless of how uncomfortable it may feel. At the onset of this journey, I would have failed or quit by now. I often fought against negative self-talk, sleep deprivation, and the narrow-mindedness of people's points of view by praying a lot and understanding there is nothing insurmountable for my True and Living God. In this reflection, I imagine how different my life and education experience would have been if I had a Mr. (Dr.) Pierce in my life as a child. I would have been 10 times more active within my community to advocate for young Black faces that resemble me and which would have opened my eyes to a different spectrum of Black culture. Though there were times I was raised in areas similar to the boys identified in this study, most of my education career was not in the blackest of places. This is an internal implicit bias I often deal with because I am a Black male who was raised by White culture—in an academic sense. Being raised in San Antonio is just as 'Black' as Washington, D.C; therefore, I could not further exasperate the narrative of how tough it is being a Black male today and how challenging it is to swallow its difficulties. I finished this task for any family of color, boy of color, or any teacher of boys of color, to let them know that this is possible. I would like them to realize that no challenge or disability should keep them from looking to the hills and seeking to aim high. I finished this for the Black boys in my family—my dad, nephews, uncles, and cousins.

Therefore, the number of hours that were spent completing papers, researching, editing, collecting data, and conducting interviews was well worth the task. My interactions with educators and parents as it related to the tenants and the students mentioned earlier have been highly enlightening. The educators who participated in this study further support the continued narrative that teachers work extremely hard and are underresourced. The actual context of my subject matter is significantly complicated and requires entire communities of individuals to fully tackle the major issues that Black boys face in their academic success and over- and underrepresentation of them in honors or special education programming.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate how educators promote parent collaboration and involvement through (a) home visits, (b) parent-teacher conferences, (c) Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings, and (d) school-based activities and events to serve urban elementary school African American male students with learning disabilities. To examine the relationship between educators and parents, I used a qualitative case study to extrapolate the commonalities between tenants, educators, and parents. Data was collected separately between two central populations: educators and parents. The findings from this study yielded different themes between parents and educators; however, there were some similarities between the two. Both stressed the importance of building relationships between all stakeholders, being strategic about communication, building relationships, and honestly focusing on those African American male students with disabilities to see their potential for greater academic success.

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Appendix A: Educators Interviews and Parent Focus Group Questions

Questions for Parent Focus Group	Questions for Educator Interviews
<p>Home Visits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you describe your involvement at home? • How do your personal circumstances determine your involvement with home visits with educators despite your child's learning ability? • How has your perceptions of the school impacted your ability to participate in the teacher's home visits? <p>Parent/Teacher Conferences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are you motivated to be involved with the educators during parent/teacher conferences throughout the school year? • What are some factors that may keep you from being fully involved in P/T conferences? • How do you expect educators to participate, engage, and support your family unit during P/T conferences? <p>IEP Meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you describe your involvement at school with a student who is identified with learning disability? • How does your collaboration at home or school ensure appropriate academic achievement for African American male students with learning disabilities? • How do parents prepare African American male students diagnosed with SLD to actively participate in school related activities and IEP meeting (if age appropriate)? • How often do you monitor the on-going progress of your student throughout the year? • How often do you participate in IEP meetings? <p>School-based activities/event</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How have you become active during school-based activities/events in collaboration with educators? • Why do you believe it is important to be active in the school-based activities/events? • How does the educator's attitude influence your participation during school-based activities/events? 	<p>Home Visits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you determine if parental involvement at home or at school for African American male students with SLD promote academic success? • How do you ensure their active participation in home visits; specifically, with those AAMWLD? • How has your perceptions of the parent(s) impacted your willingness to participate in home visits? <p>Parent/Teacher Conferences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why is it important to have parents be involved in P/T conferences? • What are some factors that may keep you engaging parents during P/T conferences? • How are you motivated to be involved at school with parents? • How does parental involvement at school have an influence on the success of African American male students diagnosed with SLD? <p>IEP Meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you prepare African American male students diagnosed with SLD to actively participate in school related activities and IEP meeting (if age appropriate)? • How do you believe your role as an educator promotes parent involvement and collaboration to ensure academic progress with AAMWLD during IEP meetings? • How often do you monitor the on-going progress of your student throughout the year? • How often do you participate in IEP meetings? <p>School-based activities/events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the parent's attitude, in terms of parent engagement in school-based activities and events influence participation and academic achievement among African American male students with learning disabilities?

Appendix B: Focus Group and Interview Protocol

Parents: For parents participating in the focus group the following will be determined for participation.

- 1) Parents will receive a letter disclosing time and place for the focus group. The focus group will last about two hours. In this letter, the researcher will confirm that the parent's participation is volunteer bases only, and snacks will be provided at no cost to participants.
- 2) Parents involved in the focus group must have an African American son diagnosed with a learning disability. No documentation will be used to verify the child's race or ability level.
- 3) The researcher will provide the participate copies of their informed consent. I will reassure parent they participation is voluntary, the participate can discontinue their participation at any time, and the participation is low risk.
- 4) Parents will be requested to complete a short demographic details questionnaire including the following:
 - a. Age
 - b. Number of children
- 5) The focus group session will begin with researcher's welcome and instructions for participants
- 6) Researcher will disclose anonymity and confidentiality surrounding the research. The researcher will disclose the focus group will be recorded for data purposes and the privacy of all participates will be maintain and nor shared.
- 7) The researcher will share Focus Group norms. Which are:
 - a. One individual share at a time.
 - b. There are no wrong or right responses.
 - c. We all may not agree with all responses.
 - d. Please provide feedback and ask questions
- 8) Researcher will provide a historical background information about self, and the study.
- 9) Participates will introduce themselves and share thoughts about scholar and their experience.
- 10) Researcher will use the following information to guide the focus group (see Appendix A).
- 11) Researcher will ask these suggested open questions in no particular order to assist the focus group is free, open, and authentic as possible.
- 12) After the conclusion of the discussion, the researcher will ask the group for any further questions related to the study and conversation.
- 13) The researcher will conclude the focus group with appreciation of their participation and a successful conversation.
- 14) The researcher will further remind participants their participation will be anonymous.
- 15) The researcher will collect any information or materials regarding their study or participants participation.

Educators: For educators participating in the interview the following will be determined for participation.

- 1) Educators will receive a letter and the educator will be able to determine whether they would like a face-to-face, in person, or phone interview. The interview will last about sixty to ninety minutes. In this letter, the researcher will confirm that the educator's participation is volunteer bases only, and snacks will be provided at no cost to participants.
- 2) Educators involved in the interview must be an educator of African American male students diagnosed with a learning disability. No documentation will be used to verify the student's race or ability level.
- 3) The researcher will provide the participate copies of their informed consent. I will reassure parent they participation is voluntary, the participate can discontinue their participation at any time, and the participation is low risk.
- 4) Educators will be requested to complete a short demographic details questionnaire including the following:
 - a. Age
 - b. How many years of experience have you taught students with disabilities?
 - c. How many years of experience do you have in education?
- 5) The interview session will begin with researcher's welcome and instructions for participants
- 6) Researcher will disclose anonymity and confidentiality surrounding the research. The researcher will disclose the focus group will be recorded for data purposes and the privacy of all participates will be maintain and nor shared.
- 7) The researcher will share Interview norms. Which are:
 - a. One individual share at a time.
 - b. There are no wrong or right responses.
 - c. We all may not agree with all responses.
 - d. Please provide feedback and ask questions
- 8) Researcher will provide a historical background information about self, and the study.
- 9) Participates will introduce themselves and share thoughts about scholar and their experience.
- 10) Researcher will use the following information to guide the interviews (see Appendix A).
- 11) Researcher will ask these suggested open questions in no particular order to assist the interview being free, open, and authentic as possible.
- 12) After the conclusion of the discussion, the researcher will ask the group for any further questions related to the study and conversation.
- 13) The researcher will conclude the focus group with appreciation of their participation and a successful conversation.
- 14) The researcher will further remind participants their participation will be anonymous.
- 15) The researcher will collect any information or materials regarding their study or participants participation.

Appendix C: Approved IRB Demographic Questionnaire

Research Title: A Qualitative Case Study to Investigate How Educators Promotes Parental Collaboration and Involvement for African-American Elementary males with Learning Disabilities

Researcher Information: xxxxxxxxxxxx
xxxxxxxxxxxx

Demographic Questionnaire

For Parents:

Please complete these questions with refence to **yourself**.

1. Please indicate your relationship to the student. _____
2. Please indicate your age. _____
3. Please provide the age or grade of your student. _____
4. Provide the number of children currently in school. _____

Research Title: A Qualitative Case Study to Investigate How Educators Promotes Parental Collaboration and Involvement for African-American Elementary males with Learning Disabilities

Researcher Information:
xxxxxxxxxxxx
xxxxxxxxxxxx

Demographic Questionnaire

For Educators:

1. Please indicate your relationship to the student. _____
2. Please indicate your age. _____
3. Please indicate your number of years in education. _____
4. Please indicate your number of years teaching students with disabilities. _____

Appendix D: Approved IRB Letter from Abilene Christian University

ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
Educating Students for Christian Service and Leadership Throughout the World
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
320 Hardin Administration Building, ACU Box 29103, Abilene, Texas 79699-9103
325-674-2885



August 2, 2019

Derek Pierce
Department of Education/Graduate Studies
Abilene Christian University

Dear Derek,

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board, I am pleased to inform you that your project titled "A Qualitative Case Study to Investigate How Educators Promotes Parental Collaboration and Involvement for African-American Elementary Males with Learning Disabilities",

was approved by expedited review (Category 6 & 7) on 8/2/2019 (IRB # 19-067). Upon completion of this study, please submit the Inactivation Request Form within 30 days of study completion.

If you wish to make any changes to this study, including but not limited to changes in study personnel, number of participants recruited, changes to the consent form or process, and/or changes in overall methodology, please complete the Study Amendment Request Form.

If any problems develop with the study, including any unanticipated events that may change the risk profile of your study or if there were any unapproved changes in your protocol, please inform the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs and the IRB promptly using the Unanticipated Events/Noncompliance Form.

I wish you well with your work.

Sincerely,

Megan Roth

Megan Roth, Ph.D.
Director of Research and Sponsored Programs