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UPLIFT AND BLAME: MINORITY PARENTS IN THE DISCOURSE  
OF PROFESSIONAL EDUCATORS

Katie L. Mitchell

97 Pages

December 2012

This historical document analysis explores the professional discourse on minority parents in education with attention to portrayal of the minority parenting role and possible reasons for educators' ongoing concern with minority parents.

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This historical document analysis explores the professional discourse on minority parents in education during the Progressive (1900-1914), Post-Civil Rights/ESEA (1960-1974), and NCLB/Accountability Eras (1995-2009). Grounded theory was used to code and analyze 430 articles mentioning parents and/or home life from two peer-reviewed journals of education. Research questions asked which minority parents are of interest to educators in each era, how minority parenting roles are portrayed in the educational discourse, and why minority parents concern educators.

Findings include a focus on immigrant parents in the Progressive Era and on African American and Hispanic parents in the Post-Civil Rights/ESEA and NCLB/Accountability Eras. While NCLB/Accountability Era racial/ethnic minority parents are commonly identified as Hispanic and African American, there is a shift away from racial/ethnic identifiers towards classifying parents by SES and marital status. Nonetheless, low SES and single-parent status are consistently associated with Hispanic and African-American identity, suggesting that race continues to matter in education.

Across the three eras, concern with minority parent behavior and culture is portrayed as a corollary to concern with minority student outcomes. While the discourse pays some attention to structural factors affecting minority student outcomes, its overwhelming concern is with how

educators can change parents. The motives for such a focus are considered in light of questions about 1) the efficacy of school-based parent programs; 2) the complex relationships among parenting style, parental involvement, SES, racial/ethnic identity, and student success; and 3) the benefits educators reap from engaging in a symbolic discourse about minority parent

UPLIFT AND BLAME: MINORITY PARENTS IN THE DISCOURSE  
OF PROFESSIONAL EDUCATORS

KATIE L. MITCHELL

A Thesis Submitted in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Sociology and Anthropology

ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY

2012

UPLIFT AND BLAME: MINORITY PARENTS IN THE DISCOURSE  
OF PROFESSIONAL EDUCATORS

KATIE L. MITCHELL

THESIS APPROVED:

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Date David K. Brown, Chair

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Date Diane Bjorklund

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I would like to thank my committee, Drs. David K. Brown and Diane Bjorklund for their patience, wisdom, and advice.

This thesis is dedicated to the Rio Grande Valley parents who first sparked my interest in this topic.

K. L. M.

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CHAPTER I  
UPLIFT AND BLAME: MINORITY PARENTS IN THE DISCOURSE OF PROFESSIONAL EDUCATORS

Introduction: Minority Parents, Schools, and Student Success

In the years bookending the enactment of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, *parent involvement* has become an educational catch phrase, much like the terms *school accountability* and *achievement gap*. In its broadest sense, parental involvement references parents' education-related interactions with students and schools over the course of their children's education. Current educational professionals and policy-makers promote specific types of parental involvement as necessary conditions for student academic success.

Professionally-endorsed parental involvement practices coincide with parenting styles identified with the white and middle class. Educators promote these practices as critical to the success of today's African American, Hispanic, and low-income students. The endorsement of parental involvement for the improvement of minority student outcomes is based on a number of cultural and causal assumptions, and ultimately originates from a body of research that is inconclusive on the relationship between parental involvement and student academic success.

The current NCLB/Accountability Era emphasis on parents and parenting in education is not unique, nor is educators' tendency to endorse the practices of mainstream parents while calling for cultural and behavior change from those in the minority. This study explores the treatment of minority parents in the professional educational discourse of three eras: the Progressive Era (1900-1914), the Post-Civil Rights/ESEA Era (1960-1974), and the

NCLB/Accountability Era (1995-2009). Historical document analysis of articles from two professional journals of education addressed the following research questions: *1) Which minority parents are most frequently identified in discourse of each era?* and *2) How are minority parents' parenting roles portrayed—both as they are and as educators believe they should be?*

Within the larger picture of school accountability, parents are one of many variables affecting student success. Structural variables, such as residential segregation and school funding clearly affect student outcomes in schooling. Nonetheless, in educational circles, parents' school involvement and home life are portrayed as major obstacles or aids to student outcomes, often to the exclusion of dialogue about other structural impediments to minority student success.

Despite dubious motives for implicating parents in the improvement of student academic outcomes, the parenting practices and home lives of students have been areas of concern for professional educators throughout the past century. A desire to understand this inconsistency motivates the work below. My final research question, *3) Why are minority parents of interest to educators?*, probes possible underlying motivations for educators' fascination for engaging with and changing minority parents.

#### Literature Review: Professional Educators as Discourse-Makers on Parenting and Home Life

The authority vested in educational professionals allows them to create ideology through their discourse (Larson 1977); the pages that follow are an exploration of professional educators' ideologies of parenting, particularly with regard to minority parents. My research synthesizes previous scholarship on parenting, the history of education, and parental

involvement in education. Cultural values regarding parenting and parental involvement have been explored in the context of parenting magazines or manuals (Quirke 2006; Rutherford 2009) and educational policy documents (Nakagawa 2000); I look to articles from professional journals of education to explore the parenting values uplifted by a specific group: educators.

The articles sampled here form part of the professional educational discourse. Like other professional discourses, that of educators legitimizes the authority of its members while drawing on cultural values from the larger mainstream society (Abbott 1988, p. 186). The educator's role is ostensibly to teach, a role one would expect to find highlighted in the journals of the profession. Yet the discourse I examine below covers much more territory than the classroom alone: it is theoretical as well as practical, and supports the assertion that "the social structure and cultural claims of professions are more important than the work professions do" (Abbott 1988, p. 17).

Beyond highlighting pedagogy and best practices in teaching, the professional educational discourse performs multiple functions, one of which is the creation and reproduction of a parenting ideology—i.e., the promotion of a normative parenting role. The parenting role endorsed by educators is similar to that found in parenting manuals and other parenting texts, and is typically associated with white, middle-class, female parents (Hays 1996; Lareau 2000,2003; Marshall 1991; Quirke 2006). The normative parenting role portrayed by educators differs notably from that associated with minority parents in the discourse. While professional educators' portrayal of mainstream parents focuses on ways these parents are an

asset to their children, educators' ideology of the minority parent emphasizes a deficit-based view of the parent and her<sup>1</sup> effect on her child's learning.

These parent-based strands of the educational discourse have little to do with pragmatic educational concerns focused on teaching and the classroom. Yet educators' production of a parenting ideology is highly functional: it fortifies the roles of educators as knowledge-bearing professionals while positioning educators as defenders of broader cultural values (Abbott 1988; Larson 1977; Mannheim 1985). In concerning themselves with parents, professional educators avoid deeper examination of other causes of minority student failure and majority students' success in schools. This conservative tack stabilizes the profession and its discourse while lending educational professionals the "social credit" (Abbott 1988; Larson 1977 p. 23) achieved through appeals to widely-held cultural values.

*Who are the experts? Education's professional discourse-makers.* The vast majority of the articles in the educational discourse are penned by those at the top of education's professional ladder: university professors of education. These are the professionals who drive policy and educational ideology, usually to the exclusion of the teachers and school-level administrators who sustain daily contact with students and families (Abbott 1988). While there are teachers and administrators among the authors of articles in my sample, the incidence of non-university-affiliated authors becomes increasingly rare as the discourse advances from Progressive Era to present.

Even during turn-of-the-century America, when education was cementing itself into a stratified system of teachers, administrators, and professors of education (Herbst 1989), the

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<sup>1</sup> My use of feminine pronouns and possessives throughout this piece reflects my own findings that the vast majority of references to parents in the educational discourse are gender-specific. It is also in line with the practice of Hays (1996) and other scholars of parenting.

pages of the journals explored here tended to be the work of higher-level administrators and university professors. The discourse created by these individuals tends to be systematized and removed from the practical concerns of education's daily operations (Mannheim 1985), creating an ideology of minority parents in education which appears to be "formalized...connotation-free, and 'objective'" (Larson 1977, p. 40). This appearance of objectivity and neutrality gives the discourse great power: its words are the work of respected authorities and bear the weight of 'truth.'

The educational discourse on minority parents has both the potential to push our collective conscience in new directions or to reproduce the status quo in our thinking on minority identity, family life, poverty, and academic success. Throughout the eras studied here, the educational discourse tends to toe the line rather than push the needle. Over the course of the twentieth century, an increasingly university-affiliated list of experts with few ties to the classroom and little interest in challenging larger structures set their sights on the family (rather than the classroom, the educational system, or the inequalities of our larger society) as the missing link in minority student achievement. In doing so, educational professionals create a discourse that protects their professional authority and the institution that justifies their existence while picking a fight with the lowest person on the educational totem pole: the minority parent.

*Social scientists on parental involvement and the NCLB/Accountability Era parent.*

Throughout the discourse, educators point to the home and family life as defining factors in student achievement. Currently, this home-school connection appears in the discourse as an ideology of parental involvement in schools. A basic tenet of parental involvement is that parents have both rights and responsibilities in the education of children (Epstein 1988). Parent

responsibilities include work at home and in the school to help their children learn (Domina 2005).

Parental involvement occupies the attention of a number of social scientists (Domina 2005; Lareau 2000, 2003; MacNeal 1999; Muller 1995; Nakagawa 2000; Useem 1992). Their work clarifies school expectations of parents (Lareau 2000, 2003; Nakagawa 2000) and sheds ethnographic light on the involvement of middle-class parents (Lareau 2000; Reay 1999). These reviewers frequently contrast mainstream parental involvement practices against those of minority (Fields-Smith 2007; Fuller 2007; Valdés 1996) and low-income parents (Fields-Smith 2007; Lareau 2000, 2003; Reay 1999). A general consensus in much of the literature is that white, middle-class parents are successful practitioners of parental involvement. By extension, minority parents are not, and their style of parental involvement is deviant from the norm. Following this line of reasoning, minority parent involvement becomes a major factor in the mainstream-minority achievement gap.

Recent research on parental involvement in education has run the gamut from qualitative (Reay 1999; Useem 1992) to quantitative (Crosnoe 2001; Muller 1995), from sociological (Domina 1999; Lareau 2003, 2000; MacNeal 1999) to persuasive and personal (De Carvalho 2001; Olivos 2006). Amidst educators' enthusiasm for parental involvement, social science research on the relationship between parental involvement and children's academic outcomes has proven surprisingly inconclusive. Quantitative studies find parental involvement associated with both positive (Altschul 2012; Sheldon and Epstein 2005) and negative student outcomes (Ho Sui-Chu and Willms 1996; Muller 1995; Catsambis 1998). A number of studies have found the effects of parental involvement to differ in scale and directionality according to the racial/ethnic identity of the parents and students in question (Ho-Sui Chu and Willms 1996;



Desimone 1999). After reviewing the literature and creating their own models, MacNeal (1999) and Domina (2005) ultimately characterize the relationship between parental involvement and academic outcomes as “tenuous” (Domina 2005, p. 242).

This ambiguity results from the difficulty inherent in conceptualizing and gathering data on parental involvement. The concept contains multiple attributes (Domina 2005), from discussions with children about future aspirations to attendance at parent-teacher conferences. Researchers’ tendency to define parental involvement according to the scope of their study or to measure it in terms of attributes available in a given data set contribute to the contradictory findings in the literature. Other difficulties in studying parental involvement include the problem of isolating the effects of parent involvement from other potential factors affecting student achievement. These factors are numerous, and range from demographic and socioeconomic variables to qualitative differences between classrooms and schools (Baker and Soden 1998).

Parents’ likelihood of being involved, much like student achievement itself, varies according to SES (Lareau 2000, 2003; Reay 1999) and race/ethnicity (Desimone 1999; Terriquez 2009). The collinearity of parental involvement, SES, and student achievement leaves relational threads difficult to disentangle. Do demographic factors like SES lead to greater likelihood of parental involvement, which in turn influences student success? Or is it possible that parental involvement and academic success are not causally related, but rather are both products of SES? Not only are multiple potential influences on student success of concern in analyzing parent involvement; it is also important to keep in mind how data about parental involvement is typically measured and collected. Out of necessity, most researchers rely on self- student- and teacher-reported measures, all of which have significant limitations (Baker and Soden 1998).

Despite its shortcomings, research on parental involvement drives current educational policy. Yet even in accepting parental involvement as potentially beneficial to students, there are further caveats to consider. Within given dimensions of parental involvement (such as PTA participation or discussions with students' teachers), minorities reap fewer benefits than their mainstream counterparts (Desimone 1999; Lareau 2000, 2003; Reay 1999). There are also suggestions that among students from similar backgrounds, parenting and childrearing practices have little effect on student achievement (Catsambis 1998). Finally, despite vast differences in school-level performance from one school to the next, variation in levels of parental involvement between schools tends to be minimal (Ho Sui-Chu and Willms 1996), further suggesting that parent involvement is not as instrumental in student achievement as other school-level factors.

A clear line of causation has yet to be drawn between parental involvement and student success, and even proponents of parental involvement admit that exactly why or how parental involvement leads to academic success is still unclear (Dauber and Epstein 1989; Oyserman, Brickman, and Rhodes 2007). Correlation does not mean causation, and ultimately, the difficulty in isolating the effects of parental involvement from a number of other salient factors in a child's schooling has proven insurmountable. The statistical association quantitative studies find between certain parent activities—such as attending parent meetings and school events—tells us nothing about how parent involvement translates into school success for students (Oyserman et al. 2007).

Annette Lareau's (2000, 2003) qualitative studies illuminate this gray area to some extent, although her answers shed light on aspects of parental involvement that policy-makers seldom publicize. Going beyond the quantitative realm of showing associations between

reported activities and outcomes, Lareau inquires about the content of parent-school interactions and the ways cultural capital shape and influence them. Like Useem (1992), she finds a world where upper-middle class parents, often superior to their children's instructors in terms of socioeconomic and professional status, know how to advocate for second chances, special services, and other academic benefits on their children's behalves, essentially making their children appear more successful, when in reality they have simply had more opportunities to appear successful. Such advocacy work goes *beyond* the parental involvement endorsed by current educational policy, and often irks teachers and administrators (De Carvalho 2001). Furthermore, this type of involvement is largely inaccessible to parents with lesser stores of social, cultural, and economic capital (Lareau 2000, 2003; Lopez 2001; Reay 1999).

An important aspect of Lareau's parental involvement thesis (2000, 2003) is its conditionality. While membership in a privileged social class is characterized by possession of greater levels of capital than those possessed by parents of the lower classes, possession alone is not sufficient for capital to translate into academic benefits for one's children. Lareau's argument hinges on parental *activation* of social, cultural, and economic resources within the school realm. Even within the context of parental action and resource activation, success is not a given: "just as in the economic world, where investments that look certain sometimes fail to yield expected returns, families' activation of cultural resources [does] not guarantee educational success" (Lareau 2000, p. 179). Despite being backed by all of the possible educational resources in the world, some children of well-off parents do not achieve academic excellence.

While Lareau's point is well-taken, on the macro level policy-makers and educators are faced with an educational context where many more well-off students achieve educational

success than those from less privileged backgrounds, a phenomenon that begs for explanation. In this context, despite reasons for doubt, the correlation between parental involvement and academic success has achieved widespread acceptance as a causal relationship in both educational literature and policy.

*Beyond parental involvement: parenting for success in the NCLB/Accountability Era.* Like Lareau (2000, 2003), other authors look beyond parental involvement as a school-based practice, delving into intersections and gaps between home and school culture. Gaps between home and school values tend to correlate with low SES (Useem 1992; Reay 1999) and minority racial/ethnic identity (Fuller 2007; Valdés 1996). These gaps are unsurprising: the parenting style most focused on fostering academic outcomes is that typically attributed to the white middle class (Hays 1996; Lareau 2003). This parenting style has been labeled ‘concerted cultivation’ (Lareau 2003), ‘intensive mothering’ (Hays 1996), or alternately, “parenting as a deliberate undertaking” (Quirke 2006, p. 387), and has many points of congruence with the expectations of educators and schools.

The reasons for the alignment between school expectations and the white, middle class parenting style are both cultural and structural in nature. Intensive mothering is “child-centered, expert-guided, emotionally absorbing, labor-intensive, and financially expensive” (Hays 1996, p. 8). While measures of child-centeredness and expert guidance in parenting may depend on parents’ cultural orientations, there are often concrete obstacles to low-income parents’ adoption of the concerted cultivation/intensive mothering parenting ideology (Hays 1996; Lareau 2003). Issues of income, transportation, and job flexibility prevent low-income parents from enrolling their children in extracurricular activities and specialized academic programs (Lareau 2000, 2003), as well as from visiting their children’s schools and participating

in school-sponsored functions with the same frequency as parents with more flexible jobs, personal transportation, and greater disposable income (Espinoza 1988; Jones 2007; Reay 1999).

Mainstream parents treat childrearing as something to be studied and undertaken with careful attention to details and crucial behaviors (Hays 1996; Quirke 2006). Emphasis is placed on “providing the right kind of stimulation...[and] mak[ing] sure the environment provide[s] constantly expanding opportunities” (Wrigley 1989, p. 67) under the guidance of a mother’s “consistent nurture” (Hays 1996, p. 8). This nurture is emotional and academic in nature, and includes the expectation that mothers will stimulate children’s academic development at home, as well as prioritize the forging of functional home-school relationships with children’s schools and teachers (Hays 1996). In harmony with the parental involvement ideology of schools, mainstream parenting emphasizes child-centered practices and the parent’s role in academic readiness (Hays 1996; Lareau 2003; Marshall 1991; Quirke 2006).

Present-day minority parents are usually identified as Hispanic or African-American (Illinois State Board of Education 2011; Texas Education Agency 2011), and their worldviews are often portrayed as at odds with those of schools in terms of children’s socialization and academic preparation. While many minority racial/ethnic mothers take a “pragmatic approach to parenting” (Johnson 2009, p. 14), schools are increasingly concerned with the academic readiness and parents’ role in fostering it. Many minority (Fuller 2007; Valdés 1996) and low-income parents (Lareau 2000, 2003) parents perceive a division of labor between home and school, with childrearing as a moral process undertaken by parents, and schooling as an academic process for which teachers are primarily responsible (Fuller 2007; Valdés 1996; Lareau 2003). Priorities in parenting are focused on “physical care for children, offering clothing and shelter, teaching the difference between right and wrong, and providing comfort” (Lareau 2003,

p. 139). In general, minority homes evidence parent-centered rather than child-centered practices (Jackson-Newsom, Buchanan, and McDonald 2008; Valdes 1996), and childrearing is viewed as something to be *done* rather than *learned* from experts (Johnson 2009).

### Methodology

Document analysis has previously been used to explore various topics related to the educational discourse on minority parents. They include professional discourse (Mills 1943), social definitions of race (Morning 2008), and parenting ideologies in popular culture (Hays 1996; Marshall 1991; Quirke 2006; Rutherford 2009; Shields and Koster 1989). This study is concerned with the parenting ideologies of educators; unlike previous studies of parenting, the texts explored here originate on the academic, rather than domestic, front. Attention is paid to the explicit and symbolic implications of educational ideology on minority parents. As Abbott notes, “The true use of academic professional knowledge is less practical than symbolic. Academic knowledge legitimizes professional work by clarifying its foundations and tracing them to major cultural values” (1988, p. 54). Although couched in academic language and professional prestige, educators’ messages about minority parents illuminate larger cultural values related to both parenting and education.

This study adds sociological and, importantly, historical perspective to the current discussion on parental involvement by exploring education’s long-standing history of criticizing and attempting to change minority parents. Rather than further illuminating the dimensions of parental involvement, this study explores this present-day paradigm as a continuation of professional educators’ ongoing engagement with minority parenting and home life. This history provides a comparative basis for understanding the dynamics and discourse on parental involvement. The pages that follow discuss how and why educators have discussed minority

parents in the past, and the relationship between past trends, educator views on parenting, and the current promotion of parental involvement for minority student success in education.

There are obvious power differences between parents and the educators and policy makers writing about them in professional journals; these differences grow larger when the parents in question are racial/ethnic minorities or of lower SES than the educational discourse-makers. Regardless of whether minority parents accept their portrayals in the educational discourse, its authors have a unique platform for criticizing parenting practices and defining normative roles to which parents should adhere. I use a systematic historical exploration of the educational discourse as a tool for understanding “relationships between the [educational] institution...and those whom the institution [has] sought to serve, control, or influence” (Sager 1998, p. 59).

While the analysis of periodicals and other written records cannot directly tell us how parents were raising children or how educators were interacting with parents, document analysis can tell us a great deal about dominant cultural ideals of parenting during the periods studied (Rutherford 2009). The cultural ideals of interest here are those educators hold for minority parents. Data was drawn from articles in *The Elementary School Journal* and *Teachers College Record*. Publication of both journals has spanned the time periods of interest in this study: the Progressive Era (1900-1914), the Post-Civil Rights/ESEA Era (1960-1974), and the NCLB/Accountability Era (1995-2009).<sup>2</sup> Unlike previous researchers who analyze parent-themed policy texts or documents specific to parent-school relations, I analyze academic articles on education in general: these include articles on parent-school themes as well as articles with passing reference to parents, family, or home life. Attention to statements from larger texts and

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<sup>2</sup> *The Elementary School Journal* was previously published under the titles *The Elementary School Teacher* (1902-1914), *The Elementary School Teacher and Course of Study* (1901-1902), and *The Course of Study* (1900-1901).

smaller passages alike reveals the taken-for-granted cultural assumptions about minority parents present in the educational discourse as a whole.

The discourse of professional educators is composed of a number of documents from a number of sources; even an analysis such as this, which focuses on academic articles, would ideally draw from a number of journal titles. Nonetheless, time constraints and differences in years of publication of different journals made a “controlled selection” ideal (Elton 2002); an initial review of seven peer-reviewed journals of education<sup>3</sup> assured me that *Teachers College Record* and *The Elementary School Journal* would provide a manageable number of articles for sampling without compromising the quality or type of texts available for analysis.

This study provides historical context to education’s current focus on parental involvement. To capture a timeframe wide enough to show both change and continuity, articles were sampled from three eras in American education. Each spans fourteen years and roughly encompasses a period of American school reform: the Progressive Era (1900-1914), the post-Civil Rights Movement/ESEA Era (1960-1974), and the NCLB/ Accountability Era. Although the definition of a time range for each era is somewhat arbitrary, my intent was to create a window large enough to capture ideological changes and shifts in perspective both within and between eras. While the study of additional time periods could strengthen the reliability of my findings, the choice of three discrete periods of more than a decade each allowed me to pull a significant number of articles and viewpoints from which to “discover relevant categories and the relationships among them” and then “put together categories in new, rather than standard ways” (Strauss and Corbin 1990, p. 49).

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<sup>3</sup> *The Elementary School Journal*, *Teacher’s College Record*, *The Peabody Journal of Education*, *The American Educational Research Journal*, *Harvard Educational Review*, *The Review of Educational Psychology*, and *Review of Educational Research*



Data collection commenced period by period, with all articles suggestive of a potential reference to parents, home, or family in each era examined. This scrutiny was aimed at a deeper understanding of educators' views on minority parents than that available in writing on today's standard parental involvement activities, such as supervision during homework or the importance of attendance at school events. Searching for non-parent-themed articles with potential references to parents was at times difficult. While parent-themed titles were obvious enough ("The Basis for a Parents' Organization" (Mead 1904); "Worldview of One Black Family in a Middle School Inclusion Program: An Ethnographic Study" (Xu 2006)<sup>4</sup>), others were more ambiguous ("Confirmatory Program Evaluation: Applications to Early Childhood Interventions" (Reynolds 2005); "An Educational Development in Georgia" (Parrish 1905)).

When the process of pulling articles from all three periods was complete, I had a sample of 430 articles for coding: 133 from the Progressive Era, 186 from the Post-Civil Rights/ESEA Era, and 111 from the NCLB/Accountability Era. Including articles with general statements about the home and parenting (i.e., "Parents Teach Kindergarten Reading at Home" [Niedermayer 1970]) or references only to white, middle-class families ("Television's Impact upon Middle-Class Family Life" [Appell 1960]) provided a more complete picture of the parent in the educational discourse, be they a member of the minority or the mainstream to which minority parents are compared. A little over half of the articles included specific reference to minority parents,<sup>5</sup> including those considered minority due to racial/ethnic identity, SES, and marital status. Although this study is not quantitative in nature, it is important to note a practical implication of sampling articles on parents and parenting in general as well as those with references to

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<sup>4</sup> All *Teachers College Record* and *Elementary School Journal* articles analyzed as part of the educational discourse for this study are cited in the Primary References section, which begins on page 59 of this document.

<sup>5</sup> Nearly one half of all articles coded (208/431) referenced only mainstream parents or parents in general.

minority parents: the number of references to specific minority groups may look small compared to the total number of articles coded during a given era.

Initial coding was guided by twenty-seven tentative categories. However, in line with grounded theory practice, the most relevant codes, themes, and analytical directions emerged during a reflexive cycle of coding and analysis (Strauss and Corbin 1990). During initial coding I read entire articles and stayed close to the text, re-phrasing and naming excerpts of interest, in a process Charmaz calls “coding incident to incident” (2006, p. 53). A second round of coding, or “focused coding” (Charmaz 2006), was guided by more abstract themes that had emerged during my first reading. It was here that similarities among passages were noted and coded in a standardized way (“parent as at-home teacher,” “school educating parents,” “mainstream parenting,” etc.). During focused coding I also coded articles according to their primary subject matter. These article thematic codes highlighted whether an article focused mainly on issues of parenting and home-school connections, or whether parents were mentioned within the context of an article primarily focused on some other theme. To be sure, the process of coding has subjective elements, as at times articles seem equally focused on two themes, or a given passage was somewhat ambiguous as to whether it referred to parents as incapable or simply not as informed as teachers. However, over the process of making several passes through the data, coding categories were refined. Categories differentiated by few degrees of separation were combined, and criteria for coding in one way as opposed to another were solidified, guaranteeing at very least that similar passages would be coded in the same way.

Revisiting the data once again, I consolidated article thematic codes from each era into three five-year groups. I counted the “demographics” of the articles sampled during each five-year period in that era. How many articles on minorities in education/schools as providers of

social services/curriculum issues/school reform occurred during that five-year period? Which minorities were mentioned, and with which vocabulary: Negro/Black/African-American? In how many different articles did each minority group appear? All codes from articles' text were collapsed into one of ten categories reflecting overarching themes that emerged during coding (parent-teacher relational statements, mainstream parent roles and characteristics, minority parent roles and characteristics, etc). Upon completing this process of classifying and counting, I was left with nine pages of summary information with which to answer questions about minority parents in the educational discourse of the Progressive, Post-Civil Rights/ESEA, and NCLB/Accountability Eras.

In considering this study's findings, it is important to recall its qualitative nature. "Rather than testing the relationships among variables," document analysis and grounded theory research aim to "discover relevant categories and the relationships among them" (Strauss and Corbin 1990, p. 49). Information about the number of articles sampled or the frequency with themes appear is not meant to create statistical statements or inspire in readers a false confidence in numbers (Sager 1998). Behind these numbers are a series of informed decisions made in the coding and analysis process. The true products of this study are not code counts and numerical comparisons, but rather an analysis of recurring themes, context-bound statements about the educational discourse and its treatment of minority parents.

Findings and Analysis: Three Episodes in the Parental Involvement Discourse

*Progressive Era parents and educators: Contextual notes.* Progressive educators' concern with immigrant parents is well-documented in the secondary literature, and can largely be explained in relation to the unprecedented immigration to the United States that defined turn-of-the-twentieth century American life. Despite a general "faith in the nation's capacity for

assimilation” (Higham 1963, p. 20), the immigrant population’s share as a proportion of the overall U.S. population rose steadily through the start of the First World War. This trend, coupled with a youth population of over 40 percent at the turn of the century (Passel 2011) and an increase in compulsory attendance laws (Cremin 1971) brought schools face to face with changing U.S. demographics.

As in the previous century, educators believed that “the public...schools were to become gateways through which all competent Americans would pass on their way from poverty to riches” (Herbst 1989, p. 13), a sentiment which still has credence today. Progressive Era educators set their sights not just on school-aged children, but also on their foreign-born parents. The Progressive belief in the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race and its Protestant, Western European traditions, led Progressives to see their role as one of educating and disciplining the immigrants among them (Higham 1963). These sentiments of cultural and biological righteousness are evident in the educational discourse of the era in references to the evolution of home types (Norton 1900), races (Montgomery 1905), and social classes (Righter 1913).

*An imperfect standard: the educational discourse on mainstream parents in the Progressive Era.* Either explicitly or implicitly, the mainstream graces the educational discourse as the standard to which minority parents are compared; attention to the portrayal of this standard adds perspective to educators’ views on minority parents. As one Progressive Era author notes, “Miss Addams says the wealthy are the standardizing class. What they do is followed, to the extent of their purses, by all the rest of the world, all the way down to the poorest slum-dweller” (Lillie 1904, p. 353).

Despite their wealth and standard-setting behaviors, contradictory views of the mainstream parent predominate in the Progressive Era. These views are part of the educator’s

taken-for-granted cultural knowledge, as they appear in articles on a number of school- (rather than home- ) related themes, from “An Account of the Work of the Cook County and Chicago Normal School from 1883-1899” (Parker 1902), to “Consolidation and Transportation: A Rural Problem” (Probst 1908).

Tradition-bound though they may be in the face of Progressive-era reforms (a theme referenced often in the articles analyzed), mainstream parents are praised as supporters of their children’s education. By and large, these parents “hav[e] faith in broad and progressive education” and “believe that the head, the hand, and the heart are to be educated simultaneously” (Dutton 1902, p. 28). Yet educators emphasize the fact that even the best parents lack vital knowledge about parenting. This exacting undertaking requires “the mother’s continued training of herself” (Putnam 1909, p. 498); even well-to-do parents cannot rely upon instinct and emotion alone. For even “a parent with an absorbing love for children may ruin them by an environment not adapted to their needs” (Parker, Cooke, and Stilwell 1901, p. 12). Parenting is an intellectual task; mothers who fail to realize this are apt to harm their children through “thoughtless, inconsistent, and ignorant methods of procedure” (Putnam 1909, p. 496). Costly errors can be avoided by heeding the counsel of newly-minted progressive experts, whose ranks include educators, psychologists, and members of the child study movement.

Parents’ foremost duties in the Progressive era included providing for the child’s early socialization and moral and civic training. These outcomes are to be accomplished by the wise guidance of a well-trained and invisible parental hand. “Our children must...think clearly, act straightforwardly, and have a chivalrous care for the weak...we are here to see that they balance without strain or stagnation... to lift an unnecessary burden from our children who are necessarily

strained and overburdened by our complex civilization” (Lillie 1904, p. 347). The preferred means for reaching these ends are child-centered and attentive yet permissive:

We must simplify our own and our children's lives. It means that the children must cooperate actively in the work and the life of the home, and that the parents must participate rather than direct... But when [the child's social] life has been most harmonious and most conducive to a proper social spirit, I have observed that some guiding hand has been at the helm, some mother with better insight into her children's wants has directed the social life, although so skillfully that the children have not even suspected it. (Harding 1903, p. 206-7)

Parents who are unable to maintain this delicate balance risk harming their children both emotionally and academically, as evidenced by case studies of ‘subnormal’ children of upper-middle class parents (Hicks 1911; Whipple Lewis 1904) and references to regular students who suffer the consequences of “over-anxiety and pressure in the home” (Cooke 1900, p. 111; also “Children of the First Grade” 1906).

*Immigrant children and educator intervention in the discourse.* The plight of the immigrant child in the Progressive Era runs counter to that of his better-off peers. While mainstream children may suffer from their parents’ anxious oversight and overbearing expectations, the immigrant child suffers from nearly the opposite set of conditions. The world the immigrant youngster is defined by lack of productive experience and basic knowledge.

But for the poorer quarters of the city it is not too much to say that trips to the country and to the city parks are a real necessity. Each year has brought its pathetic revelation in the number of children who have never seen a live robin, who scream in ecstasy at finding a frog, who marvel at the flock of sheep in Washington Park, to whom the first sight of Lake Michigan brings a moment of surprised awe. (Montgomery 1907, p. 116)

Instead of being harmed by “over-stimulat[ion] and overwork” (“Controlling Ideas of the Horace Mann Elementary School 1906, p. 8), immigrant children are more likely to be without adequate adult supervision, a message that underlies the predominant message about the immigrant parent of the era: her failure to properly train her child. In a school serving “Germans, Bohemians, Poles...and a few Irish families” (Montgomery 1907, p. 114), social needs are often more pressing

than academic ones, especially for immigrant children, who are “literally turned into the street” during their non-school hours (Blackwelder 1905, p. 211). Lack of space in the immigrant home makes it difficult to contain the immigrant child’s play and social development within safe domestic bounds. The recurrent theme of immigrant children spending unsupervised, unstructured time in the street is of great concern to the Progressive discourse-makers.

The need of furnishing opportunities for the right kind of companionship and social life demanded attention. Here the field is still so large that it is appalling. The average home is not large enough to admit of children's parties, or even the spontaneous play of neighbors. The street in front, or the few feet of ground called the back yard and shared by the ten or fifteen children of a small tenement-these are the spaces in which children play and form the habits of a lifetime. (Montgomery 1907, p. 116)

This failure to “furnish opportunities” results either in children who “kn[o]w very little about play” (Blackwelder 1905b, p. 434) and therefore lack curiosity and physical vigor, or in youngsters like “a little girl of eight [who] was seen recently in a tenement caring with great intelligence for a sick woman and baby” (Abel 1904, p. 726), must assume adult duties all too early in their lives (“Controlling Ideas of the Horace Mann Elementary School” 1906).

Throughout the Progressive Era, the literature evidences concern for the immigrant child, who is growing up restricted by both material and cultural poverty including an unwholesome slum environment in which to live, and a household characterized by a “lack of good home training” (Blackwelder 1905, p. 211). Ultimately, the Progressive educator sees culture as the catalyst for structural change, which makes nurture and home environment paramount in the quest for uplift. The centrality and assumed malleability of cultural factors rationalize the Progressive educator’s extensive concern with home life. Belief in the powers of nurture over nature and culture over structure fuels the Progressive faith that changing the parent is the best way to influence the child.

Put a boy born of gentle white parents among Indians and he will grow up like an Indian...We in America form a nation with the blood of half the peoples of the world in our veins. We are more crossed than any other nation in the history of the world, and here we meet exactly the

same results that are always seen in a much-crossed race of plants; all the worst as well as all the best qualities of each are brought out in their fullest intensity, and right here is where selective environment counts. (Burbank 1906, p. 458)

*Progressive educators and the assimilation of the immigrant parent.* The parents of concern to Progressive discourse-makers are inevitably women (mothers outnumber fathers ten to one in gender-specific parenting references), and just over half of the mentions of minority parents refer to immigrants (24/47 total references). The deficient home life of the immigrant child is characterized by shortcomings both within and beyond the immigrant parent's realm of control. Poverty compels the immigrant family to "live in dilapidated tenements whose only purpose to the municipality should be for destruction" (Wood 1905, p. 4). Nearly a quarter of the mentions of minority parents in the era simply reference their impoverished state (12/47 total references). Yet immigrant families are also plagued by cultural deficiencies, including the immigrant parental lack of familiarity with American ways, from democracy (Burks 1902) to cooking (Winslow 1915). Although the vast majority of references to immigrants and the poor are made in broad terms, when more specifics are given, Italy is the most frequent home country cited (6 references).

The discourse abounds with benevolent paternalism towards the immigrant mother. She knows little about the aims and possibilities of progressive education, "comprehend[ing] only in a faint way the purpose of the school" (Burks 1902, p. 8). Yet after a series of concerted efforts on the part of teachers, including home visits and parents' meetings, "the significance of the school as a social center [can] gradually...be appreciated" (Burks 1902, p. 8) and capitalized upon by the presumably assimilation-minded parent.

Faith in the immigrant mother's desire and ability to change is an essential component of the Progressive educational mindset. Hence, Jewish and Italians in particular are praised for their practicality and aspirations to upward mobility; they "readily see what is good and free, and will help



them 'on' in life" (Griswold 1909, p. 518; Kent 1904). It is in this spirit of helping immigrant parents better their life chances that the discourse repeatedly justifies the schools' reach into home life (23 references). Rather than representing an interference or overstepping of the school's bounds, this type of action is undertaken for the good of the family, child, and the larger society.

It may not be going too far to say that the chief service of the school is to be found in the opportunities and interests that it offers to the adult population...Such matters as personal cleanliness, the care of the home, the hygiene of cooking, the necessity of economy and of provision for the future, and many of the most significant facts of physiology, have heretofore remained very largely outside the field with which the school was directly concerned. The demands of this community respect to these and many other similar matters is evident. (Burks 1902, p. 24).

It is the duty of the Progressive school to help the immigrant mother "lead a better and more normal home life" (Winslow 1915, p. 32), improving her domestic thrift, cleanliness, and nutritional habits (Montgomery 1907). She must learn to support her children's education by assuring that they have adequate sleep and proper clothing and grooming (Montgomery 1907), attend school regularly and punctually (Woolman 1909), and spend their non-school hours in wholesome home- (rather than street- ) based amusements (Burks 1902). A major form of providing the immigrant mother with this education is through parents' and teachers' organizations, whose topics of study and discussion range from "occupations and amusements outside of school" to "food: school lunches; tea and coffee; candy and soda habit" (Hefferan 1904, p. 241); another lists recent presentations on "The Plays of Children, How to Keep Christmas, Care of Sick Children...[and] Obedience of Children" (Dutton 1902, p. 40)

The impulse to educate parents for the bettering of their parenting skills and home life is a recurring theme in the discourse of the Progressive Era (31 references).

The power of the public schools to assimilate differing races to our own institutions, through the education given to the younger generation, is doubtless one of the most remarkable exhibitions of vitality that the world has ever seen. But, after all, it leaves the older generation still untouched; and the assimilation of the younger can hardly be complete or

certain as long as the homes of the parents remain comparatively unaffected. (Dewey 1902, p. 78)

School programs for adults provide an expert-guided learning forum for immigrants and native-born alike: “in the schoolhouse (the most democratic of all institutions) these people meet on common ground, where all differences of religion, nationality, and social position are obliterated and the teachers discuss with the patrons of the school questions of vital interest concerning the welfare of the children” (Hefferan 1904, p. 241).

Another thrust of the schools’ efforts in educating immigrant parents is to be carried out by the students themselves. In fact, “much of the important work of education will be expressed directly and indirectly in the home” (Wood 1905, p. 2). Family social life will be changed through what the children learn at school: “if the parents can be influenced in the right direction, and habituated to playing games with their children, “an important home pleasure and a new family tie” will be established (Kent 1904, p. 52). Not just leisure time, but nutrition is to be changed through the children’s influence as well. Encouraging students to practice their domestic arts training in the home “present[s] a good object lesson in the way of simple and inexpensive entertainment” for parents, although at times the schools’ expectations “come into open conflict” with the practices and means of the homes into which they are introduced (Kent 1904, p. 49).

*Post-Civil Rights/ESEA Era parents and educators: Contextual notes.* Professional educators’ concern with minorities in the Post-Civil Rights/ESEA Era is not so much brought on by immigration, but rather by migration and the increased visibility of African Americans in mainstream society. The prominence of African Americans in the Post-Civil Rights/ESEA Era discourse is an expected finding, yet one that cannot be attributed to coincidences of geography alone. Major social events including the ‘Great Migration’ (Adelman and Tolnay 2003) and the Civil Rights Movement made the condition

of Negro<sup>6</sup> citizens more visible than it had ever been before and spurred policy change in education and society at large. The *Brown v. The Board of Education* decision, passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the War on Poverty legislation (of which the Elementary and Secondary Education Act [ESEA] was an integral part) radically changed the structure of opportunity available to the country's Negro citizens. These policies also made the continued omission of Negro parents and students from the educational discourse politically implausible.

From their new place of visibility, African American students and parents became a newfound point of concern for educators. As in the Progressive Era, discourse-makers grappled with questions about the origins of the poverty in which much of the country's Negro population was entrenched. Recently-enacted reforms in education and society at large purportedly aimed to level the structural playing field for the country's black and white citizens. Yet some educational policy-makers questioned whether changes and available supports—from school-based healthcare and foodservice—went far enough (Asbell 1966). Others (Clair 1965; Florida State Department of Education 1966) concurred with Moynihan ([1965] 1981) and *The Negro Family* in suggesting that culture and attitudes were the primary obstacles left standing between impoverished African Americans and socioeconomic success.

An unexpected finding detailed below is the prominence of Puerto Rican parents and students in the discourse of the era. Yet a review of external literature reveals that the yearly migration of tens of thousands of Puerto Ricans to the United States mainland in the decades following the Second World War created the first significant wave of newcomers to the continent since the Progressive Era. This influx captured the attention of both public and press, particularly in

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<sup>6</sup> Throughout this paper, I use the racial/ethnic minority labels most commonly employed by writers of each era.

the New York City area where the majority settled (Vélez 2005); a sizable Puerto Rican population was also established in Chicago by the 1960s (Toro-Morn 2001).

Despite low numbers in absolute terms, the prominence of “the Puerto Rican problem” in New York City (Briggs 2002) and Chicago (Fernández 2010)—the home cities of *The Elementary School Journal* and *Teachers College Record*—helps explain the frequency of the group’s mention in the discourse examined for this study. A more comprehensive survey of articles from other prominent journals of education of the era would be useful to lessen the influence of geography and more accurately gauge the place of Puerto Ricans in the educational discourse on minority parents. The coincidence of large Puerto Rican presences in New York and Chicago, along with other factors, such as Puerto Ricans’ foreign tongue and mixed racial roots (Fernandez 2010; Mills, Senior, and Goldsen 1950), combine to make their appearance less of a puzzle in the context of an era when race was at the forefront of the national consciousness.

As in the Progressive Era, concern for the African American or Puerto Rican student was coupled with concern for the parent. This concern depended upon a belief in the cultural, rather than structural, roots of poverty. Compensatory education programs such as the federally-funded project Head Start were prefaced upon the assumption of education as a vehicle for behavior change and social mobility. In relying upon the importance of behavior change at home as well as in the school, these programs codified the importance the parent’s role in education (Jacobs and Pierce-Jones 1969; Katz 1989).

*Parents as educators: The Educational discourse on mainstream parents in the Post-Civil Rights/ESEA Era.* The childrearing expertise of mainstream parents continues to be subordinated to that of educational experts in the discourse of the Post-Civil Rights/ESEA Era, often with examples of “extremely permissive method[s] of rearing children” or other methodological failings such as

unconsciously promoting sibling rivalry (Fellner 1961, p. 257), both of which lead to emotional and academic difficulties for the child. However, the dominance of this theme of parental ineptitude (31 references) is tempered by several other topics which are more flattering to the mainstream parent. Mainstream parents benefit their children by serving as at-home teachers (20 references). An article dedicated to teacher evaluation notes in passing that “parents, too, can influence the rate at which their children learn to read... [by] helping their children build up a useful speaking vocabulary...their efforts have a direct bearing on reading” (Casey 1960, p. 279).

Mainstream parents engage in this type of practice because they value education (17 references). They “want to keep up-to-date on what their children are doing in school” (Savage and Jones 1972, p. 127), and pass on pro-school attitudes in their day-to-day interactions with children. Mainstream parents also transmit advantage and cultural capital to their children (14 references) by enrolling them in magnet programs and elite schools (Dentler 1971) or exposing them to other professional adults (Urell 1960). The conscious and unconscious practices of the mainstream parent prepare mainstream children for success not only in the classroom, but in society as well.

The middle-class home provides a veritable “hidden curriculum” (Galloway and Mickleson 1971, p. 150; Leichter 1974, p. 173) to children. Mainstream parents serve as home-based educators by exposing their children to literacy and books. They pass along advantage through the “middle-class prerogatives of childhood such as music, art, or dancing lessons, concerts, and children’s plays” (Granite 1966, p. 420). Yet the values and attitudes parents foster in the mainstream home are perhaps their most important legacy: aspiration to “moral and the intellectual qualities...are characteristic of the middle-class child” (Hawk 1967, p. 198). “Middle class educational goals require effort and discipline” (Lefevre 1966, p. 8), qualities that the mainstream parents are praised for passing along to their children in the course of daily life (Barber 1961; Getzels 1974).

Like their Progressive Era predecessors, educators of the Post-Civil Rights/ESEA Era often imply that “the middle-class style of life” is the product of “centuries of evolution in the role of the school and the family” (Levine 1967, p. 195), and that the white, middle-class home is the norm that minority families should aspire to. Middle class values admittedly govern the school culture and curriculum (Lewin 1968; White 1965), a source of difficulty for minority students and parents.

*Impoverished home values: The Negro minority in the Post-Civil Rights/ESEA Era.* The Negro parent and child are the primary subjects of the Post-Civil Rights/ESEA discourse on minorities in education (41 references). Preoccupation with the deviant home lives of Negro families and their effects on the academic outcomes of students permeates the discourse, with commentators’ treatment of these new actors ranging from hope and sympathy to censure and contempt. Other minority parents of concern include the Puerto Rican parent (16 references) and non-Puerto Rican Hispanics (10 references), who are referred to as ‘Mexican-Americans’ (Ford 1965), ‘Mexicans’ (Elkins 1969), and ‘Spanish-Americans’ (Potts 1960). As in the previous era, the discourse refers overwhelmingly to mothers; in the Post-Civil Rights/ESEA Era mothers are mentioned nearly four times for each mention of fathers. While the father is discussed more frequently in this era than the previous, it is usually to lament his absence and the detrimental effects “fatherless families” have on minority children (Scarr 1969, p. 237).

The home is the seat of inequality in the Post-Civil Rights/ESEA Era. While larger structural factors influencing the form and function of minority home are alluded to in the discourse, they are quickly submerged under a rhetoric of parent accountability for child outcomes. Like her distant second-place counterpart, the Puerto Rican parent, the Negro parent is subjected to blame and criticism in the educational discourse. Her home in the “Negro ghetto” is “often [a] loci for great hostility...[and] a great numbers of broken and matriarchal families, heavy welfare loads, great

numbers of unemployed, and high crime rates” (Campbell 1966, p. 169); it is a place lacking learning-conducive materials and behaviors: “books [a]re generally not highly regarded” (Braziell and Terrel 1962, p. 353) and “attitudes of passive compliance rather than active exploration” are the norm among children (Anastasi 1961, p. 391).

The Negro family, from which a strong male figure is notably absent, often relies upon a confusing and less-than-optimal array of grandparents and siblings in the rearing of children. This familial disorder combines with damaging surroundings to push the Negro child further from educability and acceptable middle class norms.

From the earliest age the child becomes familiar with asocial and antisocial behavior that profoundly shocks the sensibilities of the mid-class adult. While low-income citizens are often quite loyal to one another and are able to maintain strong ties with friends and relatives, many children are denied the careful supervision of a nuclear family unit with the ability to shelter them from the assaults of the adult world swirling around them. Thus, they are not prepared for further socialization in the self-disciplined activities of the school. (Levine 1967, p. 194)

The limited parent-child relationship that does exist in Negro families is “rigid, and the children...exhibit fear of parental authority” (Hawk 1967, p. 198). Other shortfalls of the parent-child relationship include failure to foster adequate parent-child verbal interactions; “the most obvious limitation of the disadvantaged child is the deficit in visual and verbal stimulation in the home and the community” (Richmond and Norton 1973, p. 278).

The complex interplay between socioeconomic conditions and cultural practices is overlooked in critiques of homes devoid of reading materials, developmentally appropriate playthings, and attentive, domestically-oriented parents. Lack of these and other accoutrements of middle-class home life is often attributed to a failure to value these items and, more importantly, failure to value the opportunities for learning they symbolize. Even when poverty’s effects on the ability to spend greater amounts of money and time on children are considered, the consensus is that parental behavior can—and *should*—overcome these real, but ultimately surmountable, challenges. When parental will is not strong enough, the Negro child suffers emotionally, academically, and socially. If she is female, the Negro child is sexually precocious, and if male:

has specific problems of social identity deriving from a dearth of occupational roles to strive for and of adult models in the culture with whom to interact and identify. The predominantly matriarchal culture leaves the Negro male doubly low in ego strength and self-confidence. (Fowler 1967, p. 79)

*The Negro child: Cycle of poverty, cycle of academic failure.* The discourse implies that environment and indifference create and reproduce a cycle of poverty which impedes Negro children's classroom learning *and* their desire to strive for something more: "repeated failure, constant frustration, unsuitable home conditions, inadequate diet, lack of sleep, and inability to talk out problems took their toll. The children's self-concept and sense of worth were weak and negative" (Crystal 1969, p. 169). Inability to deal with conflict and damaged self-concept are psychosocial problems more grave than poor grades, they are the roots of behaviors sabotaging the Negro's chances at mobility and success. The "cycle of apathy or hostility and illiteracy that springs from poverty" is structural and attitudinal, part of an "impoverishment [that] has been sharpened and embittered by racial discrimination" (Granite 1966, p. 420).

The cycle of poverty presents both a hardship and an opportunity for educators, engendering a need for programs and beneficiaries expanding beyond those traditionally within the reach of the public schools. These programs include preschool and adult education, with beneficiaries both older and younger than the traditional primary and secondary student. "For many, preschool and parent education is required if the crippling effects of cultural deprivation are to be reduced. Somehow the cycle of deprived parents who have deprived children must be broken" (Campbell 1966, p. 169).

The deprivation in which the Negro parent raises her child is both "cultural and economic" (Brazziel and Terrell 1962, p. 352); hence she is often identified by the simple shorthand of her impoverished or disadvantaged state (30 references), or with descriptors such as disadvantaged or culturally deprived. Deprivation, impoverishment, and disadvantage are largely the fate of Negroes



in the Post-Civil Rights/ESEA era discourse. Although the quote from Campbell (1966), above, refers to ‘deprived parents’, we learn elsewhere in the articles that these individuals are actually Negroes from Chicago and Los Angeles. In another article, the term “culturally deprived” is used interchangeably with “lower-class Negro” (Lefevre 1966, p. 8), a trend seen in many of the articles of the era.

Despite admission of the difficulties of raising children in a low-income environment, responsibility for changing her negative circumstances is often placed squarely in the hands—and the attitudes—of the deprived Negro parent. Although the school can be a catalyst for positive change through compensatory education and parent education programs, parent knowledge, behaviors, and beliefs are ultimately the deciding factors in helping minority children succeed. Parents are responsible for ‘adopting the appropriate tactics’ and ‘converting their attitudes into constructive behavior’ on their children’s behalves:

The parents...almost never have an understanding of the basis of the child’s underachievement. Usually they have only been told by teachers, school psychologists, etc., that the child is not living up to his academic potential and assume, naturally, that his lack of effort results from a lack of motivation rather than from disorganization, a sense of hopelessness, and fear of failure. If the parent accepts the situation, many can adopt the appropriate tactics. (Ross 1970, p. 236)

Parents, although desirous of a better education, are in need of professional guidelines and directions if their attitudes are to be converted into constructive behavior. Here again, the responsibility of the educator is to furnish new modes of teaching that incorporate parents and the community into the curriculum and guide parents toward self-betterment and improved family life. (Mackler and Giddings 1964, p. 612)

As in the excerpts above, the discourse of the era reflects the assumption that aided by schools, parents will assimilate to mainstream ways of thinking and childrearing, leading to accompanying changes in life chances for both parent and child. If schools can “change the interests and values of lower-class families sufficiently...the knowledge they need to have for greater equality of opportunity” in education will follow (Barber 1961, p. 112).

*Post-Civil Rights/ESEA Era educators and the re-education of the Negro parent.* Childrearing style is still a focus for schools' education of parents in the Post-Civil Rights/ESEA Era (16 references), but the expected outcomes of such training have narrowed considerably in scope from the Progressive Era. Whereas the earlier discourse links changes in childrearing style to changes in cultural, civic, and academic behaviors, the outcomes of improved parenting in the Post-Civil Rights/ESEA Era *are more strictly school-bound*. Parent education is now justified almost exclusively in terms of children's *academic* success, a trend that is highlighted by the other major thrust in schools' education of parents: training them to be better at-home teachers of their children (12 references).

Parent education programs aimed at helping parents educate their children range in focus from literacy development to homework help to mathematics. What does not vary is the focus on improving student outcomes through minority parent behavior change: in one instance "the project-planner felt that the parents' interests and desires...could be organized and directed into action that would raise the children's level of achievement" (Sitts and Sitts 1963, p. 31); in another, parents are taught to "encourage school-type interests in their children at no cost" (Wolman 1966, p. 405). Not only are minority parents failing to raise their children properly and socialize them to the value of education, they are failing to send their children to school with adequate exposure to literacy, language, and other requisite academic skills. Parents can promote such skills by encouraging their child's interest in learning activities, supervising and helping with homework (Bond and Smith 1965; Goldstein 1960), and even by taking on school-scripted teaching roles in the home (Brazziel and Terrell 1962; Sitts and Sitts 1963).

Those who attempt other routes toward change in educational outcomes are criticized. Mobilization to openly challenge inequality in schools earns Negro parents the labels of 'aggressive',

'militant' (Holland 1972; Lewin 1968), 'problematic', 'strident' (LaNoue 1968), and 'ethnocentric' (Ford 1965). These criticisms come despite allusions to white parents exerting similar types of pressure on schools, albeit in ways which are more covert, and ultimately, more successful (Areen and Jencks 1971). By the end of the Post-Civil Rights/ESEA Era, admission of this and other double standards faced by minority parents is increasing. Nonetheless, the discourse's dominant voice tells of minority parents' shortcomings and ways schools can intervene in family life on the child's behalf.

*NCLB/Accountability Era parents and educators: Contextual notes.* The education and social science literature of the current era pays greater attention to the diversity of parenting behaviors within racial/ethnic groups, in part due to an increased focus on the role of class in home lifestyle and academic outcomes. While this may be a positive step towards the reflection of intra-group diversity and away from the blanket statements of previous eras, it leads to a new territory of muddled references in which racial/ethnic and class terms are often used imprecisely. As the brunt of the discourse's research and professional claim-making is still tied to the discussion of poor racial/ethnic minorities, it is difficult to conclude that this new vocabulary of class over race/ethnicity signifies any fundamental shift from previous eras.

Recent book-length ethnographies probe the interstices of home and school life, portraying home culture as more closely linked to class (Lareau 2000, 2003; Valdes 1996) and immigrant status (Valenzuela 1999) than to race/ethnicity alone. Nonetheless, despite evidence that race and SES differ in significant ways (Furstenburg 2007), society and scholars alike tend to blur the lines between the two (Gans 1995; Katz 1989; Marks 1991), treating minority status as synonymous with poverty and vice versa. In education, racial/ethnic minority status is synonymous with risk of academic failure (Lubeck 1995).

For social scientists and educators concerned specifically with minority parents in education, parental involvement is the theme of the day. Most parental involvement literature portrays mainstream, academically-oriented parenting practices as the source of white, middle-class student success in school while depicting minority parents' practices as negative influences on their children's academic prospects (Fine 1995; Valenzuela 1999). Despite holes in the proposed causal relationship between parental involvement in schools and mainstream student success (Baker and Soden 1998; Desimone 1999; Lareau 2000, 2003; Reay 1999), solution-oriented authors recommend policies and programs aimed at re-making minority parents' involvement practices in the image of their majority counterparts. However, as noted by Fine (1995), there are usually large logical gaps between the types of parental involvement promoted and supposed student benefits: "to the extent that parent involvement is noted as 'essential' to school improvement, the strategy is typically one in which parents are trained as homework monitors or 'better parents'" (86).

The nebulous relationships among school achievement, parental involvement, race, and class make whatever causal relation there may be between parental involvement and student success stubbornly elusive. In the following pages I am less concerned with parental involvement as a *practice* than as an educational *ideology*. Specifically, within the context of over a century of discourse on minority parents, how does today's parental involvement ideology fit into the ongoing professional discourse on parenting, home life, and minority student success?

*Setting the parental involvement standard: the educational discourse on mainstream parents in the NCLB/Accountability Era.* By the NCLB/Accountability Era, the professional educational discourse no longer portrays the mainstream parent as inferior to child

development professionals. Rather than being described as well-meaning but uninformed, the mainstream parent is now a model to be emulated, a collection of normative, academically-oriented childrearing roles. The majority of these roles coincide with educational experts' advice for optimal child development and learning. The mainstream parent's assumption of such roles stems from an innate understanding of the importance of education to her child's future success. All of the mainstream parent's future- and academically-oriented roles can be subsumed under the rubric of parental involvement, a practice which is held up in the discourse as a way to "improve[e] student commitment to school work and the academic outcomes that follow" (Becker, Nakagawa, and Corwin 1996, p. 511), and similarly, as "a major pathway to children's school success" (Kessler-Sklar and Baker 2000, p. 101; see also Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler 1995; Smrekar 1996).

According to the NCLB/Accountability Era discourse, schooling is a central aspect of mainstream home life. The young child's transition to school is lauded as "a highly valued and celebratory event in the life of every child and family" (Ramey and Ramey 1988, p. 293), and the mainstream parent actively seeks out ways "to be involved more effectively in their children's school learning" (Hoover-Dempsey and Bassler 1995, p. 435). As in previous eras, the parent in question is invariably a mother: mothers are referenced ten times and fathers zero in this era<sup>7</sup>. The mother's desire to be a part of her child's academic life extends beyond looking for ways to be more involved in school; mainstream mothers also orient their homes and childrearing practices toward the promotion of their children's academic stimulation and growth (Ramey and Ramey 1988). This creation of home-school continuity evidences an understanding of a basic

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<sup>7</sup> Absolute numbers of nearly all references are lower in the NCLB/Accountability Era than in other eras; this is likely the result of an increasingly disaggregated and scientific treatment of themes in articles of the era. For example, authors were less likely to make passing mention of home life, parenting, etc. unless these factors were explicitly treated as variables in their article/study.

tenet of the NCLB/Accountability Era discourse: “that learning begins at birth and occurs in all settings, not just within the traditional classroom” (Finn-Stevenson and Stern 1997, p. 53).

In concrete terms, this means that the mainstream parent engages her child verbally and exposes him to reading (11 references), “creating a supportive home literacy environment” (Taylor and Pearson 2004, p. 169) that is conducive to later school success. As in the previous era, the mainstream mother continues to function as an at-home teacher for her child (8 references). This role usually manifests itself in helping with homework, but also includes orchestrating “learning activities in the home” (Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, and Sandler 2005, p. 131). It is implied that mainstream parents assume their academically-oriented roles naturally. Conversely, in the case of minority parents, discourse-makers advocate for workshops and programs that will explicitly teach these individuals to orient their homes toward academics and school success.

*New labels, same impoverished values: race without racism and the NCLB/Accountability Era minority parent.* In the NCLB/Accountability Era the knowledge and practices of minority parents, unlike those of their mainstream counterparts, *are* portrayed as inferior to those of the experts. In comparison to the mainstream norm-setters, minority parents tend not to organize their home lives in ways that maximize their children’s educational readiness. In failing to consciously orient their childrearing and home lives toward academic values, much as in the previous eras, the discourse implies that minority parents are harming their children and hampering their prospects for school success.

While occasionally referred to as Hispanic (9 references) or African American (5 references), minority parents in the NCLB/Accountability Era are most often identified according to their socioeconomic and marital status. Low-income parents (23 references) and single

mothers (15 references) are the new NCLB/Accountability Era faces of the minority family<sup>8</sup>. The discourse suggests that just like their racial/ethnically identified counterparts of previous eras, low-income and single parents are not involved in their children's education in mainstream ways and that because of this, their children are failing to live up to their academic potential.

In its greater reliance on SES and marital status to identify parents of concern, the professional educational discourse of the NCLB/Accountability Era evidences a turn toward what Marks (1991) has termed "race without racism" (452), a covert, yet still-divisive way of speaking about racial difference by members of the mainstream. Despite a discourse-wide shift away from the use of racial/ethnic labels, a careful reading of articles referencing poor and single parents reveals that many subjects are not only low-income or single parents, they are racial/ethnic minorities as well. This trend of veiled references parallels the findings of Luker (1997) in the years preceding the NCLB/Accountability Era. Her work on America's so-called teenage pregnancy epidemic documents the ways the race-neutral label 'teen mother' has been employed to create and inflate concern around the subject of *black* teenage moms. A similar phenomenon appears to be underway in the current educational discourse's use of the labels low-income and single parent. Despite at least one passing reference to subjects' racial/ethnic identities, most articles from the current era employ labels based on marital and SES status for repeated use. Hence, a subject who might have been described article-wide as a Negro matriarch in the Post-Civil Rights/ESEA Era is simply a low-income, single parent in the current, although the imagery and connotations around her identity and parenting practices have changed little over time.

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<sup>8</sup> Insofar as the minority family is defined by its non-mainstream qualities, in the current era, poor whites could also be considered part of the minority. Evidence of professional educators' tendency to see poor whites as part of the minority in previous eras is evidenced by occasional Post-Civil Rights/ESEA Era references to Appalachian (Granite 1966) or 'hill' whites (Ford 1965).

While more authors make mention of middle-class (and by extension, less troubled) minority families in the NCLB/Accountability Era than in previous periods, there are no primary studies or ethnographic portraits of middle class minority family life in the NCLB/Accountability Era discourse. The peculiarities of the sole article—a literature review—on “better off” African-American families in the NCLB/Accountability Era is discussed at length below (Gosa and Alexander 2007, p. 285). In fact, most acknowledgment of the existence of a racial/ethnic minority middle class in the discourse is tacit, as in references to the “mostly white middle class” (Skinner, Bryant, Coffman, and Campbell 1998; also Finn-Stevenson and Stern 1997; Griffith 1998; Oakes, Wells, Jones, and Datnow 1997). In similar fashion, while readers are frequently assured that poverty, not race, is the reason for professional educators’ concern with the families who appear as subjects in a given study, those poor and single-parent families portrayed in the discourse are overwhelmingly black and brown rather than white. With a dearth of concrete examples of middle-class black and Hispanic families in the present discourse, it is difficult to discern what has caused certain middle-class racial/ethnic minority families to succeed. Is it truly childrearing style and parental involvement as the educational discourse would have us believe, or have there been other key factors differentiating the lives and opportunity structures of these middle class minorities from their less-affluent counterparts?

Anyon’s (1995) NCLB/Accountability Era school reform study is illustrative of the muddled treatment of race and ethnicity in the present discourse. The author begins by asserting the prominence of SES, rather than race, in the predicament of a failing school, whose enrollment area has experienced decades of out-migration by affluent African-American families. Little more is said of the plight of these or any other such families in this or any other



article from the period. In failing to portray the educational experiences of middle-class racial/ethnic minority families during the NCLB/Accountability Era, the discourse implies that what distinguishes upper- and middle-class minorities from their still-impooverished counterparts is a simple question of class, which in turn relates to home culture and home values.

While those families who have made the climb to middle class status are no longer of enough concern to be the subject of potentially illustrative primary study and discussion, those who have not are apparently still clinging to the poverty of culture with which they were associated in the Post-Civil Rights/ESEA Era. Minority students left in the school's neighborhood area are nearly three-quarters African-American and a quarter Hispanic; the majority live in a nearby housing project. As evidenced by the excerpt below, their home life is detrimental their academic and emotional well-being:

A recent random psychological assessment of 45 [of the study school's students] found that they were plagued by the problems that result from extreme poverty: chaotic lives, neglect and/or abuse, poor health histories and chronic health problems, emotional stress, anxiety, and anger. Drug use and AIDS have claimed the parents of a large (but uncatalogued) number of students, and teachers comment that many of their students are being raised by relatives and friends, or, as a recent newspaper article stated, are growing up 'without any apparent adult supervision'. (Anyon 1995, p. 72)

Although pains have been taken early in the article to point out that not *all* racial/ethnic minority families can be envisioned in the above conditions, the messages of the above excerpt are clear: race *still matters* for students and families insofar as it *is* associated with poverty. Many African-American and Hispanic students live chaotic lives in which risks abound and positive parental influence is lacking. Despite the existence of impoverished, academically-troubled, all-white populations throughout the country, there are no articles from the NCLB/Accountability Era discussing similarly devastating home conditions among white students of any class.

When Anyon (1995) describes the parental involvement occurring at this majority-minority study school, we learn that actively engaged parents are few. Worse yet, those parents who *are*

involved are oblivious to the larger issues driving the need for school reform—a process whose primary beneficiaries are to be poverty-plagued, educationally-failing minority students like their own. Unconcerned with their children’s dismal academic showings, parents’ major school-related concerns are for facilities maintenance and finding balls for gym class. The discourse is devoid of portraits of similarly misguided parent groups in all-white or majority-white schools.

The NCLB/Accountability Era discourse points out multiple ways schools are failing minority students and their families, from falling prey to the lopsided power dynamics of the communities in which they are embedded (Jacob 1995) to failing to provide adequate classroom resources for learning (Borman and Overman 2004). Nonetheless, professional educators continue to hone in on low-income and minority parents as the primary liabilities to minority student academic success. Consequently, in the discourse-wide search for solutions, attention is not focused on equalization of educational resources, but rather on ways minority parents can benefit from education and behavior change according to the parent involvement paradigm. Although this parent-changing message is delivered more subtly than it was in previous eras—by implicating not *all* minority parents, but rather those who are also poor and whose home priorities are askew—the image of minority parent in need of behavior change and re-education has changed little over time.

What *has* changed is professional educators’ level of comfort with making across-the-board statements about minority parents of the type found in the Progressive and Post-Civil Rights/ESEA Era discourses. Characteristic of the NCLB/Accountability Era tendency to use “race without racism” (Marks 1991), authors offer weakly-asserted and often contradictory statements about the role of race in family life and student achievement, leaving an overall impression of a discourse divided: reaching in new direction with increased attention to intra-group diversity, but still pinned down by

the weight of decades of equating minority racial/ethnic status with a very specific palette of home types and behaviors.

The sole exploration of middle class family life in the NCLB/Accountability Era discourse is a literature review, Gosa and Alexander's aptly titled, "Family (Dis)Advantage and the Educational Prospects of Better off African American Youth: How Race Still Matters" (2007). While, as its title suggests, the article focuses on middle-class African American students, it offers no new scholarship on the subject. In re-considering previous research, Gosa and Alexander come to a now-familiar conclusion, one that could have easily been reached decades ago by adherents to the culture of poverty ideology: impediments to African Americans' transmission of educational and economic advantage "emanate outward from the immediate home environment, through peers and friends, into neighborhoods and schools, and to society at large" (2007, p. 285).

In detailing how this ecology of disadvantage works, the authors tread the territory of contradiction that houses most descriptions of minority parents during the era: "African American parents, especially African American mothers, are said to be more authoritarian and punitive than white parents" (2007, p. 295). Yet, "if the portrayal of black families as disorganized and pathological is problematic, so too is its blanket rejection" (2007, p. 294). According to these characterizations, African American mothers are not definitively "more authoritarian and punitive" than whites—a charge that might have been leveled in a previous era. Nonetheless, African American mothers *are said* to be authoritarian and punitive, in a careful commitment-free phrasing that plants the idea as a *possibility* in the reader's consciousness. Similarly, while not *all* black families are "disorganized and pathological" (294), some apparently are. As is typical of the NCLB/Accountability Era, intra-group variation is emphasized in Gosa and Alexander's (2007) descriptions of *certain* African American parents. Also typical of the era is the authors' failure to clarify whether the mixture of pathology and

normalcy they attribute to black parents is unique, or whether it can be applied to families from the mainstream and other racial/ethnic groups as well.

The inconsistencies of statements such as the above leave the reader to wonder where professional educators stand in this brave new world of implicating class before race in the discussion on minority parenting. Some, despite questioning previously taken-for-granted assumptions about minority parent life, conclude their articles by endorsing familiar, parent-changing solutions in the end: “parents may have to learn how to...be meaningful participants in the work of the school if parents and the school (and, thus, society) are to succeed...parents may have accepted what appears to be their assigned absentee role in their children’s schooling” (McCaslin and Infanti 1992, p. 298). Passages such as this reinforce the discourse-wide thrust toward implicating parent behaviors over structures of opportunity. Much like the culture of poverty discourse of the 1960s and 1970s, the educational discourse of the NCLB/Accountability Era relies on images of poor and minority parents as capable of effecting change in home and school life yet ultimately unwilling to do so, largely due to their reliance on a home-school “culture of distance” of their own creation.

It is challenging for discourse-makers to advocate for the importance of parental involvement while simultaneously acknowledging persistent inter-group differences in student achievement like those highlighted by Gosa and Alexander (2007), who note that even middle-class African Americans are far behind their white counterparts in terms of school achievement. In light of seemingly positive articles about the schooling hopes and attitudes towards harbored by some minority and low-income families—particularly those who have already re-learned the parenting craft through participation in parental involvement programs like Head Start (Ramey, Lanzi, Phillips, and Ramey 1998; Ramey and Ramey 1998; Seefeldt, Denton, Galper, and Younoszai 1998)—how are

we to make sense of the lack of articles on successful minority students in the discourse?

Furthermore, how can the instrumentality of individual choices in child-rearing and home values continue to be emphasized in the face of grossly unequal student outcomes that vary along student racial lines? Mandara (2006) struggles to strike this balance in an article on home life's effects on the academic achievement African American males, ironically one of the most persistently low-achieving student groups in the nation.

Since the end of the civil rights era, most American-born parents, *especially poor African American parents* [emphasis mine], have relied on teachers and school officials to educate their children... policy and interventions must focus on making parents the most important factor in their sons' education by increasing parents' control of their children's education. (219)

The author's focus on the family implies that since the end of the Civil Rights Era, all else has been equal (or at minimum, inconsequential) in American education: structures, staffing, finances, opportunity. The missing link in minority achievement is parents, particularly poor minority parents. With their lack of involvement, low-income minority parents have created a culture of distance between the home and school. In doing so, they have tacitly empowered schools to act unilaterally in the precious territory of their children's education.

Despite calls for their greater involvement, throughout the discourse of the NCLB/Accountability Era, minority parents are portrayed as too ill-informed to act independently in the best interests of their children. Minority parental involvement must follow a specific script if it is to be successful, one that has nothing to do with the grassroots movements for school reform that earned African American parents the censure of educators in the Post-Civil Rights/ESEA Era. Fortunately, teachers and other school officials are capable of bridging the minority parent-school culture of distance, namely by assessing home life and steering minority parents toward practices that experts have identified as most beneficial to their children.

...researchers have identified [reading with the child, writing stories with the child, taking the child to the library, monitoring television viewing, and overseeing homework] as critical for the academic success of schoolchildren. If teachers are not aware of the level of parental involvement in these areas, then they may be unable to provide parents timely and individual feedback and guidance about enhancing their involvement. (Kessler-Sklar, Piotrkowski, Parker, and Baker 1998, p. 377)

Home-school communication leads to home-school continuity, a necessary condition for student achievement. Creation of such continuity depends on schools and teachers being aware of parents' home practices in order to intervene when necessary with "timely and individual feedback" (Kessler-Sklar et al. 1998, p. 377) as to how parents can change their practices. Note that in the above excerpt, home-school communication flows in one direction, from schools to homes. Educational professionals diagnose family needs and then communicate proposed solutions to families.

*The Parent education/parental involvement panacea.* Parent education is an integral part of the parental involvement paradigm. If minority student success depends on minority parent behavior change, as in the Progressive and Post-Civil Rights/ESEA Eras, educators are capable and willing to facilitate minority parent change. Areas of focus for parent education include making parents into better at-home teachers (10 references), as in the case of "an urban after-school science and math resource and activity center that targeted minority students and their families" (Ramey-Gassert 1997, p. 441). Similar initiatives are seen in the parent education components of Head Start programs, which provide parents with materials and instructions for educational activities they can do with their children at home (Seefeldt et al. 1998; Stahl and Yaden 2004).

Parent education also aims at improving parents' childrearing craft (9 references). School district programs are intended to "help parents develop parenting skills" (Chrispeels 1996, p. 190), because instruction that "reach[es] the child and parent early, develop[s] language skills and self-confidence...demonstrate[s] that these children, if given a chance, can meet successfully all the demands of today's technological, urban society" (Reynolds 2005, p. 2414). Although the exact

identities of parents and 'these children' are not revealed in the previously-cited study, the reader learns that whatever their racial/ethnic identity, they are often lacking in "nurturing parenting" and "participation in children's education," and exhibit risk factors such as low-income and single parent status (Reynolds 2005, p. 2408).

To secure better educational outcomes for their children, minority families should heed expert guidance from schools, which ultimately calls for greater parent vigilance over children's activities and more child-centered, literacy-promoting parenting practices. In short, minority families should strive to approximate the "white middle-class culture that is validated in most U.S. mainstream schools" (Skinner et al. 1998). Failure to move closer to the mainstream norm, evidenced by failure to receive guidance from schools and, as a result, parent in more child-centered, academically-oriented ways, is equated with minority parents putting their children's academic and future success on the line.

Academic risks may be associated with the potential discontinuity, or 'lack of fit,' between the behavioral patterns and values socialized in the context of low-income and minority families and communities and those expected in the mainstream classroom and school contexts. (Borman and Overman 2004, p. 178).

The activities and values in which parents socialize their children are paramount to children's school success. Entertainment of the possibility of bridging the culture of distance between minority homes and schools not by changing minority parents, but rather by changing schools, is minimal.

*A New model minority? Hispanic parents and professional educators' assimilatory hopes.*

Within the NCLB/Accountability Era discourse, studies of parent education initiatives note that such programs are primarily attended by Hispanic women (Cooper and Christie 2005; Warren, Hong, and Rubin 2009). Despite low parental education levels and cultural values that are at times at odds with those of the school (Fuller Eggers-Pierola, and Holloway 1996; Jacob 1995; Dudley-Marling 2009), Hispanic parents tend to be looked upon favorably in the present-day discourse. Among the Hispanic

mother's positive traits are her domestic orientation, her tendency to belong to a stable, two-parent union (Fuller et al. 1996; Hernandez, Denton, and McCartney 2009), the value she and her partner place on their children's education (Arias 1998; Fuller et al. 1996), and the high level of trust she places in school authorities (Ramey et al. 1988).

Perhaps most importantly, the Hispanic family's school-related attitudes and values coincide with those educators have been promoting since the Progressive Era. Instead of fighting against the injustices they face, Hispanic parents accept their external conditions as given and esteem education as a way for their children to succeed: Stahl and Yaden (2004) cite a study of Hispanic parents by Orellana et al. (2003) in which "parents seldom talked about limited financial means, long work hours, lack of access to medical care, or racism as obstacles to their children's education. They viewed these factors as part of everyday life;" their greatest concern was the growth of their children into "morally and academically responsible citizens" (2004, p. 156). This imagery of positivity in the face of racism and financial duress contrasts against portraits of African American families during the Post-Civil Rights/ESEA Era, when parents who did not take such difficulties in stride were branded as strident (LaNoue 1968), and when it was frequently implied that poor African American parents were not particularly concerned with the moral and academic futures of their children nor the opportunity to make good on the future by means of an education.

Professional educators of the NCLB/Accountability era paint the Hispanic mother with positive characteristics and hopes for educator-guided malleability similar to those pinned upon immigrant mothers of the Progressive era. In contrast, the characterizations of African-American in the present-day discourse differ dramatically. Henfield, Owens, and Moore (2008), for example, cite Ogbu's (1978) oppositional culture theory, stating that "African American parents tend to pass on to their children the belief that they will face the same prejudices and will not be allowed to secure



desirable jobs, regardless of their effort in school” (399). This particular portrait of African American parents in an article considering influences on the school achievement of gifted African American males continues a tradition of framing African-American parents as a net negative influence on their children’s school achievement. The portrayal of African American parents socializing their children into the expectation of prejudice and obstacles to success contrasts sharply against Stahl and Yaden’s (2004) depiction of Hispanic parents as positive and hopeful about schooling in the face of racism and discrimination.

In an article focused on home-school partnerships between schools and both African American and Hispanic parents, African Americans—rather than Hispanics—are again highlighted as parties to the home-school culture of difference.

Cultural disparity between the home life and norms and expectations of schools may create tensions between African American parents...and the teachers of their children such that parents and staff feel intimidated and alienated by each other. (Kessler-Sklar et al. 1998, p. 377)

In parental involvement terms, not only does the culture of difference harm children, it prevents parents from accessing potentially beneficial school-sponsored parent involvement programs. This sentiment is echoed by Warren et al. (2009), who note that African American parents tend to participate less in school-sponsored parent education programs, and must often “work to overcome mistrust or perceptions of institutional racism to seek collaborative orientations” (2244).

It is worth noting the tone of previously-cited quotes which specifically reference African Americans. In them we learn that African American parents may be ‘authoritarian and punitive’ (Gosa and Alexander 2007), that they are not playing an active enough role in their children’s education (Mandara 2006), and that contacts with schools are characterized by ‘cultural disparity and alienation’ (Kessler-Sklar et al. 1998). A parallel trend of markedly negative references does not

occur with Hispanic parents, despite the fact that Hispanics appear more often in the overall discourse (9 articles include references to Hispanics; 6 include references to African Americans).

The size of this sample may not permit conclusions on the differential treatment of Hispanic and African American parents in the NCLB/Accountability Era. Nonetheless, evidence of this difference suggests the possibility of reviewing a wider range of journal titles in continued exploration of this trend. At present, it appears that connotations attached to African American parent identity in previous eras are seeping into educators' current portrayal of African American parents, while the recent-immigrant status of most Hispanics of concern allows them to be seen with fresh, assimilation-minded eyes, much like those used to view Eastern European immigrant parents in the Progressive Era.

Discussion: Educators on Minority Parents and the Culture of Distance

*A Minority for each era.* Demographic and social trends of the day partially explain the discourse's concern with particular racial/ethnic minorities in each era. Italians and Southern European immigrants were at the forefront of the educational and national consciousness during the Progressive Era (Addams 1908; Haskin 1913; Higham 1963; Thompson 1920). African Americans and Puerto Ricans were likewise in the spotlight during the Post-Civil Rights/ESEA Era (Fernandez 2010; Mills, Senior, and Goldsen 1950; Moynihan 1981; Ryan 1976) as are African Americans, Hispanics, and low-income individuals during the NCLB/No Child Left Behind Era (Illinois State Board of Education 2011; Lareau 2000,2003; Texas Education Agency 2011).

Yet the persistence of educators' interest in minority parents merits deeper exploration. Shifts in the minorities of concern and variation in the adjectives used in their portrayals should not obscure the fact that professional educators have spent over a century advocating changing minority parents for the good of their children. Despite subtle changes in the educational

dialogue, the minority-majority distribution of student outcomes in American education shows stability over time: regardless of who is designated as minority in a given era, the academic performance of the group's youth invariably pales in comparison to that of the middle class white mainstream.

In acknowledgement of this reality, a handful of authors from the discourse question the efficacy of focusing minority student improvement efforts on parents rather than on schools and students. They note the traditionally low parent participation in school-sponsored classes and events (Montgomery 1905; Montgomery 1907; Sitts and Sitts 1963; Corwin 1996), doubt the long-term effects of parent education and involvement efforts (Michael 1962; Dudley-Marling 2009), and acknowledge larger structural obstacles to minority student success in schools and society (Campbell 1966; Apple and Pedroni 2005). Although their voices are relatively few, authors from all three eras note that "many children succeed in school even when their parents are not directly or actively involved" (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler 1996, p. 311).

Despite dissenting voices, the professional educator's ideology of minority parenting has been deficit-based for over a century, framed by a culture of poverty discourse that blames parent attitudes and values for the persistent academic shortcomings of minority and low-income students. There have been recent shifts toward class-based over racial/ethnic-based identification of minorities. Yet the discourse continues to weave strands of race, class, and minority status into a narrative defense of education's long-standing structures and practices, structures and practices which validate middle-class, white cultural values (Bourdieu 1984; Bourdieu and Passeron 1990; Herbst 1989). The propagation of these values legitimizes the work of legions of educational professionals, from teachers to family resource coordinators to

university professors and policy makers, all focused on the common goal of reforming the minority family in the name of improved minority student achievement.

*The Home as the seat of inequality, professional educators as the bearers of solutions.* In the Progressive Era, the educational professional's role was to address a lack of information among newcomers to America and its schools; immigrant parents were seen as ignorant of American cultural norms. Under the guidance of solution-oriented Progressive educators, foreign-born parents were to replace their antiquated domestic and civic habits with behaviors and values better adapted to modern American society. These cultural changes would, in turn, facilitate the academic, civic, and social success of immigrant children. The discourse of the era includes notes of structural challenges faced by immigrant newcomers, yet suggests that once immigrants change their values, economic success and a higher standard of living will follow. Behavioral and cultural change will drive improvement in structural conditions, because immigrants themselves will have the tools to level the uneven playing field on which they currently stand.

By the middle of the Post-Civil Rights/ESEA Era, although educational professionals were still working to raze parent-borne cultural barriers to minority student success, the perceived nature of these barriers had shifted. Rather than ignorance, their roots now lay in the poor choices and outright resistance to mainstream culture and values practiced by African American parents. Trapped in a cycle largely of their own making, African American parents were seen as creators and reproducers of a self-sustaining culture of poverty. These parents were fully knowledgeable of mainstream cultural values and capable of instilling them in their children, yet by and large failed to make and in some cases *resisted* proper choices in family life and educational values.

As in the Progressive Era, the discourse of the Post-Civil Rights/ESEA Era implies that behavioral and cultural change among minority parents is the best route toward structural change in

education and society. In light of an educational problem identified as home- and behavior-based in nature, opportunity knocks on the professional educator's door. Professional jurisdiction expands beyond the classroom into the home, creating more territory for the educator to occupy, more responsibility to assume. In the Post-Civil Rights/ESEA Era, the educator's role toward the African-American mother is to teach her how to best raise her children, or when this is not possible, to create programs that ensure that her children will spend as few hours in their mother's damaging care as possible.

Regardless of the severity of the censure they level against minority parents, the Progressive and Post-Civil Rights/ESEA Era discourse-makers portray the minority parent's potential, educator-assisted contribution to her child's overall development as multi-faceted: in the Progressive Era, minority parents are portrayed as influencing their children's domestic, civic, and academic lives; in the Post-Civil Rights/ESEA Era parents mold both their children's moral values and academic potential for better or for worse. By the NCLB/Accountability Era, however, the scope of the minority parent's role in her child's life has narrowed in the educational discourse. In the current period, the minority parent has become a one-dimensional positive or negative influence on her child's school life. The results of her childrearing efforts are not explored for their civic and moral implications; rather, they can now be distilled into a collection of academic outcomes achieved by her child.

In the NCLB/Accountability Era, with the discourse-makers' focus on SES and marital status over racial/ethnic identity, educators are portrayed as reaching out to low-income and single parents rather than exclusively to those defined as racial/ethnic minorities. These parents, who by implication are still usually Black or Hispanic, as in previous eras, are insufficiently child-centered, school-involved, and academically-oriented in their childrearing, all problems which can be remedied

with educator evaluation and guidance. While NCLB/Accountability Era educational professionals concerned with minority parents may have new achievement- rather than ascription-based labels for their populations of concern, the focus on poor racial/ethnic minorities and their alleged domestic weaknesses is remarkably stable.

In light of the strife and overt discrimination of the previous eras, the NCLB/Accountability Era adjustment of the labels used to speak about society's have-nots fulfills a present-day social need: that of appearing to have moved beyond divisiveness and racial lines (Marks 1991; Katz 1989; Ryan 1976). Socioeconomic status, according to America's individualistic, mobility-minded social ideology, is malleable and influenced by individual behavior (Gans 1995; Katz 1989). As the shorthand of low-SES replaces racial/ethnic labels of previous eras, a vocabulary of achieved identity comes to the forefront of the educational discourse, emphasizing the role individual values, behaviors, and efforts play in academic outcomes. An educational discourse focused on individual agency and earned labels is not likely to be focused on the ways opportunity and achievement are ascribed in American education. An emphasis on choice over ascription obviates discourse-wide consideration of the reasons why minorities are more likely than their white counterparts both to be poor *and* to struggle in school (Crosnoe 2006; Furstenburg 2007), a tendency that has changed little since the discourse's Progressive Era concerns with minority student outcomes and the home practices of immigrant families.

Conclusion: Minority Parents as a Symbolic Concern

*The Myth of educational equality.* Throughout a century of professional discourse educators justify their concern with minority parents in terms of the subpar academic outcomes of minority students. Yet as achievement data shows, in a diverse nation, uniform academic results are difficult to ensure at any level—school, district, state, or national (Grotsky, Warren, and Felts 2008). In

American education, those who have more of any of a number of resources—from higher levels of parent education to greater sources of social credit to greater more economic assets to better schools—tend to outperform those who have less. As long as educators tie home life and parenting to student outcomes, parents from the lower rungs of our socioeconomic ladder will be seen as culpable for the low academic performance of their children.

The idea that unequal inputs at nearly all levels of the educational process should produce uniform student achievement is evidence of what Cohen (1995) calls “the complicated expectations that Americans have about the purpose of schooling” (513). These expectations include tacit acceptance of an unequal investment of resources at the student level. This unequal investment “reflects [the] individualist values” of American society, while our expectations of uniform academic achievement are tied to “collective aspirations” of group mobility and social welfare for all who pass through the little red schoolhouse doors (Cohen 1995, p. 513). Educators are prime reproducers of this internally inconsistent ideology. Despite knowing that not all schools, students, and opportunity structures are equal, educators carve out a professional niche by promoting the school as the great social equalizer, a sort of black box into which varying types and qualities of educational resources can be fed and from which uniformly educated students will emerge (Herbst 1989). This ideology of school-as-savior has long formed part of the American consciousness (Johnston 2007; Katz 1968), despite the reality of student outcomes that *do* vary according to relative measures of privilege afforded along the way.

*Minority parents and parental involvement as symbolic concerns.* If there are other possible answers to the minority student underachievement puzzle, and the benefits of parental involvement are open to question, why have educators been so keenly focused on the minority parent for so long? A framework for understanding this puzzle lies in the work of Gusfield (1963), Higham (1963),

and Luker (1984). In their studies of symbolic discourse in the American Temperance Movement (Gusfield 1963), Progressive Era (Higham 1963), and anti-abortion debate (Luker 1984), the authors explore discourses as symbolic tools. In the act of creating and reproducing discourse, social actors have at their disposal a powerful medium for the promotion of ideology and chosen styles of life. Understanding the professional educational discourse as a coded discussion of otherness and privilege in American schools sheds new light on the professional, economic, and political implications of over a century of discussion of minority parents.

When discourse-makers define social problems and engage in their subsequent discussion, they implicitly defend their own lifestyles, professions, and positions of social along the way. Those social actors defined as problematic in a discourse, be they Irish immigrants (Gusfield 1963), Catholics (Higham 1963), poor unmarried women (Luker 1984), or minority parents in schools, tend to be less powerful, less vocal, and consequently largely defenseless in the face of the discourse spun around them. From these positions of relative disadvantage, the subjects of a given discourse may be treated with benevolence or hostility; good-natured attempts at reform and assimilation or more severe derogation and anger (Gusfield 1963). The professional educational discourse on minority parents includes instances of both, in the form of the assimilatory hopes pinned on Progressive Era immigrants and present-day Hispanics, as well as the more aggressive stance towards African American parents in the Post-Civil Rights/ESEA Era.

The terms used to reference the subjects of a given discourse must be efficacious within the political climates of their day. Both Luker (2007) and Marks (1991) document examples of racially-charged discourses shifting toward the use of race/ethnicity-neutral labels in the final decades of the twentieth century. The NCLB/Accountability Era educational discourse on minority parents parallels this trend, as African American and Hispanic parents are increasingly referenced according to their



socioeconomic and marital statuses rather than the racial/ethnic labels of previous eras. As professional educators continue framing the problem of minority student underachievement as a symbolic discussion on the merits and shortcomings of minority parents, the current post-racial climate necessitates a more subtle, yet universally-understood way to reference these individuals. Defining minority parents according to their achieved rather than ascribed characteristics is convenient: it deflects responsibility for chronically low academic outcomes away from the educational system and any embedded disadvantages it may harbor for racial/ethnic minorities. Instead, the blame can be laid squarely onto individuals whose attitudes and life choices have earned them the status of impoverished and/or single parents.

Symbolic discourses are powerful tools wielded against groups whose values fail to “harmonize easily with...[those] embedded in the national culture” (Higham 1963, p. 6); those wielding these tools advance their own statuses in the course of discourse-making. Like temperance workers (Gusfield 1963) and Progressive Era reformers (Higham 1963), educators have furthered their professional status by tying the problem of minority student underachievement to a need for education among the minority parents at the crux of their discourse. In focusing more intently on changing people than structures, Temperance workers (Gusfield 1963), Progressive-era reformers (Higham 1963), anti-abortion advocates (Luker 1984), and professional educators have *all* stayed true to “the tradition of American liberalism...defin[ing] reform as education, not redistribution, and focus[ing] their slim resources on the individual rehabilitation of poor people” (Katz 1989, p. 83).

In calling for safe and familiar solutions to social problems, the professional educational discourse on minority parents stakes several important claims for the educational institution and the status and jurisdiction of its members. These claims run the gamut from justifying the distribution of resources within the educational system to upholding professional educators’ claims to prestige and

professional jurisdiction in the midst of parenting and child development experts, psychologists and social workers. Diffusion of an educator-endorsed parenting ideology legitimizes educators as authorities on child growth, development, and learning. This thrust is evident from the Progressive Era on, and carves out a place for educators as discourse-producers and experts not just on learning, but on childhood and parenting as well.

The parenting practices promoted by educators dovetail with the mainstream parenting trends documented by Hays (1996), Quirke (2006), Zelizer (1994) and other scholars. While these ideologies may not actually have been practiced even by a majority of white, middle-class parents in their respective eras (Gans 1995), they reflect the childrearing styles most praised in society during a given time. In consistently promoting mainstream parenting ideologies, professional educators have spent the greater part of the past century “offer[ing] moral and political legitimacy to the institutions and structures of the deserving” (Gans 1995, p. 95). In this sense educational discourse is not merely about education. It also—and perhaps more importantly—legitimizes dominant groups’ wider advantages in society.

Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) characterize educators’ system of validating and reproducing mainstream values as a regime of ‘symbolic violence,’ a more covert alternative to the physical and economic violence employed elsewhere in the maintenance of inequality. Aggressive though this process of legitimation and dissemination may be, it evidences professional educators’ good intentions toward minority students and families. Programs, policies, and entire portions of the educational discourse attest to educators’ willingness to engage with minority parents and effectively teach them to help themselves. If the projected minority student success is not forthcoming, educational professionals’ greater proximity to theory than actual practice (Abbott 1988) allows blame to be easily passed on to teachers, parent liaisons, and others farther down the professional

ladder. Like the minority parents at the heart of this discourse, these lower-level educational workers have few institutionalized outlets for voicing their own views and experiences in the educational system.

Despite purported efforts to narrow the gap between minority and mainstream students, there is evidence that over the course of the past century American educators have made a series of minor changes in our system of schooling while leaving larger institutional structures intact (Cremin 1971; Pearl 2002; Tyack and Cuban 1995). When considered from a symbolic angle, educators' ongoing concern with the reform of minority parents fits logically into this trend of small adjustments and long-term institutional stability.

The propagation of a professional discourse that reproduces socially entrenched ideologies of race, class, and parenting has allowed educators to strengthen their status as professionals and social discourse-makers over the course of the past century. The discourse's valuation of individual behavior as more important than the structural conditions resonates with a society that values personal responsibility and purports to live by meritocratic ideals, while messages about the importance of teaching minority parents to better raise their children position educators as authorities not just on schooling, but on parenting and home life as well. Ultimately, the cultural salience of these and other messages about race/ethnicity and privilege in education have managed to deflect closer scrutiny from an educational system in which few, if any, truly have the chance to pull themselves up by their bootstraps.

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CHAPTER II.  
ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT LITERATURE

Baker, Amy L. and Laura M. Soden. 1998. "The Challenges of Parent Involvement Research."

*ERIC/CUE Digest* 134:1-10. New York: ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education.

This survey of parent involvement research explores methodological issues that have led to the practice's mixed record of effectiveness in the literature. Difficulties in isolating the effects of parental involvement, inconsistent definition and operationalization of parental involvement, and non-objective measures of the practice all influence the variety of findings that have come out of the parent involvement literature.

Crosnoe, Robert. 2006. *Mexican Roots, American Schools: Helping Mexican Immigrant Children*

*Succeed*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Children from different demographic and SES backgrounds enter school with different skill sets and developmental backgrounds. However, gaps in educational achievement are at their narrowest in the early years of schooling, making it easiest to intervene academically on the behalf of lower-performing students earlier rather than later. Among the racial/ethnic groups considered in this quantitative study employing Early Childhood Longitudinal Study—Kindergarten Cohort (ECLS-K) data, Mexican immigrant students show the lowest level of academic readiness upon school entry. Crosnoe posits the creation of a universal preschool system to improve academic readiness among Mexican immigrant children. Interventions in the early years of schooling are particularly effective because they include parents, who are more

likely to be involved in their children's domestic and academic development during the early years. Such interventions are particularly valuable for Mexican immigrant parents who may morally support their children's education, but participate in few of the academically oriented practices that could benefit their children in concrete ways.

Crosnoe, Robert. 2001. "Academic Orientation and Parental Involvement in Education during High School." *Sociology of Education* 74(3):210-230.

Crosnoe uses longitudinal survey data to consider how parental involvement and student academic orientation change over the course of a student's high school education. Both students' feelings about school and measures of parental involvement were reported by students, and show that in general, parent involvement in education tends to decrease over time. As in previous studies, there is some evidence that parental involvement is not a stable input that automatically leads to greater student achievement: parental involvement often occurs in response to a student's struggles, leading to its association with lower student outcomes. Those parents whose involvement is associated with increased student outcomes are those from the most advantaged backgrounds: educated parents from two-parent families whose children are enrolled in college preparatory classes.

Dauber, Susan L., and Joyce L. Epstein. 1989. *Parent Attitudes and Practices of Parent Involvement in Inner-City Elementary and Middle Schools*. Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools, Report Number 33.

Dauber and Epstein surveyed teachers and parents in eight low-income, inner-city schools to gauge their feelings about parental involvement and the actual involvement practices in which they engage. They found that school factors like school climate and teacher

communication with parents are important predictors of parental involvement. Parents are more likely to be involved when they sense that schools want them to be involved and provide opportunities for them to do so. Dauber and Epstein conceptualize parent involvement as a collection of home- and school-based practices; parents are far more likely to be involved in the home than in the school. Involvement is greatest during the early years of a child's education, and higher parent education levels are associated with greater parental involvement while working outside the home is associated with less involvement.

De Carvalho, Maria Eulina. 2001. *Re-Thinking Family-School Relations: A Critique of Parental Involvement in Schooling*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

In her analysis of a loosely-defined collection of policy documents on family-school partnerships, De Carvalho questions the premises behind schools' current endorsement of the partnership model. De Carvalho aligns herself with Bourdieu and Passeron (1990), framing the school as a reproducer of social inequality through its validation of middle and upper class social and cultural capitals. The current family-school partnership model forms part of the school's role as cultural reproducer and perpetrator of symbolic violence, as it proposes that all parents should take on home-based academic involvement and school-based curricular oversight roles of the types typically assumed by highly involved middle class parents. Cultural and economic factors at the family level mean that not all parents are willing or able to participate in schools as prescribed by the model. In its current incarnation, true partnership is not the aim; instead, the autonomy of parents and the home are eroded as the domestic realm is situated as an accessory in furthering the academic mission of the school.



Domina, Thurston. 2005. "Leveling the Home Advantage: Assessing the Effectiveness of Parental Involvement in Elementary School." *Sociology of Education* 78(3):233-249.

In the decade preceding this quantitative study, policy-level emphasis on parental involvement as a means to improving student achievement grew. However, the literature offers mixed results on the effectiveness of parental involvement in improving students' academic outcomes. In his work with data from the National Longitudinal Study of Youth's 1979 cohort, Domina finds that the positive effects of parental involvement diminish when student background variables are considered, and that some types of parental involvement may actually have a negative relationship with academic outcomes. There is, however, a positive relationship between parental involvement and student behavior in schools. While parental involvement may not actually increase student achievement, the practice may act as a social control on student conduct in the classroom.

Fields-Smith, Cheryl. 2007. "Social Class and African-American Parental Involvement." Pp. 167-202 in *Late to Class: Social Class and Schooling in the New Economy*. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press.

Parental involvement models typically assume that parents and schools approach parental involvement with similar expectations. Yet there is a gap between educators' assumption of shared parent-school responsibility and poor African American parents' frequently held belief that academic learning occurs primarily in the classroom. While parents from all social classes may support their children's education, their expectations of their students' school experience differ in important ways: whereas the parents of high achieving students tend to stress good grades, the parents of low achievers stress good behavior. These differences may stem from the life experiences and social networks of poor African American parents, which provide them with few ways to involve themselves in the academic fabric of their

children's education. As a result of their own educational experiences and social networks, middle class parents have an information advantage when it comes to their children's schooling. This information, combined with a class-based sense of entitlement, allows middle class African American parents to advocate for their children in the face of teachers and administrators in ways that poorer parents do not.

Johnson, Laura Ruth. 2009. "Challenging 'Best Practices' in Family Literacy and Parent Education Programs: The Development and Enactment of Mothering Knowledge among Puerto Rican and Latina Mothers in Chicago." *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 40(3):257-276.

This ethnographic study explores the parent education-based experiences of urban Hispanic mothers in a family literacy program. The family literacy model, which originated in the 1990s, assumes that illiteracy is family-based and that good parenting can be taught. Johnson argues that the model is both deficit-based and too narrowly focused on white middle-class parenting practices. The model's assumption of the primacy of dyadic mother-child interactions runs counter to the reality of Hispanic family culture, in which childrearing is typically shared among a number of people including siblings. Its further assumption that parenting is a taught skill is also at odds with Hispanic cultural traditions: many Hispanic mothers learn the mothering role by caring for siblings and young relatives when they themselves are children. When participating in family literacy programs, urban Hispanic mothers may lack motivation to 'learn' new parenting skills; for them parenting is a pragmatic endeavor in which they have been involved since they themselves were children. Unlike middle class white mothers intent on shaping their young children's every experience, the Hispanic mothers in Johnson's study accept the fact that not all external factors in a child's life can be controlled—a logical conclusion in communities where quarters are tight, violence is frequent, and instability often reigns.

Jones, Stephanie. 2007. "Working Poor Mothers and Middle-Class Others: Psychosocial Considerations in Home-School Relations and Research." *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 38(2):159-177.

In addition to the types of capital typically referenced in the sociological literature—social, cultural, economic—Jones argues for addition of a concept of psychological capital. Social class is something that is "lived psychologically" (195). Within the realm of schools, this reality manifests itself in bi-directional parent-teacher alienation. Schools often construct working-class, non-academically oriented mothers as 'other' to the educational institution's upwardly mobile, academic orientation. Likewise, working -class mothers portray school personnel and related authority figures as members of an impersonal and monolithic institutional identity. Estrangement from schools and questioning school authority in the presence of their children.

Lareau, Annette. 2003. *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Lareau asserts that parenting style is a cultural practice more strongly correlated with SES than with race; this ethnographic portrait of parenting across the middle, working, and lower classes focuses on relevant differences in class-based parenting ideology. Differences in how children from different social classes are socialized factor strongly in the reproduction of opportunity and inequality in society. The middle class parenting ideology of *concerted cultivation* sets children up for success in the adult world by exposing them to academically and socially stimulating experiences. It further instills in them a sense of entitlement and confidence vis-à-vis the adult world, as children from this background have seen their parents bend rules and negotiate favorable outcomes on their behalves throughout their young educational and social lives. Children from working- and lower-class backgrounds are products of a parenting ideology of the *accomplishment of natural growth*.

Parents from the lower classes see themselves as responsible for providing for their children's basic physical and emotional needs, and parent-child social interactions emphasize the distinctness of children's and adult's worlds. Even if they were inclined to intervene on their children's behalves in schools and other institutional settings, parents from the lower classes lack the experience, agency, and confidence of middle class parents in similar settings, leaving their children with an entirely different portrait of the negotiability of outcomes in the adult institutional world. The *accomplishment of natural growth* parenting style provides children with the opportunity to be creative and self-directed in their leisure time; however, it does little to prepare lower class children for future interactions with society's key institutions, where they are likely to act with constraint rather than the agency shown by children from middle class backgrounds.

MacNeal, Ralph. 1999. "Parental Involvement as Social Capital: Differential Effectiveness on Science Achievement, Truancy, and Dropping Out." *Social Forces* 78(1):117-144.

Research on the effects of parental involvement on student achievement has been inconclusive, with outcomes varying according to the race and socioeconomic status of the parents and child in question. MacNeal suggests that parental involvement can best be conceptualized as a source of social capital, one whose benefits may accrue in both the academic and behavioral domains. Analysis of data from the National Educational Longitudinal Study 1988 shows difficulty connecting PTO participation and some other traditional measures of parental involvement with outcomes such as increased student grades. Behaviors such as parent-child discussion *are* associated with lower levels of student truancy and decreased chances of dropping out, but with much greater effects for white and better-off students than for minority and low income students. Parental involvement have beneficial behavioral effects, but disproportionately so for those students who are already at an advantage in our school system.

Nakagawa, Kathryn. 2000. "Unthreading the Ties that Bind: Questioning the Discourse of Parent Involvement." *Educational Policy* 14(4):443-472.

Nakagawa's critical discourse analysis of parental involvement policy in state legislation and parent-school compact texts finds conflicting portrayals of parents in documents from the discourse. Minority and low-income parents are urged to participate in their children's education in order to assure its quality yet at the same time are portrayed as problematic and incapable of meaningful participation. Despite these inconsistencies, parental involvement is framed as a necessary condition for student success: parents are obligated to participate in their children's education; without this requisite input from parents, schools are absolved of their responsibility for providing students with the resources necessary for a quality education. This framing of the parental involvement/quality education relationship puts schools in a position of power, as it is used to legitimize an unequal distribution of educational resources in the name of lack of involvement efforts on the part of poor parents.

Sheldon, Steven B., and Joyce L. Epstein. 2005. "Involvement Counts: Family and Community Partnerships and Mathematics Achievement." *Journal of Educational Research* 98(4):196-206.

This quantitative study of correlations between parental involvement and mathematics achievement draws longitudinal data from schools participating in the Johns Hopkins National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS), a group of campuses committed to working within Joyce Epstein's (1995) school, family, and community partnership model as a means for improving student achievement. Surveys administered at the school level reported on mathematics-specific parent involvement practices (i.e. mathematics workshops for parents, math homework requiring parent-child interaction) and were considered in relation to math

achievement test data at the student level. Sheldon and Epstein find that providing parents with math materials for use in the home and the assignment of parent-child interactive homework are two activities whose implementation is associated with an increase in student test scores from one year to the next, however there is no discussion of the demographic profile of schools in which these measures were beneficial. Those schools in the study with students performing poorly on math assessments tended to be larger with lower SES levels and higher rates of English as a Second Language learners among the student population. The authors see this low performance in mathematics as evidence of room for increased parental involvement efforts and subsequent growth in student math achievement.

Trainor, Audrey A. 2010. "Reexamining the Promise of Parent Participation in Special Education: An Analysis of Cultural and Social Capital." *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 41(3):245-263.

The Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA) was born in 1975 with legislation mandating special education services allowing educational access for all handicapped students. Parental participation in the special education process was also mandated at this time. However, active parental participation implies significant effort on the part of the parent, including cultivation of knowledge of the technical aspects of special education legislation, their child's individual case, and relevant school and district policy. In order to acquire and use these informational resources, parents must mobilize social and cultural capital that is not equally available to all, particularly to Mexican immigrant families with different generational and legal status in the country.

Useem, Elizabeth L. 1992. "Middle Schools and Math Groups: Parents' Involvement in Children's Placement." *Sociology of Education* 65:263-279.

Interviews with the mothers of children in upper-track middle school mathematics courses reveal that the background knowledge, social networks, and intervention skills of college-educated parents all help explain the high incidence of children of college-educated parents in advanced courses. Here parental involvement is embodied in the parent's knowledge of school affairs and ability to influence her child's course placement. Resources associated with socioeconomic status such as familiarity with the educational system and knowledge of the importance of a college-preparatory trajectory keep parents on the lookout for advanced courses for their children. High levels of school participation and social connections to other involved parents provide more-educated parents with access to important information about course offerings, testing policies, and even preferable teachers. Parents' sense of entitlement and comfort interacting with school personnel and administrators allow them to intervene when necessary to assure that their children are enrolled in upper-track courses. All of these education-related resources help parents transmit their own educational and social advantages to their children.

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APPENDIX A  
TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1: Characteristics of Mainstream Parents in Three Eras

	<i>Most common themes</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
<b>Progressive Era</b>		
	Incapable, need expert advice, harm child	39
	Capable of passing advantage on to their children	17
	Should use child-centered, permissive parenting	11
	Should be involved in child's academic & school life	11
	As child's first teachers/at-home teachers of child	10
	Too narrowly focused on child's academic progress	10
<b>Post-Civil Rights/ESEA Era</b>		
	Incapable, need expert advice, harm child	29
	As child's first teachers/at-home teachers of child	20
	Value education	17
	Capable of passing advantage on to their children	14
	Must do specific things at specific times for child's proper development	12
<b>Accountability/NCLB Era</b>		
	Should expose children to books, literacy, and language experiences	11
	As child's first teachers/at-home teachers of child	8
	As consumers of their children's education	8
	Should be involved in child's academic & school life	7
	Must do specific things at specific times for child's proper development	6

Table 2: Minority Parent Identities in Three Eras

<i>Most commonly-mentioned minority parents</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
<b>Progressive Era</b>	
Immigrant	24
Low SES	12
Italian	6
<b>Post-Civil Rights/ESEA Era</b>	
Negro	41
Low SES	30
Puerto Rican	16
Non-PR Hispanic	10
Indians	7
<b>Accountability/NCLB Era</b>	
Low SES	23
Single parents	15
Hispanic	9
African American	6

Table 3: Schools Educating Parents in Three Eras

		Frequency
<b>Progressive Era</b>		
	To be better parents (in domestic, child development, and parenting areas)	31
	To be more informed consumers of their children’s education	4
	<i>Other school-home themes: schools justified in reaching into home life (23), capable of overcoming home deficiencies (4)</i>	
<b>Post-Civil Rights/ESEA Era</b>		
	To be better parents (in child development and parenting)	16
	To be better at-home teachers of their children	12
	For parents’ own benefit & economic mobility	8
	<i>Other school-home themes: schools justified in reaching into home life (17), questions schools’ reach into home life (12), schools capable of overcoming home-based deficits (12)</i>	
<b>Accountability/NCLB Era</b>		
	To be better at-home teachers of their children	10
	To be better parents (in child development and parenting)	9
	For parents’ own benefit	5
	For school oversight and reform roles	4
	<i>Other school-home themes: schools justified in intruding into home life (8), school dedicates personnel to parent involvement (8), school blaming home (5)</i>	

Figure 1: References to Parents: Positive, Negative, and Neutral as a Percentage of Total by Era

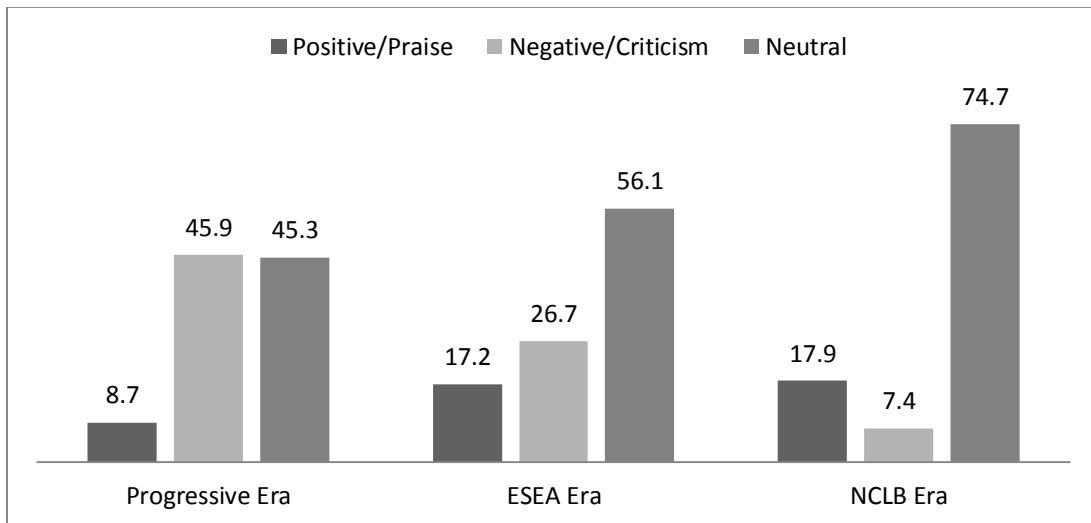
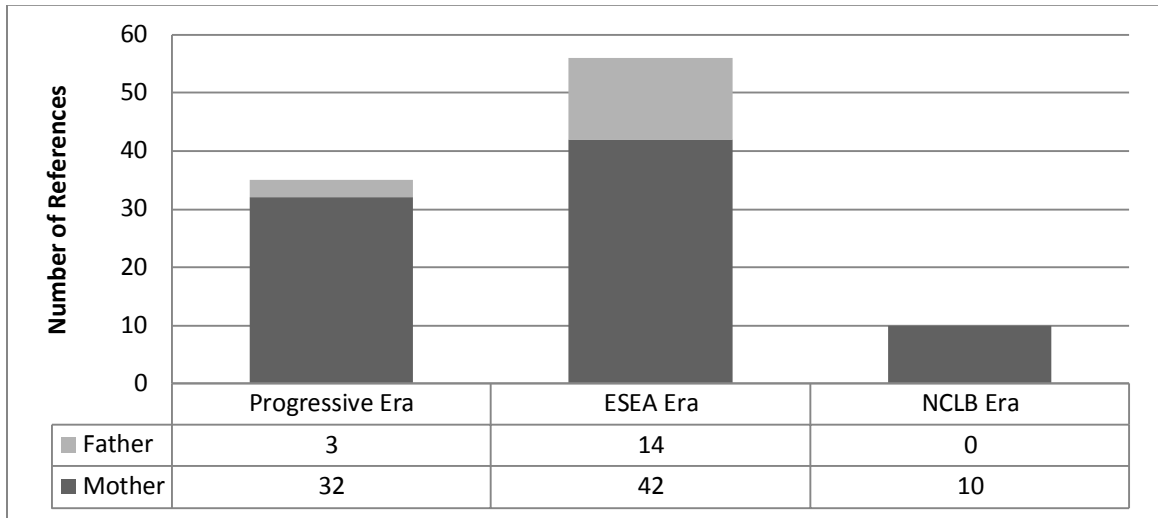


Figure 2: Gender-Specific Parent References in Three Eras



APPENDIX B  
CODING CATEGORIES

<b>Parents and parenting (general/mainstream statements)</b>	
Net influence on child	
	Positive
	Negative
	Neutral
School issues	
	Should engage in parental involvement
	Don't trust schools, are disenfranchised, resist school intrusions into home
	Support and want to be part of schools, value education
	(Wrongly) delegating their tasks to schools/institutions
	Too narrowly focused on academic performance
	Proactive, rational, have special knowledge of child that can help schools
	Should have school oversight roles
	Rational economic calculators of the value of their child's education
	White parent entitlement, opposition to desegregation
	In favor of desegregation
	Class-based differences in efficacy at pressuring schools
	Empowered through school choice/vouchers
	Not all parents capable of choosing schools well
	Don't want their children to be racial/ethnic minority in schools
Parenting issues	
	As child's socializers, teachers
	Incapable/need expert advice/harm child
	Must do specific things at specific moments in child's development
	Capable of passing on advantage to child
	Should use child-centered parenting
	Should mediate child's experiences
	Should be authoritative toward child
	Should expose children to books and literacy experiences
	Should be child's friend
	Standard-bearers of humanity; parenting as a patriotic duty
	Should live as example for child

<b>Parents and parenting (continued)</b>	
	Overschedule/overly demanding of child
	Overreact, want to shelter child too much
	Parent's health and mental states effect parenting efficacy
	Mind over matter: actions/values/parenting behaviors more import than SES
	Feel pressure from experts to do parenting right
<b>Mothers (gender-specific statements)</b>	
	More involved in school than fathers
	Childrearing as a calling/vocation for women
	Should put child's interests before hers
	Crucial for proper development of child (including her verbal interactions)
	Should be permissive yet authoritative
	Should train herself continually in parenting
	Can be educated by their children's schools
	Emotionally delicate
	Naturally compulsive
	Handle daughters better than sons
	Assumption of stay-at-home mother as outdated

<b>Minority parents and parenting</b>	
<b>Identity</b>	
	SES
	As a risk factor
	Slum/tenement-dwellers
	Working class
	Romanticized view of poverty
	Associated with specific racial/ethnic group
<b>Minority</b>	
	Immigrant
	Italian
	Jewish
	Other immigrant (fewer than 2 references/group)
	Western European as model immigrants
	Negro
	Matriarchal
	Externally motivated
	Suffer consequences of discrimination
	Neglectful
	Culturally handicapped/culturally deprived
	Culture of poverty

<b>Minority parents and parenting (continued)</b>		
		Problematic for schools, strident, ethnocentric
		Negro ghetto
		Father figure absent
		Public aid
		Rural
		Puerto Rican
		Machista
		Culturally handicapped/culturally deprived
		Culture of poverty
		Mexican-American
		Indian (Native American)
		Teen parents
		Hispanic
		In NCLB, mothers as most likely minority to be involved
		Value education
		Demographic threat to other minority populations
		Less likely to seek preschool education
		African American
		Associated with: disadvantage in early learning, single parent, low SES
		Out-migration of middle class
		Public aid
		Single parent home
		Low parental education
Source of feeble-minded children		
Deficient community and civic life		
Upwardly striving, want the best for their children		
As a risk factor for children		
Used as pawns by policy-makers		
Need to assimilate		
Homes		
		Squalor/crowded/dirty
		Lack reading materials
		Native language use hinders school success
		Chaotic lives
Education		
		Don't support/value education
		Do support/value education



<b>Minority parents and parenting (continued)</b>	
	Home-school distance
	Inclusion in special education process as symbolic
	Used as tokens by educational policy makers
	Effects of discrimination
Parenting	
	Harsh/punitive/authoritarian parenting practices
	Parenting style as adaptive to urban environment
	Parenting based on different set of values
	Teach their children racial identities
	Large/extended families
	Advantages
	Disadvantages
	Diversity within minority groups
	Absentee parents
	Passive parenting
	Improperly socialize children

<b>Parent-teacher relationship</b>	
Parent and teacher equal	
	Both insufficiently knowledgeable
	Both support school
	Both positively involved for child
	Powerless in face of larger education structures
	Mutual misunderstanding/distrust
Parent and teacher have competing interests	
Teacher more knowledgeable, rational than parent	
	Teacher more knowledgeable than parent, but subordinated to educational professionals
	Parent as equal to child, school can help both
Parent's knowledge superior to teacher's	
Parent's influence over child greater than that of teacher	
Collaboration necessary	
Cooperation more symbolic than instrumental	
Issues affecting parent-teacher relationship	
	race
	teacher's personality and past
	sex/gender dynamics
	social status of parents and teachers

<b>Teachers</b>
En loco parentis
Can't change home environment
Should do home visits
Need cultural sensitivity training
Have values similar to those of parents of their own race
Don't like working with parents/blame parents
Want more parental involvement
Underestimate poor/minority children
Lack power/beholden to parents and school admin
Not supervised properly by school admin
Should be evaluated on the parental involvement she achieves
Identity: Latinas as uniquely qualified to work with Latino families

<b>Home</b>
Part of larger community responsible for child's socialization
Affected by changing society/less stable/in decay
Undesirable/degraded/inadequate for child development
Wholesome, children should spend time/do activities here
Seat of child's development (for better or worse)

<b>School</b>
Blames home/parents, not welcoming of parents
Increasingly isolated from its constituencies
Can overcome home-related deficits
Not legitimized in intruding into home life
Legitimized in intruding into home life
Dedicates personnel and offices to promoting parental involvement
Educating parents and communities for:
school oversight/reform roles
for parents' own benefit
To be better parents (in domestic, moral, child development, and parenting aspects)
To be at-home teachers
To be better consumers of education
More successful when linked to family/community
As social service provider

<b>School (continued)</b>
Should celebrate cultures of minority families
As assimilator/socializer/citizen maker
Important factor in mobility
Some child socialization properly belongs to school
Promotes middle class white norms