Contexts of Parental Involvement:

An Interpretive Synthesis of Qualitative Literature Using the Meta-Interpretation Method

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Dedication and Acknowledgements

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, my husband, and my three sons. To my parents, thank you for instilling in me the love of learning and the desire to know. To my husband, thank you for your continued support of my pursuit of higher education. To my three sons, thank you for making me strive to be a better, more involved parent each day.

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Abstract of Dissertation

Contexts of Parental Involvement:

An Interpretive Synthesis of Qualitative Literature Using the Meta-Interpretation Method

Utilizing the meta-interpretation approach (Weed, 2005, 2008) to obtain a holistic interpretive synthesis of extant qualitative literature on the topic of parental involvement, this study is an effort to provide insight into the following initial inquiries: (1) Do extant interpretations offer the potential for any conceptual or theoretical extensions or differences as presented in qualitative research related to parental involvement? (2) Will a holistic interpretive synthesis provide a greater understanding of or insight into the overlap or interplay between and within these extant theories? The two goals of this study included: (1) conduct a meta-interpretive synthesis of qualitative parental involvement literature underpinned by divergent parental involvement theories to: holistically offer insight into how researchers conceptualize parental involvement, understand the convergent and divergent relationships among selected theories of parental involvement, and advance the theory related to parental involvement in schools; and (2) present a change in the paradigm of qualitative literature synthesis by establishing meta-interpretation (Weed, 2005b, 2008) as a viable approach for the interpretive synthesis of educational literature.

The varied and transparent methods of data collection and analysis occurred through an iterative process, beginning with theoretical sensitivity (Glaser, 1978) to the research area of parental involvement, maximum variation sampling (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) to establish the initial dataset for analysis, and continued until theoretical saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967 as referenced in Glesne, 1999). To ensure trustworthiness

(Denzin & Lincoln, 1994 as referenced in Glesne, 1999) the technique of memoing (Glesne, 1999; Maxwell, 2005) was employed to ensure a clear audit trail (Glesne) through the synthesis process.

While the findings of this study suggest multiple points of conceptual convergence among the various theoretically selected synthesized research studies, in contrast there are five identified points of conceptual divergence namely: protector and nurturer; building positive social relationships; awareness and knowledge; discrete involvement; and parent as learner. The insight gleaned from this study suggested that broader theoretical notions of the parental involvement construct are based upon various conceptualizations and contextual implications of divergence regarding what it means to be a parent and what it means to be involved.

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Chapter I: Introduction

"Presumption should never make us neglect that which appears easy to us,
nor despair make us lose courage at the sight of difficulties."

-Benjamin Banneker

Contextual Overview

Two of American public education's earliest purposes were espoused by Dr. Benjamin Rush and Noah Webster. Rush extolled that the purpose of American public education was "to render the mass of people more homogeneous and thereby fit them more easily for uniform and peaceable government" while Webster argued that the purpose was to "implant in the minds of the American youth, the principles of virtue and liberty; and inspire them with just and liberal ideas of government" (Kelley, 2003, p. 6). Since Colonization, the purpose of American public education has been in flux and evolving. Ultimately in the late 1700's, "the new purpose of education was to secure a body of moral, loyal and productive citizens--citizens trained in practical matters who would also be active participants in building the business of America to insure the success of a new republic" (pg. 7).

Unfortunately, many of the individuals who were actively responsible for the actual building of the new republic were denied access to this public education. Within the context of the public domain of knowledge about the founding of America many speak about America's original sin--slavery--and its lasting effects. Slaves were denied access to education as a way to keep them oppressed and subservient. Our history is replete with stories of the many slaves who were willing to risk death for the simple cause of learning to read. Once the Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery, America went through many stages of segregation and discrimination enforced through what came to be known as "Jim

Crow Laws." It can be argued that one of the major lasting effects of slavery, Jim Crow, and socioeconomic disparity is known in American public education today as the achievement gap.

The United States government manifested its concern about "the education of students who come to school with disadvantages" (Jennings, in Borman, Stringfield, & Slavin, 2001, p. 1) in the enactment of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 which is reauthorized on a five year cycle. Currently, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) is known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Title I, a federally funded grant program which allocates funds to localities for the specific purpose of educating the disadvantaged, is in a long line of federal financial interventions to the states aimed at providing opportunity, equality and abolishing educational disparity. Disparity that was most prominently unveiled and denounced in the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling.

For over thirty five years Title I has also evolved in its recognition of the importance of parents in their child's education and evolved in its outlined expectations for parental involvement. Parental involvement has always been a centerpiece of Title I legislation. In fact, parental involvement has been so accepted as an important part of the system of educating the disadvantaged, that it has been codified for the first time in the history of the ESEA and "has a specific statutory definition" (US Department of Education Publication, 2004, p. 3). As such, NCLB, 2001--ESEA reauthorized-- has statutorily defined parental involvement

> as the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities, including ensuring--

> that parents play an integral role in assisting their child's learning; that parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child's education at school; that parents are full partners in their child's education and are included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child; and that other activities are carried out, such as those described in section 1118 of the ESEA (Parental Involvement). (Section 9101(32), ESEA)

The aforementioned NCLB mandates have been created for schools in part based upon extant parental involvement research syntheses (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Lewis & Henderson, 1998) that extol the significant importance of parental involvement in the educational process of children. Henderson and Mapp's synthesis and review of parental involvement studies indicated that this construct was critical to student achievement. In fact, a 2004 United States Department of Education Title I NCLB Parental Involvement Guidance Publication cited the work of Henderson and Mapp, in answer to the question, "Why is parental involvement important?" As referenced in this document,

> a synthesis of the research concluded that 'the evidence is consistent, positive, and convincing: families have a major influence on their children's achievement in school and through life. When schools, families, and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more.' (p. 3)

The document also extolled this matter of fact perspective taken from another research synthesis. In sum it stated, "In short, when parents are involved in education, children do better in school and schools improve" (Lewis & Henderson, 1998, as cited in US Department of Education, 2004, p. 3). The reference of these syntheses works in relation to NCLB, is an

indication that research syntheses on this topic are regarded as significant in the eyes of educational policy makers.

Despite widespread agreement that parental involvement is important and numerous quantitative research synthesis on the topic, including a recent presentation and discussion of over "thirty-five years of research about effective schools" that indicated parental and community involvement and the home atmosphere of a child are two of the factors "that influence student academic achievement" (Marzano, 2003, p. 10), parental involvement is still regarded as one of the most elusive components of NCLB (Herrold & O'Donnell, 2008). Moreover, the vast amount of qualitative literature on the topic has not yet been synthesized in a manner that can provide the necessary contextual understanding to advance parental theory, re-conceptualize the practice of what parental involvement means, and influence educational policy. Further, current testing mandates may actually be retrenching practice to the one-sided notion that the perspective of the educator is "best" when discussing how to improve or quantify parental involvement as it is related to student achievement. Ultimately, public educational practice may be developing an over-reliance on existing research syntheses for potential solutions.

Extant meta-analyses (Comfort, 2004; Crimm, 1992; Darling & Westberg, 2004; Fan & Chen, 1999; Jeynes, 2003, 2005, 2007; Rosenwig, 2000) have indicated that parental involvement positively affects student achievement. Yet despite the plethora of studies on parental involvement, there exist few conclusions in the quantitatively synthesized literature about, "what works for whom, when" (Comfort, 2004, p. 1) or "what kind of parental involvement is most important" (Jeynes, 2003, p. 207). Fan and Chen (1999) stated that the "operational use of parental involvement has not been clear and consistent" and "this

somewhat chaotic state in the definition of the main construct not only makes it difficult to draw any general conclusion across the studies, but may have contributed to inconsistent findings in this area" (p. 5). Zipnick (1996) stated that this construct "is a popular, yet ill-defined, term in education" (abstract). At times parental involvement has been operationalized in research literature to support various research needs (Marcon, 1999) and is often bandied about as a buzz-word or catch phrase with the underlying assumption that it means relatively the same thing in all contexts.

As such, this study was designed with dual investigative purposes in mind. This study was designed to holistically interpret and synthesize extant qualitative research on parental involvement, to explore extensions and developments related to parental involvement theory, and to present a paradigmatic shift in the synthesis of qualitative research using the explorative implementation of meta-interpretation (Weed, 2005a, 2008). Meta-interpretation (Weed, 2005a, 2008) is an iterative process for the synthesis of qualitative literature that aims to maintain the epistemological integrity of qualitative literature as data are collected from existing literature until saturation is reached and new holistic insights can be drawn from the collected and synthesized data. The application of this new and virtually untested qualitative synthesis methodology during this study led to an advancement in theoretical conceptualizations of parental involvement.

Methodological Context

Meta-interpretation (Weed, 2005a, 2008) has several distinct characteristics. This method of synthesis is "underpinned by the same interpretive epistemology as much qualitative research, therefore remaining true to the epistemology of the research being synthesized" (Weed, 2005b, p. 5, 2008, p. 15). Additionally,

> meta-interpretation focuses on highlighting differences in studies that are not accounted for in the immediate social processes or events being examined. . . . The awareness of difference, and the need to understand the reasons for such difference, rather than 'correct' for it, plays a key part in the meta-interpretation approach. (p. 8)

Ultimately, "given its interpretive epistemology, [meta-interpretation] emphasizes constructing 'a truth' rather than finding 'the truth' "(p. 9). To date, it is the only known qualitative synthesis method to offer an interpretive approach to the holistic synthesis of qualitative literature (M. Weed, personal communication, July 28, 2006, July 25, 2007; Weed, 2005b, 2008). Much of the conceptualizations of parental involvement are fueled by meta-analytic studies that control or correct for differences so that the answer to the question, "What is parental involvement?" is clean, linear and neat. For example, a close examination of extant parental literature revealed that the field is saturated by Epstein's (1995) work on the topic. While prolific, Epstein's work has produced a specific conceptualization of parental involvement: volunteering, parenting, communicating with the school, collaborating with community, decision-making, and learning-at-home. While significant, in-depth, and worthy of respect and consideration, Epstein's prolific dominance in the field has the potential to extinguish the search for theoretical and conceptual advancement of the parental involvement construct and nuances associated with this topic.

Theoretical Context

Epstein's overlapping spheres of influence theory (1995) is based on the social connections within organizations. With respect to students, the focus is on school, family, and community partnerships for [all] children's learning (Epstein). The basic premise of this theory is that frequent high-quality interactions between schools, families, and communities

will increase the likelihood that more students will receive common messages from various people about the importance of school, of working hard, of thinking creatively, of helping one another, and of staying in school (Epstein). All of Epstein's espoused six areas of involvement--parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with community--are synonymous with the concept of caring (1995). Again, it must be duly noted that these six areas are characterized by behavior and actions not by advancing understanding.

As indicated previously, a review of extant parental involvement literature revealed that Epstein's overlapping spheres of influence theory (1995) is prominent in the field. Yet, this review also indicated that other theories--social capital (Bourdieu, 1973, 1987; Coleman, 1988; Lareau, 1989), posture of cultural reciprocity (Kalyanpur & Harry, 1997), and concept of parent role construction (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997)--have also been used to underpin qualitative research on the topic of parental involvement. This knowledge prompted an elevation in the design of this study to interpretively synthesize qualitative literature on the topic at the theoretical level. Subsequently, the literature was examined and reviewed based on the premise of divergent theoretical underpinnings. This study's iteratively developed literature base was used to purposefully select this study's initial dataset on the basis of theoretical maximum variation. It must be stated that this study was not designed to test existing parental involvement theories, but instead to use these theories for a larger inquiry.

To date, gaps exist in extant qualitative research specifically related to the interpretive synthesis of qualitative parental involvement literature. The meta-interpretation approach gave rise to the ability to uncover nuances that can further develop existing parental

involvement theory and advance the identification of promising educational practices related to the construct. Blendinger and Snipes (1993) documented that, "parent involvement research, however, appears to make minimum impact on teacher practice," (p. 3). As schools and society grapple with stringent legislative mandates and expectations for continuously increased student success, an evolution in what is known about parental involvement is needed. It was the supposition of this study that a deeper understanding of the contextual implications and conceptualizations of parental involvement could contribute to improved and effective processes of parental involvement thereby having positive influences on student achievement.

Synthesis Context

While the meta-analysis method, used to synthesize quantitative studies, has proven valuable and has widespread use (Weed, 2005b), methods for synthesizing qualitative research appear to have been in a state of evolution (Chen & Turner, n.d.; Dixon-Woods, et al. 2006; Hundersmarck, 2001; Suri, 1999, 2004; Weed, 2005a,b, 2008). To date, extant methods of qualitative literature synthesis appear ineffective, cumbersome, and difficult (Hundersmarck), and ultimately resort to the positivist paradigm (Weed, 2005b, 2008). Moreover, these methods do not “take into consideration opportunities that might exist by conducting research syntheses oriented along different methodologies situated outside of positivism” (Suri, 2004, p. 3). Presently, most attempts at synthesis of qualitative literature focus on aggregation rather than interpretation and while they do mention the usefulness of diverse qualitative literature, these methods seek to incorporate or *reduce* the synthesized qualitative research into a larger quantitative synthesis (Hundersmarck; Suri, 1999, 2004; Weed, 2005b, 2008).

In addition, researchers have sought to develop ways to integrate quantitative and qualitative literature in synthesis approaches (Chen & Turner, n.d.; Dixon-Woods, et al. 2004; Shaw et al., 2001). Yet, the very idea of such incorporation destroys the integrity of qualitative research. Quantitative research and qualitative research are underpinned by two entirely different schools of thought. The qualitative tradition regards the sum of all of the contextual implications including the role of the researcher as important (if not more so) and intertwined with the outcomes or findings. Therefore, to suggest that these traditions are so equal or similar that they can be combined into one, instead of regarded individually violates assumptions and substantially limits validity and trustworthiness of findings.

Other qualitative synthesis methodologies--systematic review, meta-ethnography, meta-study, and narrative review--do not maintain the epistemological integrity of qualitative literature and thereby "quantify" qualitative literature (Weed, 2005a,b, 2008). Thus, when used to synthesize qualitative literature, there are clear deficits with these methodologies: they destroy or totally ignore the context of the findings, or do not recognize the specific nuances of the qualitative paradigm--the role of the researcher--and thereby limit the reliability and trustworthiness of the synthesis efforts.

In this context, a method for synthesizing existing qualitative research is needed. As such, many researchers have investigated, argued for, and developed alternate methodologies to synthesize qualitative research (Chen & Turner, n.d.; Dixon-Woods, et al., 2006; Hundersmarck, 2001; Suri, 1999, 2004; Weed, 2005a,b, 2008). Suri (1999) asserted,

> although qualitative research reports do not easily lend themselves to synthesis, some form of synthesis is essential to enhance the practical value of qualitative research in policy making. Synthesis of individual reports can facilitate a fuller

> understanding of the phenomenon, context or culture under consideration. However, synthesis of qualitative research should be interpretive rather than aggregative" (p. 2).

It is evident in the current body of qualitative research that, "educational research is no longer restricted to traditional qualitative methods and has become open to poststructuralist, postmodernist and/or critical viewpoints" (Suri, p. 4). Suri further offered,

> this is an era of methodological pluralism and eclecticism. Given all this complexity and diversity in principles, practices and primary research methods within education, we have a case for a research synthesis framework which is inclusive of diversity at multiple levels. It is essential that the educational research community finds strategies to accommodate high quality, rigorous research from a wide range of current methodological persuasions. Most importantly the educational research community must explore multiple ways of "justifying evidence-based claims". (p. 4)

Recognition of the changing context of qualitative research methods, and the developing acceptance of variance in qualitative research, prompted the exploration and ultimate use of meta-interpretation (Weed, 2005a, 2008) for this study, an interpretative synthesis approach that maintains the epistemological integrity of the qualitative research it synthesizes. Within the aforementioned contexts, the following questions guided this research inquiry: (1) Do extant interpretations offer the potential for any conceptual or theoretical extensions or differences as presented in qualitative research related to parental involvement? (2) Will a holistic interpretive synthesis provide a greater understanding of or insight into the overlap or interplay between and within these extant theories?

Summary

This study had two primary goals: (1) conduct a meta-interpretive synthesis of qualitative parental involvement literature underpinned by divergent parental involvement theories to: holistically offer insight into how researchers conceptualize parental involvement, understand the convergent and divergent relationships among selected theories of parental involvement, and advance the theory related to parental involvement in schools; and (2) present a change in the paradigm of qualitative literature synthesis by establishing meta-interpretation (Weed, 2005b, 2008) as a viable approach for the interpretive synthesis of educational literature. Within the context of this study, the term parent applies to anyone responsible for the care-giving and raising of a child.

The rest of this study is organized into three chapters and an appendix section. The conceptual innovation of this study's use of a virtually untested methodology permitted the appendix section to be used as a component of the transparent audit trail of the qualitative research process. Chapter II (Methodology) includes an overview, a discussion of interpretive qualitative methodology, meta-analysis, extant qualitative synthesis methodologies, meta-interpretation approach as espoused and applied during the four distinct iterations of this study, and a summary. Chapter III (Findings) includes an overview, summary of the applied meta-interpretation process, findings of the four distinct iterations of this study: (1) delimited research area and initial dataset; (2) collected data; (3) convergent and divergent theoretical data; and (4) exhausted conceptual divergence. Chapter IV (Discussion) includes a discussion of divergent conceptual data, presentation of a meta-interpretative model of parental involvement, a discussion of conceptual, theoretical, and methodological insights, presentation of a contextually differentiated process of parental

engagement, limitations, suggestions for future research, and the conclusion of the study. The Appendix section contains methodological, analytic, and reflective memos which are meaningful parts of this study's audit trail.

Chapter II: Methodology

"Whatever you can do, or dream you can do, begin it.

Boldness has genius, power and magic in it."

-Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Overview

This chapter is a presentation of the meta-interpretation methodology as (1) espoused by Weed (2005b, 2008) and (2) as applied during the four distinct iterations that comprised this study. The presentation of meta-interpretation is situated in the contexts of interpretive qualitative methodology, meta-analysis, and current qualitative research synthesis methodologies. As espoused by Weed, meta-interpretation was developed as an approach for the specific purpose of interpretatively synthesizing qualitative literature. Yet, in advance of this current study, the application of meta-interpretation for its intended purpose had remained virtually unexplored (Weed, 2005b, 2008). In addition to the explicit presentation of the meta-interpretation approach as espoused and applied in this study, standards of validity and trustworthiness are discussed in this chapter. The last section of this chapter is an explicit explanation of the iterative application of this approach as applied and further developed within the four iterations of this study.

Interpretive Qualitative Methodology

Two distinct epistemologies--positivism and constructivism--characterize the ways students "go about putting [research] elements together [making] for distinctive differences in both the research process and final product" (Glesne, 1999, p. 4). Quantitative methods of research align with the positivist paradigm and qualitative methods of research align with the interpretivist paradigm. This dichotomous nature is evident in educational research which

continually juxtaposes positivism and constructivism (also known as interpretivism). Each perspective is characterized by distinctly different methods for making sense of that which has been observed, studied, or investigated. Glesne (1999) argued that, "Quantitative methods are, in general, supported by the positivist paradigm, which characterizes the world as made up of observable, measurable facts" (p. 4). She further asserted, "Positivists assume a fixed, measurable reality exists external to people. In contrast, qualitative methods are generally supported by the interpretivist paradigm. This paradigm portrays a world in which reality is socially constructed, complex, and ever-changing" (p. 5). Peshkin (1993) offered a compelling address to the dichotomy problem.

> Research that is not theory driven, hypothesis testing, or generalization producing may be dismissed as deficient or worse. This narrow conception does an injustice to the variety of contributions that qualitative research can make. . . . I draw attention to the too-limited conventional focus on a theory-driven, hypothesis-testing, generalization-producing perspective, though not to denigrate but to place it within a broader framework that sees goodness-and therefore warrant for the inquiries of educational researchers-in a multitude of types of outcomes. (p. 23 & 28)

Certainly students of research continually seek ways to organize knowledge in order to make sense of it and to contribute to and advance extant literature on a given topic by way of multitudes of outcomes. Since the interpretivist approach lacks standardization (Glesne, 1999) ambiguity with the process exists. "To do justice to complexity, researchers avoid simplifying social phenomena and instead explore the range of behavior" (p. 5). Merriman (2002) stated the following of basic interpretive qualitative study

> . . . the researcher is interested in understanding how participants make meaning of a situation or phenomenon, this meaning is mediated through the researcher as instrument, the strategy is inductive, and the outcome is descriptive. In conducting a basic qualitative study, you seek to discover and understand a phenomenon, a process, the perspective and worldviews of the people involved or a combination of these. (p. 6)

In appreciation of qualitative methodology, Peshkin (1993) stated

> . . . the 'heart of morality' (Noddings, 1984 as cited in Peshkin, 1993) lies in respecting-not defending-the integrity of the qualitative paradigm and that this respect does not derive from taking as one's starting point the issues and premises as defined by non-qualitative components. It derives, rather, from taking qualitative inquiry as the starting point and asking, "What is its generative promise?" . . . To qualitative researchers, what is to be learned does not invariably necessitate a particular study design involving theory, hypotheses, or generalizations, though it may. It necessitates a judgment that leads them to decide what research designs they should frame to produce one or more of many imagined and as yet unimagined outcomes . . . . (p. 23)

Glesne noted that, "Interpretivists assume that they deal with multiple, socially constructed realities or 'qualities' that are complex and indivisible into discrete variables, they regard their research task as coming to understand and interpret how the various participants in a social setting construct the world around them" (1999, p. 5). The interpretivist researcher,

> becomes the main research instrument as he or she observes, asks questions, and interacts with research participants (p. 5). A key difference between the positivist and

> constructivist paradigms, respectively, is the concern with researcher objectivity is replaced by a focus on the role of subjectivity in the research process. (p. 5)

Weed stated that

> . . . meta-interpretation is underpinned by an interpretivist epistemology, and consequently is not constrained by the desire for the accolade of science. In fact, meta-interpretation sees the location of the researcher in the process as an important and vital part of the synthesis. (2005b, p. 7; 2008 p. 16)

Meta-interpretation was presented as a method to achieve the dual goals of better understanding the theoretical implications of the phenomenon of parental involvement and understanding the role of the researcher in the process of the synthesis.

"Given the focus on interpretation, the approach is termed 'meta-interpretation'" (Weed, 2005b, p. 5) and it focuses on the study of phenomena and "an effort is made to include those studies that are theoretically relevant based on the analysis to date" (p.12). Meta-interpretation also focuses on highlighting differences in studies that are not accounted for in the immediate social processes or events being examined . . . the awareness of difference, and the need to understand the reasons for such difference, rather than correct for it, plays a key part in the meta-interpretation approach (p. 5). Weed argued, "In the meta-interpretation approach, the value of the studies is not pre-determined, rather, as recommended by Noblit and Hare (1988, p. 16) 'the worth of studies' is determined in the process of achieving a synthesis" (Weed, p. 10).

Meta-Analysis

The characteristics of the meta-analysis methodology are summarized in a 2006 report published by the Alliance for Excellent Education. According to this report, meta-analysis

> is a particularly powerful way of synthesizing large bodies of research, as it relies on quantitative studies and permits the calculation of effect sizes. . . . Effect sizes report the average difference between a type of instruction and a comparison condition. They indicate the strength of the effect. The following guidelines make these numbers more meaningful: 0.20 = small or mild effect; 0.50 = medium or moderate effect; and 0.80 = large or strong effect. (Graham & Perin, p. 13)

This method estimates an overall effect-size of a range of studies from the individual effect sizes of each individual study, thus giving greater power to the overall statistic (Wood, 2000 as cited in Weed 2005a). It does this by calculating a mean of means: in the original study, a mean is taken of the effects of a particular variable for all subjects in the study, then variables are averaged to provide an overall effect size (mean) for that study, and then the effect sizes of a number of studies are averaged in the meta-analysis procedure (Weed, 2005a). Meta-analysis should only be used when studies are similar in terms of their population, address the same substantive issue, and use the same statistical procedure and manipulations (Weed). Designed for and used exclusively with quantitative literature, meta-analysis is a way to synthesize the findings of many research studies. An examination of meta-analyses on the topic of parental involvement substantiated an important claim of this study: the dominance of the use of the meta-analysis methodology in the field of parental involvement research

synthesis has almost exclusively framed what is known (and potentially yet to be known) in the field.

Meta-analyses related to parental involvement exist (Comfort 2004; Crimm, 1992; Darling & Westberg, 2004; Fan & Chen, 1999; Jeynes, 2003, 2005, 2007; & Rosenwig, 2000). What these studies had in common, along with the meta-analytic approach to synthesis, was the inconsistent definition of the parental involvement construct. For example, all researchers indicated that their meta-analyses were conducted because there was a void or lack of research synthesis available in the literature on these types of parental involvement. That is because of a lack of clear scientific evidence about parental involvement and literacy development (Darling & Westberg, 2004) and lack of conclusion about which parent training program is best for whom (Comfort, 2004). Among other issues, in the aforementioned meta-analyses parental involvement had been synthesized based on the operationalization of the construct--an artifact of quantitative research synthesis--rather than understood and interpreted in relation to its context. In short, the lack of a theoretical underpinning or conceptual context for these studies is a methodological weakness of meta-analysis which purports that there is one correct answer about which aspects of parental involvement have a standard effect in all situations. These meta-analyses (Comfort; Crimm; Darling & Westberg; Fan & Chen; Jeynes, 2003, 2005, 2007; & Rosenwig) of educational research have suggested that parental involvement has a positive effect on student achievement. Yet, there exist few conclusions in the extant quantitatively synthesized literature regarding the basic questions, “What works for whom, when” (Comfort) or “What kind of parental involvement is most important (Jeynes, 2003). A possible reason that this question remains unanswered is that the meta-analysis approach synthesizes studies so that

posed questions are confirmed or refuted; therefore, *understanding* is not an aim of meta-analysis. Results from parental involvement meta-analyses are grounded in positivistic notions of behavior and action which have been presented through the lens of meta-analytic synthesis.

In an attempt to address the somewhat inconsistent research findings in the area of parental involvement and student achievement, Fan and Chen's 1999 meta-analysis was an effort to solidify extant quantitative literature, up through 1997, on the topic of parental involvement and student achievement. The authors saw the need "for constructing a meta-analytic synthesis of the literature about the empirical relationship between parental involvement and students' academic achievement" (p. 6). Fan and Chen noted that "such a quantitative synthesis of the empirical findings in this area has the potential to provide insights about the relevant issues related to parental involvement research that are otherwise not readily available from individual studies" (p. 6).

Fan and Chen's (1999) study selection criteria was very specific and reduced a field of some 2000 articles down to 25 that fit the criteria they set forth. Fan and Chen "limited their quantitative synthesis to…empirical studies…focused on the bivariate relationship between parental involvement and students' academic achievement, and conducted meta-analysis involving correlational coefficients between the two constructs" (p.6). Absent from their meta-analysis--a methodological hallmark of this synthesis procedure--was an expressed theoretical framework. Researchers have recognized and suggested that the parental involvement construct is duly informed by theory and many individual quantitative and qualitative studies on the topic of parental involvement explicitly state their theoretical underpinning to include social capital theory (Auerbach, 2007; Bell-Baptiste, 2003;

Escoffery, 2007; Haynes, 2006; McNeal, 1999; Reyes Cruz, 2005; Smith, 2002); overlapping spheres of influence theory (Bowen, 2003; Cortes-Torrado, 2000; Egan 1997; Gaffney, 1998; Hynes, 2006; Mahler, 1997; Mora, 1997; Smikle, 2003; Strauss, 2000; Suver, 2000; Wiser, 2000); the concept of parent role construction theory (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Auerbach, 2007); and the posture of cultural reciprocity theory (Johnson, 2003; Kalyanpur, 1998). As such, parental involvement should be regarded as a multidimensional concept (Strauss, 2000) with theoretical connections. Recognition of this further supports the claim that synthesis efforts that attempt to control for difference substantially limit and do not allow the inherent nuances of qualitative literature to provide insight on a topic.

In 2003, Jeynes conducted a meta-analysis of 21 studies to determine the impact of parental involvement on minority student's academic achievement. Jeynes' literature review included studies from 1994 to 2001. The time of the literature review spanned approximately seven years; however, Jeynes' review was very limited in scope. Jeynes' search sought to isolate studies that addressed the issue of parental involvement with respect to minority student achievement. His search produced 20 studies that had a sufficient degree of quantitative data to be included in his analysis and included approximately 12,000 subjects. This may indicate that the field of literature about the effect of parental involvement on minority achievement is minimal. It could also be an indication that the nature of meta-analysis limits the scope of "useable" research studies for synthesis. Jeynes then searched every major database to find studies that examined the effects of parental involvement on the academic achievement of children in K-12. A statistical analysis was then performed to determine the overall effects of parental involvement obtained for each study, as well as specific components of parental involvement related to various minority group participants:

(1) mostly African American; (2) all African American; (3) mostly Asian American; (4) all Asian American; (5) mostly Latino and Asian American; (6) and all Latino and Asian American. According to Jeynes, "four different measures of academic achievement were used to assess the effects of parental involvement on academic achievement" (p. 206). Jeynes noted that "the research done on this issue (parental involvement in education) has frequently been unable to give guidance regarding the extent to which parental involvement helps student achievement and just what kind of parental involvement is most important" (p. 207). Hence, meta-analysis systematically omits contextual and theoretical implications, suggesting this research method is not the most appropriate choice to use in an attempt to arrive at the empirical evidence that would more accurately provide a fuller understanding of the parental involvement concept. Jeynes acknowledged that "further research is needed to examine why it is that particular kinds of parental involvement are especially beneficial for certain racial groups" (p. 215).

So, in 2005, Jeynes shifted his meta-analytic perspective slightly and conducted a meta-analysis of 41 studies focused on the relation of parental involvement to urban elementary school student academic achievement. Jeynes' search yielded more than 5,000 articles and papers on parental involvement, and according to Jeynes, nearly all of these articles were not quantitative in nature. As a result, from the 5,000 initial results "41 studies possessed a sufficient degree of quantitative data to include in [the] meta-analysis" (p. 243). Again, because of the pre-selection criteria set forth by Jeynes, seemingly, the bulk of the literature was not "useable". Jeynes conducted three analyses of the selected Grades K-6 studies: (1) analysis to determine the effect sizes for the overall parental involvement variable and for parental involvement programs: (2) analysis to examine the association

between specific components of parental involvement . . . with student achievement; and (3) an analysis to examine the relationship between parental involvement and student achievement by race and gender. While the use of this methodology led to findings that identified certain aspects of parental involvement positively associated with student achievement (Fan & Chen, 1999; Jeynes, 2003), this methodology was not designed to lead to a holistic understanding of the body of literature synthesized or the concept of parental involvement. Though the parameters of these studies focused on specific groups; a gap in contextual and conceptual understanding related to the parental involvement construct being studied persisted.

Jeynes (2005) referenced the value of qualitative literature in his study while simultaneously acknowledging the difficulty with the process of the quantification of qualitative data. Jeynes noted that ". . . qualitative studies are definitely valuable, [but] they are difficult to code for quantitative purposes, and any attempt to do so might bias the results of the meta-analysis" (p. 242). Jeynes, perhaps like many other researchers, did not consider that the quantification of qualitative data destroyed its integrity. This notion again substantiated one of the dual claims of this study that a methodological approach that can respectfully synthesize qualitative research was needed to offer holistic and contextual understanding of the phenomenon under study.

While meta-analysis does allow for large sample sizes, as the "133,600" used in Fan and Chen's study (1999, p. 13), "larger" does not automatically equate to "better" when trying to understand "what works, in which situations, and for whom" (Solesbury 2002 as cited in Weed, 2005b, p. 25). Meta-analysis does not call for theory or conceptual framework, although one is implied through the exclusion criteria. It is in this way that the

meta-analysis methodology explicitly ignores its own theoretical framework and in doing so limits the ability to make advances in understanding. In summation, a limitation of meta-analysis is that it is not able to synthesize literature at the theoretical level. Thus, while meta-analysis can consolidate knowledge, it is limited in the ability to generate new knowledge. Meta-analysis, methodologically regarded as a common approach of the positivist paradigm, is an available tool for combining the results of similarly investigated quantitative studies. In this regard, qualitative literature deserves a methodological approach, especially when used for the synthesis of research at the theoretical level, which is respectful of the nuances of the qualitative paradigm. While several approaches are espoused to synthesize qualitative research, to date only meta-interpretation (Weed, 2005b, 2008) purports to be an approach that maintains the epistemological integrity of the research it synthesizes.

Qualitative Research Synthesis Methodologies

The general aim of all research synthesis approaches is to synthesize several research studies in order to arrive at a broader conclusion and various approaches exist to meet this objective. Yet with extremely limited exception, qualitative synthesis approaches are positivist in nature (Weed, 2005a,b, 2008). Meta-interpretation stands in contrast. This methodology provides an ability to interpretively synthesize qualitative literature and maintain epistemological integrity.

Meta-interpretation was developed, "from an extended analysis and evaluation of nine research methods involving synthesis, plus a broader review of research synthesis literature" (Weed, 2005b, p. 5, Weed, 2008, p. 15). While this discussion of research methods Weed presented was not exhaustive, his review of the landscape " . . . ensured a wider familiarity with the range of issues in synthesizing previous research (p. 5). Five

synthesis approaches: meta-analysis, systematic review, narrative review, meta-ethnography, and meta-study were referenced. Weed discussed their purposes and then illustrated their connection to positivism. Three other qualitative synthesis methodologies (Chen & Turner, n.d.; Hundersmarck, 2001; Suri, 1999) offer further comparison and rationale for meta-interpretation.

Systematic review uses pre-determined exclusion criteria--prevalent in the positivist paradigm--in its aim for comprehensive sampling (Weed, 2005a, 2008). For many researchers, especially those in health care/medicine, the systematic review procedure has been seen as the logical alternative to the traditional narrative literature review (Weed). Systematic reviews have been used to compile the "best evidence" for clinical decisions and for policy making (Cook, Mulrow, & Haynes, 1997; Tranfield & Denyer, 2002 as cited in Weed, 2005b, 2008). According to Pai, et al. (2004), the basic steps to conducting a systematic review are: "(i) formulation of a focused research question; (ii) a comprehensive, exhaustive search and inclusion of primary studies; (iii) quality assessment of included studies and data extraction; (iv) synthesis of study results (meta-analysis); and (v) interpretation of the results and report-writing" (p. 87). The main "objective of a systematic review is to summarize the evidence on a specific clinical question" (p. 87). This process is laborious and "time-consuming" (p. 87) usually requiring the work of a team. Meta-interpretation, as discussed below, is distinguished from systematic review in its ability to converge on new meaning through maximal divergent sampling, rather than exhaustion or inclusion, thereby offering new insights through modest research endeavors.

Narrative review summarizes qualitative research in an attempt to draw a holistic interpretation (Educational Research Review, n.d.). In essence, "traditional narrative

reviews, usually written by experts, are qualitative summaries of evidence on a given topic" Pai, et al. (2004). Narrative reviews usually "involve informal, subjective methods to collect and interpret studies, and tend to selectively cite literature that reinforces pre-conceived notions" (p. 86). This type of review "often [does] not explicitly describe how the reviewers searched, selected, and appraised the quality of [included] studies" (p. 86). This method is similar to meta-interpretation in that it does not rely on specific search and inclusion criteria, however a point of departure is that meta-interpretation uses an iterative approach to the inclusion of studies for synthesis (Weed, 2005a, 2008). Moreover, one of the key methods of meta-interpretation approach is the maintaining of a transparent audit trail.

Meta-ethnography is regarded as the closest to the meta-interpretation approach (Weed, 2005a, 2008) and this method recognizes the central importance of meaning in context and the focus on interpretations as the data for synthesis. Noblit and Hare stated that "meta-ethnography is a term [used] to characterize [their] approach to synthesizing understanding from ethnographic accounts" (1998, p. 10). Interestingly, when describing the audience for their book, Noblit and Hare asserted

> [w]hat follows is our idea about how qualitative researchers ought to think about [the task of synthesizing studies]. This book is not for everyone. It will be of most interest to social scientists who struggle to "put together" the many qualitative studies now being produced, to the researcher or student who wishes to construct interpretivist literature reviews, to the policy researchers and policymakers who wish to use humanistic research in their deliberations but who are at a loss about how to 'reduce' it, and to qualitative researchers concerned with interpreting multiple cases and/or alternative lines of argument. (p. 10-11)

From the outset, the notion of *reduction* of data is juxtaposed with *interpretation* of data. As such, this methodology begins with one of its research 'feet' in the positivist paradigm. Which is in direct opposition to their statement that "our notion of meta-ethnography is firmly based in the interpretivist paradigm" (p. 11). The main emphasis is on the translating of interpretations into one another (Noblit & Hare, 1988). According to Noblit and Hare metaphoric reduction is the tool to achieve this objective. The reductivist nature of this approach is a clear difference point with meta-interpretation (Weed, 2005a, 2008) which, through its iterative nature, seeks to expand the insights (within the context of difference) able to be gleaned from collected data.

Similar to meta-interpretation, a difference between meta-ethnography and other synthesis methodologies is that meta-ethnography does not use the primary data collected through interviews and observations as the raw data for the synthesis. The subject of the synthesis in meta-ethnography is the interpretations of the data. As asserted, " . . .we focus on constructing interpretations, not analyses. . . . the synthesis of qualitative research should be as interpretive as any ethnographic account" (Noblit & Hare, 1998, p. 11). Noblit and Hare designed their work to synthesize ethnographic studies that were about similar things, studies that refuted each other, and studies that suggested a line of argument (p. 38). In light of this critical perspective, meta-ethnography was regarded as a major shift in the synthesis of ethnographic literature (Noblit & Hare, 1988).

Meta-study is used to synthesize qualitative research and is a research process that combines meta-theory, meta-method, meta-analysis, and meta-synthesis. Dixon-Woods, et al. (2004) noted that meta-study provides a useful framework, but little of this methodology is original in its conceptualization. As Dixon-Woods et al. further noted

> Paterson, et al. (2001) use the term 'meta-synthesis' to describe bringing together the ideas that have been deconstructed in the three meta-study processes. The primary goal of such an analysis is to develop mid-range theory grounded in qualitative research. . . . The processes . . . are laborious and time-consuming, and [Paterson, et. al] suggest that they can be done effectively only as a team effort. (p. 21)

According to Zhao (1991), "meta-study refers, first of all, to studies that come after some other studies, that is, some individual studies must exist before meta-study becomes possible" (p. 377). This method

> involves studies about (or of) other studies. . . . [a]fter a given set of studies is done, at least two different types of studies can follow: (1) restudying the same phenomenon that was previously studied (replication, for example) and (2) studying the results and the processes of the previous studies. Meta-study belongs to the later category [and] it is occasionally referred to as a second-order study. (p. 378)

In that meta-interpretation is about the interpretation (study) of interpretations--not the desire to replicate the original study--therein is its point of convergence with meta-study.

Qualitative meta-analysis (Chen & Turner, n.d.) is drawn upon grounded theory as the theoretical framework to conduct a qualitative meta-analysis on existing . . . literature. With respect to data collection, this method specifies a set of criteria for research appropriate to the study (Chen & Turner). This set of criteria justifies the "inclusion/exclusion of the studies" (p. 5). Chen and Turner asserted that "the data search [would] be systematic and exhaustive within the data pool. . . . [and] that "the principle of theoretical sampling, data coding and analysis will be guided by the themes emerging from the data collection/analysis throughout the study process" (p. 6). Additionally,

> . . . after the initial data collection/coding (which is based on the general perspective of the guidance criteria drawing from the research questions), the researcher will refine the data collection criteria and coding categories according to the themes [that] emerge during the research process so that a framework of the data can be gradually formalize[d] and then to guide the succeeding data collection in terms of relevance. (p. 6)

From the above statement, it seems that this method is to be conducted through an iterative process like meta-interpretation; however, there are clear points of difference with meta-interpretation. As Weed (2005b) argued,". . . rigidly . . . applying such criteria can mean that important studies are excluded from synthesis because they do not conform to *a priori* understandings of what is important or relevant" (p. 9). Moreover, the emphasis on exhaustive sampling is a positivist notion that implies comprehensive coverage which is clearly another point of difference from meta-interpretation.

In qualitative meta-analysis, "the data . . . will be analyzed through the coding process" using the constant comparative method (Chen & Turner, n.d., p. 7) which will allow the researcher to "be constantly comparing the data collected/coded to redesign the former coding categories to make sense out [of] the data as a whole" (p. 7). The authors used an explicit coding strategy to include open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. . . "for the purpose of systematically reviewing the literature" (p. 8). With respect to illuminating another core difference of this *oxymoronic* method with meta-interpretation, Weed (2005b, 2008) did not specifically outline the process of coding that a researcher would use when conducting a meta-interpretive synthesis. The prescriptive description used by Chen and Turner is connected to the lock-step procedures of meta-analysis. While their aim is to

devise a way to synthesize qualitative literature, Chen and Turner's method can create tensions between method and data which can "… [result] in the loss of much of the richness of qualitative research" (Weed, 2005b, p. 4).

Suri (1999) conducted a pilot synthesis of "ten qualitative research studies" and outlined decision points that occurred in the process of synthesizing this literature (p. 3). Subsequently, a 'system' for the synthesis of qualitative research, to be included in a larger project that also contained qualitative syntheses of extant research, was presented. Suri realized that the questions that could be addressed by a qualitative synthesis of literature were "better suited to promote an understanding for the phenomenon at hand" (p. 3). Her method of preliminary coding essentially comprised the following steps: (1) reading each report to familiarize herself with the data at hand; (2) identifying the context, major themes, and findings emerging from each report by using an open-coding scheme; (3) continually going back to the first paper and recoding it in light of the information obtained from the second paper; (4) moving back-and-forth between individual reports while coding each new report (p. 3). With respect to sampling, Suri asserted that "purposeful sampling may be justifiable" (p. 3) rather than the comprehensive aims of meta-analysis. In line with Maxwell (2005) the term purposeful selection (p. 88) is preferable to sampling. The term "sampling" is problematic for qualitative research, because it implies the purpose of representing the population sampled" (p. 88). Looking at this issue from the qualitative perspective, it should be expected, not *justifiable*, that "selecting those times, settings, . . . individuals, [and extant studies] that can provide the information needed in order to answer research questions is the most important consideration in qualitative selection decisions" (p. 88).

Suri (2004) used the techniques of theoretical saturation during the analysis stage. The final stage of her study was a content analysis that employed the use of reciprocal translational synthesis (Noblit & Hare, 1998). As indicated by Weed, (2005b), " . . . the tool for [reciprocal translation] is metaphoric reduction . . . [which] is, by necessity, a reductivist method" (p. 7-8) and associated with the positivist paradigm. Noblit and Hare (1998) noted that

> we better understand our own studies by translating them into other studies. . . . We read the manuscripts repeatedly and chose these metaphors as basic to the account. Like all interpretations, a meta-ethnography is but a "reading of what is studied. . . . However, all interpretations must be grounded in the texts to be synthesized; the chosen metaphoric reductions are to be judged by their ability to portray the essence of these texts. Without such reductions, synthesis is not possible. (p. 40)

With respect to Suri's work, what began essentially as an interpretivist 'system' of synthesis for qualitative data, resorted to positivist paradigm methods of reducing the data from culled studies though she argued that "the synthesis of qualitative reports should be an interpretive, inductive, hermeneutic, and eclectic process at every stage" (p. 9).

During a larger research synthesis project on the quality of teaching Hundersmarck (2001) and other researchers at Ohio Northern University encountered many methodological problems resulting in the attempt to develop a method to synthesize qualitative educational research on the topic. Seeking to synthesize qualitative studies on methodological grounds, Hundersmarck outlined three methods two of which from the outset "were direct applications of qualitative analysis as described in the literature using aggregation and synthesis" (p. 1) and the third method used "a multi-layered inductive approach that employed aggregation,

synthesis, and narrative description as a means of analysis" (p. 1). The three approaches drew heavily on the work of other researchers who have sought to synthesize qualitative literature (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2002; Suri, 1999) and Hundersmarck's innovation.

Hundersmarck (2001) sought to analyze six qualitative studies using "research standards, existing literature on qualitative synthesis, and assessment as guides for formulating different types of synthesis. The aim of this endeavor was to ultimately include the synthesis of the qualitative findings into a larger project that used the meta-analysis approach to synthesize quantitative studies. Foremost, Hundersmarck indicated that "there was no linear process in conducting this study . . . [and] it was apparent that there was a wide variation in the manner in which the different authors approached the relationship between [the constructs being studied]" (p. 2). Hundersmarck asserted that based on this "it was . . . apparent that the synthesis would require an integrative approach in which the variability across studies could be captured in a type of synthesis that did not over-generalize each study's findings" (p. 3). Yet ultimately, Hundersmarck's attempts were closely related to the positivist paradigm.

The first synthesis--quantification of qualitative studies--used "consisted of a quantitative overview of the studies . . . [using] both a traditional approach of quantification and a multi-tiered inductive approach as advocated by Suri (1999)" (Hundersmarck, 2001, p. 13). Study reviewers completed a qualitative coding checklist of criteria for each study and then "the check box results of each study were simply added up and summarized" (p. 13). It is evident that this approach to qualitative synthesis resorted to the positivist paradigm where the world is characterized as being made of "observable, measurable facts" (Glesne, 1999, p. 5).

The second synthesis--synthesizing the coding process--involved two coders writing notes during the coding process before comparison and synthesis of the studies (Hundersmarck, 2001, p. 16). Coders recorded his or her interpretations of each study as their individual coding process progressed using a specified, pre-determined coding category (p. 16). Even though "this synthesis was designed to be analyzed based on each coder's interpretation of the studies . . ." (p. 16), the use of a pre-determined, specified criteria vehicle for analysis, this synthesis also resorts to the positivist paradigm.

The third synthesis--integrative narrative approach--"involved . . . utilizing the first two types of synthesis coupled with the use of self-described narrative findings from each study" (Hundersmarck, 2001, p. 18). So, "in addition to using quantitative analysis and coder notes, a representative quote from each study was selected by each coder as part of this synthesis" and "the quotes were then compared against the coder's notes and the quantitative synthesis" (p. 18). Hundersmarck identified this as a "best type" of analysis (p. 18). Yet, a concern can be raised that this method utilized a quantitative premise of looking for *sameness* rather than celebrating *difference* which is a nuance of the qualitative paradigm. Overall, Hundersmarck noted that each of the syntheses conducted, " . . . do not necessarily provide a neat 'fit' into a universal and holistic method of synthesis" (p. 21). He further asserted that "as difficult as it was, it is [a] process I recommend for those foolish enough to attempt a qualitative synthesis. Interestingly, Hundersmarck explained that his paper on the topic has been taken out of press because of difficulty with publishing and he offered Suri's work to researchers interested in the topic of qualitative synthesis methods (personal communication, December 12, 2008). In contrast to Hundersmarck's work, the meta-interpretation method (Weed, 2005b, 2008) is a presentation of an approach for a holistic method of synthesis.

In sum, most qualitative synthesis methods do not focus on the interpretative nature of qualitative inquiry and ultimately use reductivist or positivistic methods to synthesize qualitative data. Perhaps it is the attempt to synthesize qualitative research on the methodological level that ultimately returns synthesis efforts to the positivist paradigm. A synthesis effort at the theoretical level could provide the opportunity for more epistemological integrity with the synthesis process. Therefore, qualitative research synthesis methods should strive to maintain the integrity of the qualitative data synthesized. While Suri's (1999) method is ultimately connected to positivism, the following assertion is relevant to the discussion of qualitative synthesis. She asserted,

> although qualitative research reports do not easily lend themselves to synthesis, some form of synthesis is essential to enhance the practical value of qualitative research in policy making. Synthesis of individual reports can facilitate a fuller understanding of the phenomenon, context or culture under consideration. However, synthesis of qualitative research should be interpretive rather than aggregative. (p. 4)

As discussed, extant methods of literature synthesis have various shortcomings which include: (1) the notion of reduction as a part of the synthesis; (2) pre-determined exclusion criteria; (3) striving for exhaustion; (4) not explicitly describing how the reviewers searched, selected, and appraised the quality of [included] studies in the synthesis; and (5) aiming to replicate original studies. When juxtaposed with extant methods of qualitative research synthesis, it is clear that the focus on providing a way for a holistic interpretive synthesis sets meta-interpretation (Weed, 2005b, 2008) apart.

Meta-Interpretation as Espoused

Meta-interpretation as espoused by Weed (2005a,b, 2008), is an iterative approach to the interpretive synthesis of qualitative literature underpinned by seven fundamental features

> (1) the role of the synthesizer as an active agent; (2) a recognition that the synthesis will be 'an interpretation' rather than 'the interpretation' of the collection of studies; (3) an ideographic (rather than pre-determined) approach to the development of exclusion criteria; (4) an iterative approach to the theoretical sampling of studies for synthesis; (5) a focus on 'meaning in context'; (6) interpretation as the 'raw data' for synthesis; and (7) a transparent audit trail as a guarantor of the integrity and trustworthiness of the synthesis. (2005b, pg. 21)

To date, "meta-interpretation is the only integrated holistic approach to the interpretive synthesis of qualitative research" (M. Weed, personal communication, July 2007). Weed asserted that " . . . the underlying assumption of synthesis is that such procedures can add to the body of knowledge, and in this tradition the aim of meta-interpretation is to make conceptual links across previously unconnected areas of 'undiscovered public knowledge' " (Weed, 2005b, p. 25). Weed noted, "primary qualitative research is underpinned by interpretivist epistemologies, yet approaches to the synthesis of qualitative research tend to be derived from positivist approaches" (Weed, 2005b, p. 4). Ultimately, "this creates tensions which can lead to the quantification of qualitative findings for the purposes of synthesis" (p. 4). Weed noted in particular that work on the incorporation of qualitative data into systematic reviews (Roberts, K., et al., 1998 as cited in Weed, 2005b)

> has seen the extension of a Bayesian approach to meta-analysis . . . such an approach raises two issues: firstly, reducing qualitative findings to a statistical measure of

> probability results in the loss of much of the richness of qualitative research; secondly, the approach relegates qualitative research to a secondary or supporting role to quantitative data largely, it appears, because quantitative data is easier to synthesize (p. 4).

Meta-interpretation strives to do what no other qualitative synthesis methodology has been documented to do: maintain the epistemological integrity of the nature of the qualitative research paradigm (Weed, 2005b, 2008). This method's connectedness and respect for the qualitative research paradigm affirms the idea that qualitative research has value in developing educational practices that can help children achieve, schools improve, and provide greater understanding into the conceptualization of parent involvement in extant qualitative literature.

In addition, as espoused by Weed, meta-interpretation is comprised of four iteratively distinguishable steps which are subsequently outlined and represented by Figures one through five which are credited to Weed (2005b, 2008).

Step one

Researchers are to " . . . identify the research area for the synthesis" (Weed, 2005b, p. 21, 2008, p. 23) and make "an initial selection . . . of around four or five contrasting studies, informed by an awareness of, or theoretical sensitivity to, the research area (Glaser, 1978 as cited in Weed, 2005b, 2008) and selected on the basis of maximum variation sampling" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 233 as cited in Weed, 2005b, p. 21, 2008). Maximum variation sampling is the sampling practice of selecting "cases that cut across some range of variation such as students of different ethnic backgrounds enrolled in an environmental studies program" (Patton 1990, in Glesne 1999, p. 29). Maximum variation sampling

"searches for common patterns across great variation" (Glesne, p. 29). See Figure 1 on the following page.

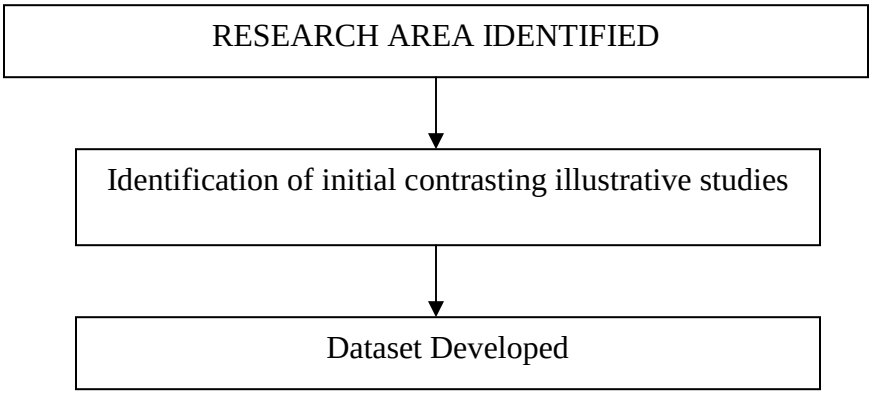

Figure 1 Step One of Meta-Interpretation as Espoused

Step two

Employers of this approach are to conduct an "initial analysis which, given the focus on 'meaning in context' (Mishler, 1979 as cited in Weed, 2005b, p. 21) which involves a concurrent thematic and context analysis of the studies in question" (Altheide, 1996 as cited in Weed, 2005b, p. 21, 2008). Weed argued that "during this analysis issues may emerge that warrant the exclusion of one or more of the studies, and a range of issues for further investigation may emerge" (Weed, 2005b, p. 21, 2008). This initial analysis is regarded as the first 'iteration' of data. Iteration is defined as a procedure in which repetition of a *sequence of operations* yields results successively closer to a *desired result* (Webster's 2007). For meta-interpretation, the desired result is saturation. During the first iteration, the need for exclusion of studies is considered; however, as there will be no exclusion criteria

from previous iterations, any exclusion will be on new bases for exclusion (Weed, 2005b, 2008). The exclusion criteria will be developed because it is beyond the scope of the synthesis (Weed) or "that the quality of the research is flawed" (2005b, p. 22). Specific reasons are to be noted in detail and then exclusion criteria will emerge accordingly (Weed). See Figure 2 below.

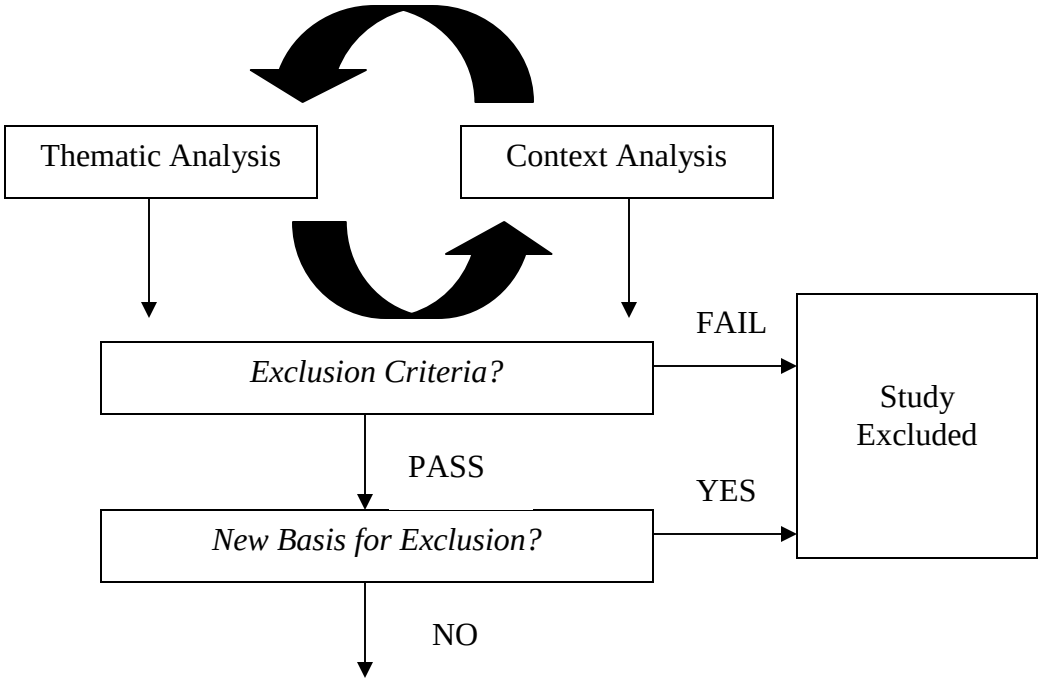

Figure 2 Step Two of Meta-Interpretation as Espoused

Step three

Researchers will need to "identify *conceptual issues* that will arise from the first analysis…and search the literature for further studies that address these issues" (Weed, 2005b, p. 22). After such studies are located, the dataset must further be developed by including the other studies that will have previously been analyzed and those added from the

most recent search (Weed 2005b, 2008). At this point, the second iteration of the meta-interpretation is begun and the studies undergo a further thematic and context analysis (Weed 2005b, 2008). Following this second analysis, "the need for any exclusions is considered" again (2005b, p. 22). Exclusion criteria from the previous analysis are considered and if a study fails such exclusion criteria it is duly excluded (Weed). Yet, it will have to be considered whether or not the exclusion criteria from the previous iteration remain relevant given the analysis in the current iteration (Weed 2005b, 2008). If it appears that they may not, then all previously excluded studies will be reviewed for potential re-inclusion, and the dataset will be redeveloped and a further iteration will commence (Weed). If the previous exclusion criteria remain relevant, then new bases for exclusion are considered and the reasons for the studies' exclusion during this iteration are noted and the generic exclusion criteria developed further if necessary (Weed). Then, emergent conceptual issues will again be considered and the need to further theoretically sample (Strauss & Corbin, 1990 as cited in Weed, 2005b, 2008) will be examined. See Figure 3 on the following page.

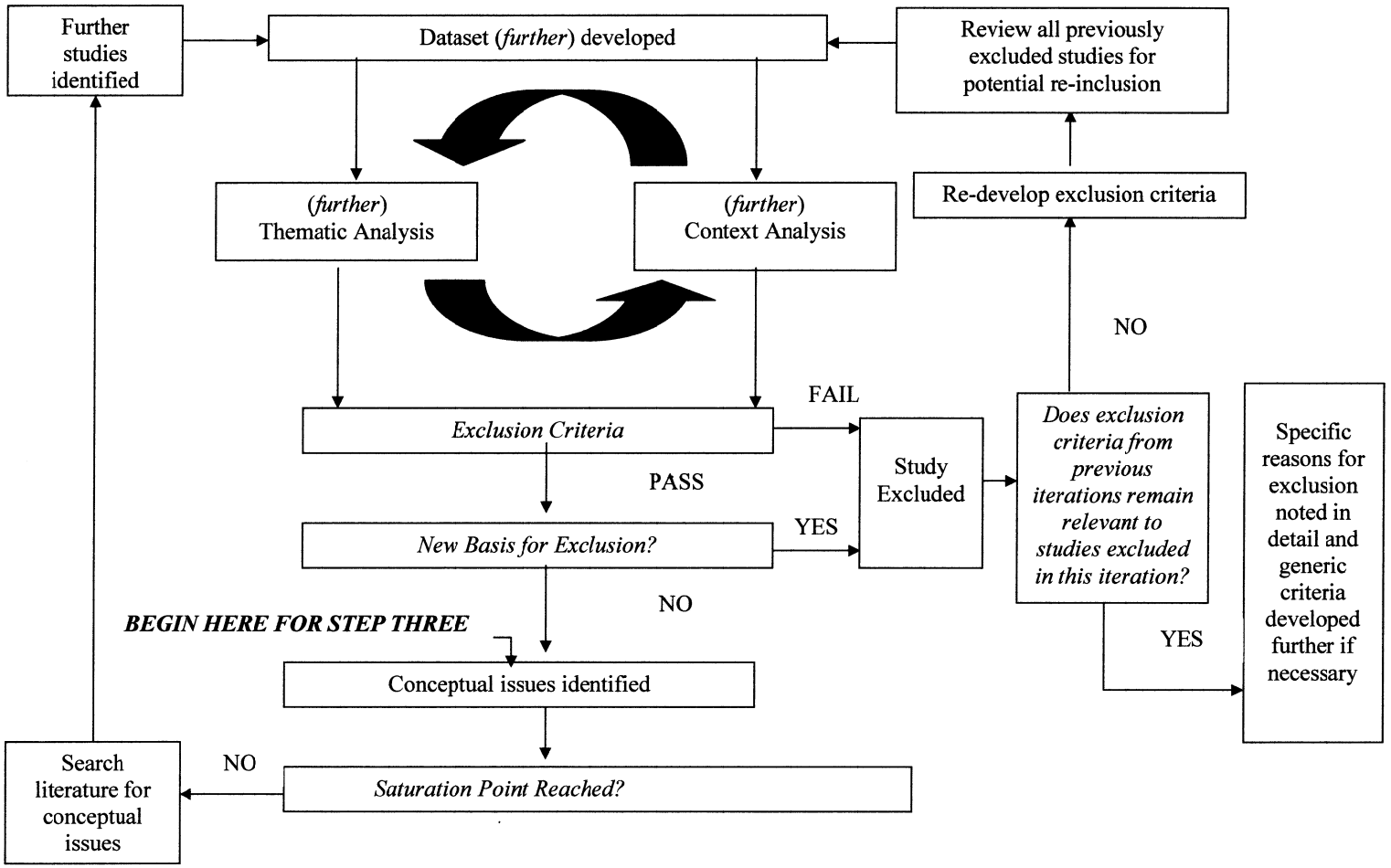

Figure 3 Step Three of Meta Interpretation Procedure as Espoused

Step four

The meta-interpretation will continue iteratively until *theoretical saturation* is reached and no new insights are emerging from the analysis (Weed, 2005b). At this point, "the final findings of the meta-interpretation, and any emergent insights, will be developed and written up" (p. 23). A statement clearly identifying the boundaries of applicability will be written up with the findings (Weed). The boundaries will be identified by a thorough review of exclusion criteria and excluded studies. The statement of applicability, like the transparent audit trail (Smith 2003; Yin, 1990, as cited in Weed, 2005b), will play an important role in ensuring the quality and integrity of the meta-interpretation and substantially differentiates the methodology from other syntheses in which exclusion criteria are identified a priori. See Figure 4 on the next page.

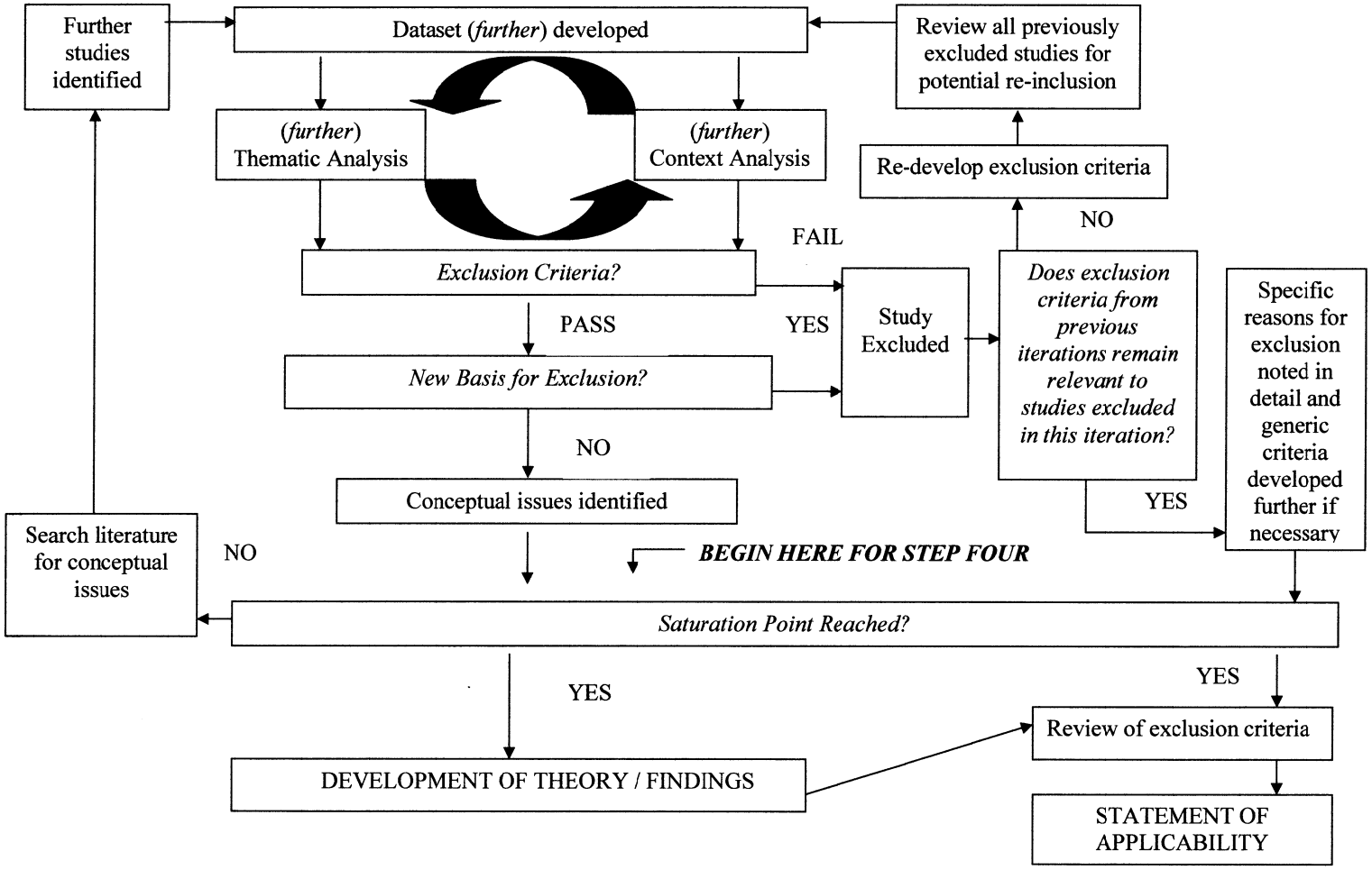

Figure 4 Step Four of Meta Interpretation as Espoused

See Figure 5 on the following page for a visual representation of the meta-interpretation procedure espoused in entirety.

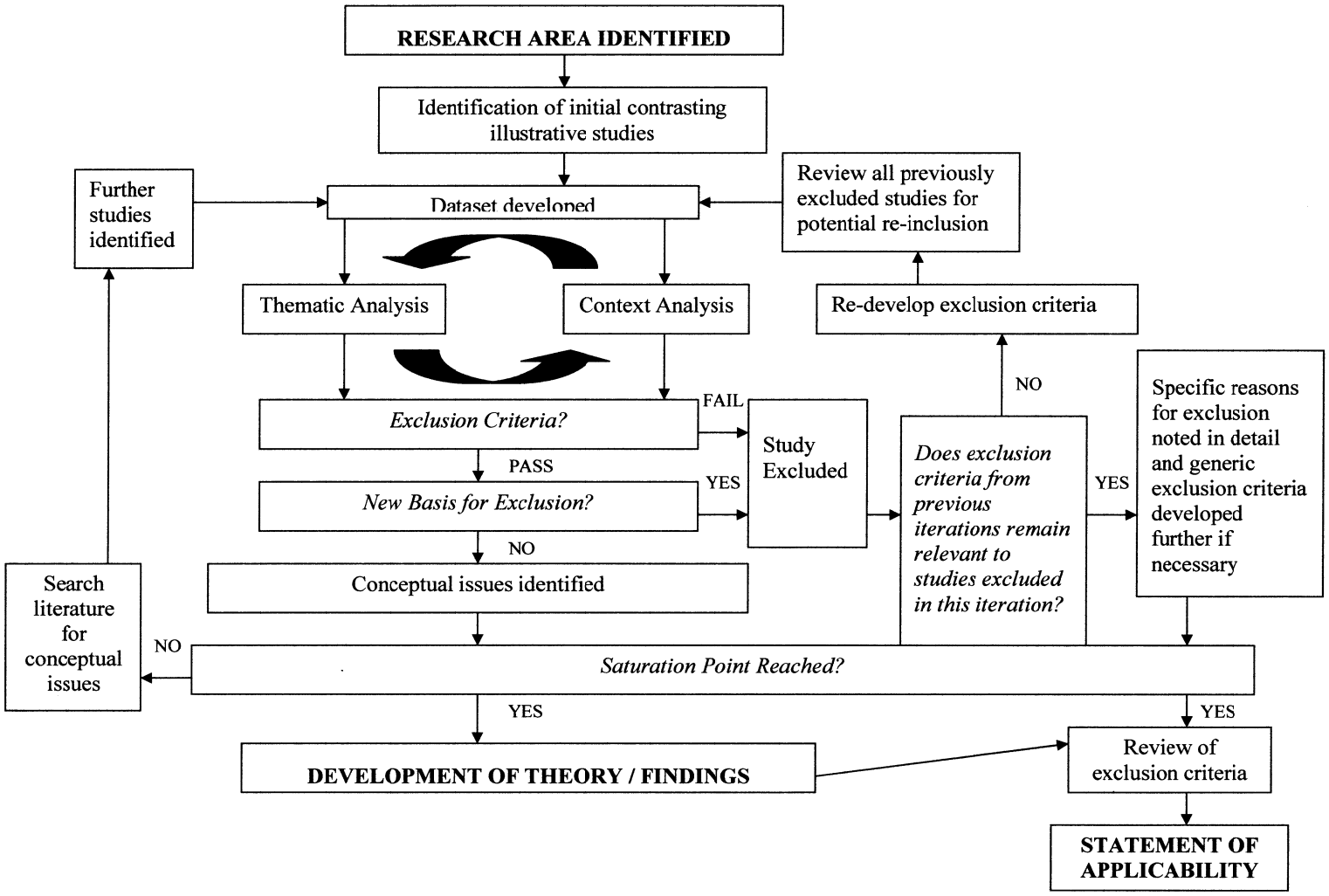

Figure 5 Meta-Interpretation Procedure Espoused

Validity and trustworthiness: Meta-interpretation as espoused

As the synthesis of literature occurs through an iterative process, there is need to identify such measures that work to ensure integrity, validity, and trustworthiness of the approach as a whole and the results achieved by implementation of the approach. First and foremost, an appealing component of the meta-interpretation approach is the use of published studies to commence the synthesis and analysis process. Weed (2005b) plainly stated,

> . . . a further advantage of using interpretations as 'raw data' is that all the raw data (i.e., the original interpretations of the published studies included in the synthesis) are readily available and open for inspection (Doyle, 2003, in Weed, 2005b, p. 19). As such, the potential for 'public scrutiny' of meta-interpretation is far greater than the vast majority of qualitative research, and than that of many qualitative studies. This alone goes a long way towards ensuring integrity and trustworthiness. (p. 19 & 21)

In addition, the meta-interpretation approach is not a lock-step process to be used with studies deemed *good* or *useable*. The iterative nature of the meta-interpretation approach allows for the recommencing of analysis at any point in the process of the continual development of exclusion criteria until theoretical saturation is reached. This latitude and flexibility allows the researcher to be able to make 'grounded' decisions as necessitated by examined literature.

Rather than focus on whether a study is 'good' for meta-interpretation it is incumbent upon the researcher to determine if the original interpretation can be trusted. As Weed (2005b) espoused,

> given the focus on interpretation rather than raw-data as the subject of the synthesis, consideration must be given to the way in which the integrity of meta-interpretation can be ensured. An important point to note at the outset is that because original interpretations have been made in a research context that cannot be recaptured, it is not possible to re-interpret the original findings and retain the focus on meaning in context. The context in which the research is located will be inextricably tied in with the original interpretations. Consequently, the original interpretations must be trusted, or the study should be excluded from the analysis. (p. 18)

The determinations of whether a study's original interpretations can be trusted occur during the iterative analysis stages when the interpreter holistically examines the selected studies. With respect to trustworthiness, a brief discussion of the role of hermeneutics is warranted. Weed (2005b) acknowledged

> meta-interpretation recognizes that synthesis is a hermeneutic process. The synthesis process in meta-interpretation becomes a 'triple hermeneutic' when the meta-interpretations of the synthesizer are added to those of the original researcher and the research participant. This interpretation of interpretations of interpretations is no different to the means of means of means of meta-analysis. 'Such triple averaging' has no less the potential to lose the nuances of each individual data point, than the triple hermeneutic of meta-interpretation. A basic hazard of synthesis is that the move from the specific to the generic will result in the loss of some individual differentiations. However, the synthesis method should be constructed to allow for as much detail of individual cases to be carried as far through the synthesis process as is possible. (p. 17-18)

In addition, the meta-interpretation approach provides a way to "deconstruct . . . a story . . . to reveal any hidden, marginalized, or subtle exploitations, contradictions, or traps" (Boje & Dennehy, 1993, p. 340). Boje & Dennehy also stated that,

> a story is a single interpretation of experience. Experience is always more complex that a simple story. The story has picked out some facts, views, and sequences to report and ignored a whole lot more. Two people given the same elements of experience can put together wildly different accounts. Your task, [with this type of analysis], is to reinterpret the elements of a given story and put together another scenario. (p. 342)

As it is related to the application of the meta-interpretation approach, the process used for the reinterpretation of extant interpretations is central to the utility of this method and its ability to allow researchers to interpretively construct *new* scenarios. Also, Weed (2005b) made some noteworthy assertions in validation of the use and development of this methodological approach. Weed posited

> . . . while there are a number of established synthesis methods, and still further research approaches that involve synthesis, to date an holistic approach for the interpretive synthesis of qualitative research that allows the synthesis of more than around five studies has not been available . . . . Whilst the potential procedure outlined here has not been fully 'road-tested', a meta-interpretation is currently underway relating to the motivations and behaviors of sports spectators. (p. 23; M. Weed, personal communication, July 28, 2006 & July 25, 2007).

To date, Weed's sports spectator meta-interpretation has not been completed (M. Weed, personal communication, July 28, 2006 & July 25, 2007) and ultimately he " . . . hoped that .

. . explanations [as outlined above] provide enough detail to allow other researchers to 'try out' or develop further the meta-interpretation procedure if they are minded to do so" (p. 23, 2005b).

In further substantiation of the application of a virtually unexplored methodology to achieve an interpretative synthesis, some have argued that the purpose of research of this type is not to generate predictive theories, but to facilitate understanding of the phenomenon, context or culture under consideration (Jensen & Allen, 1996; Sandelowski, 1997 as cited in Suri, 1999). Interestingly, Peshkin (1993) presented a slightly different view. He stated that, "the outcomes of interpretation lead to a range of possibilities: the creation of generalizations, the development of new concepts, and so forth" (p. 24). Ultimately, Peshkin stated, ". . . There is no prototype qualitative researchers must follow, no mold we must fit in, to ensure that we are bound for the right track" (pg. 28). And to this end, the use of the meta-interpretation approach was desired to (1) "further develop" (Weed, 2005b) this methodological approach, allowing it to be viewed as a valuable method for the interpretive synthesis of qualitative research, (2) and to offer a fuller holistic conceptualization of the parental involvement construct based on the consideration of points of theoretical divergence.

Meta-Interpretation as Applied

Iteration one: Research area identified and initial dataset developed

Experiential knowledge was used to conduct explorative searches of educational literature related to parental involvement and research synthesis. Numerous results were returned from searches of ProQuest Research Library, Academic Primer, ERIC databases, and the internet search engine Google using the following terms singly and in combination without date limitation: *parent, involvement, parental involvement, parenting, volunteering,*

communicating, decision making, learning at home, collaborating with community, qualitative, quantitative, Epstein, overlapping spheres of influence, meta-interpretation, meta analysis, synthesis, school, social capital, and *school improvement.* For each set of results obtained, researcher roles were comprised of: (1) reading abstracts and noting various theories and methodologies associated with the concept of parental involvement; (2) reviewing and critiquing prevalent extant meta-analyses (Fan & Chen, 1999; Jeynes, 2003, 2005); (3) searching for--to no avail--a qualitative synthesis of parental involvement literature to juxtapose findings with that of the quantitative syntheses; (4) investigating the meta-interpretation approach (Weed 2005a,b); (5) making explicit notes of the extant gaps in the literature; (6) being aware of personal, professional, and academic experiences and knowledge through memos, note-taking, and academic discourse; and (7) using a major conceptual issue--the absence of a qualitative synthesis of parental involvement literature--as a way to develop the use of the anchor term *qualitative* as a delimiter to be used in all subsequent searches of the extant literature.

Increased theoretical sensitivity (Glaser, 1978) informed subsequent delimited advanced literature searches of all databases in the ProQuest Research Library which were conducted in November 2007 using the terms *parental involvement* and *qualitative* without date limitation and which returned 321 results. Utilization of the search term sets *parenting, parent involvement,* and *qualitative*; *volunteering*, *parent*, and *qualitative; communicating*, *parent*, and *qualitative; learning-at home*, *parent*, and *qualitative; decision making*, *parent involvement*, and *qualitative; collaborating with community*, *parent*, and *qualitative* and returned a total of 70 results. For each sets of results obtained, researcher roles were comprised of: (1) furthering the increase of theoretical sensitivity by skimming all 391

studies; (2) noting various expressed theoretical frameworks used to underpin individual studies on the topic of parental involvement; (3) reading, reviewing, critiquing and grouping studies according to their expressed theoretical framework; (4) noting the prevalence of Epstein's (1995) theory of overlapping spheres of influence in the parental involvement literature; (5) reconciling that the application of this previously unexplored approach was non-linear; (6) embracing the evolution and elevation of this study's design-- a qualitative literature synthesis to be conducted at the theoretical level; (7) delimiting the design of the study to include studies that were pure qualitative research on the topic of parental involvement, conducted in American public school settings, with a theoretical underpinning; and (8) remaining aware of personal, professional, and academic contexts through memos, note-taking, and professional/academic discourse.

Theoretical sensitivity (Glaser, 1978) developed from the iterative review of the literature and theoretical patterns and trends emerged. As such, the identification of various theories used to underpin qualitative studies on the topic of parental involvement became evident: (1) Overlapping Spheres of Influence (Epstein 1986, 1992, 1995); (2) Posture of Cultural Reciprocity (Kalyanpur & Harry, 1997); (3) Concept of Parent Role Construction (Hoover-Dempsy & Sandler, 1995, 1997); and (4) Cultural Capital, Social Capital, and Social Network Theories (Bourdieu, 1973, 1987; Coleman, 1987, 1988; Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Lareau, 1989). The selection of the specific theories used to underpin qualitative parental involvement literature, resulted from the knowledge (theoretical sensitivity) gained during the iterative exploration and review of research studies. To this end, a decision was made to purposefully select (Maxwell, 2005) parental involvement studies underpinned by the aforementioned extant theories for my interpretive synthesis of extant qualitative

literature. It is recognized that there are qualitative studies underpinned by theoretical models of which parental involvement is a component; however, these studies were not included in this synthesis. The initial dataset consisted of three studies, selected on the principle of maximum variation sampling (Glesne, 1999).

In addition, the extensive iterative exploration and examination of the research highlighted two gaps: (1) the absence of a qualitative synthesis of parental involvement literature and (2) the absence of the use of the meta-interpretation approach to synthesize qualitative literature. The supposition of this research study (see Chapter I) and the development of the initial dataset emanated from the iteratively grounded evolution of a delimited research area for synthesis: pure qualitative parental involvement research, within the context of American public schools, which was present in a refereed journal or a published dissertation and underpinned by a theoretical framework. In sum, the steps of this iteration were comprised of: (1) identifying a research area of interest; (2) increasing theoretical sensitivity by an explorative search of the literature to note substantial gaps theoretical patterns in the literature; (3) developing search delimiters (exclusion criteria) based on theoretical sensitivity; (4) developing an evolving study design as grounded in the literature; and (5) selecting contrasting studies as the initial dataset. See Table 1 for the initial dataset studies.

Table 1

Initial Dataset

Author	Theoretical / Conceptual Framework
Auerbach, S. (2007)	Concept of Parent Role Construction (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997) Cultural Capital, Social Capital, and Social Network Theories (Bourdieu, 1973, 1979, 1987; Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Lareau, 1989)
Hynes, M. (2006)	Overlapping Spheres of Influence (Epstein, 1992, 1995, 1996)
Johnson, D. (2003)	Posture of Cultural Reciprocity (Kalyanpur & Harry, 1997)

Iteration two: Data collection

Each purposefully selected initial dataset study was carefully read through in its entirety and memos were written during each study's thematic and contextual analysis. On multiple occasions, critical portions of each study (primarily the data collection, findings, and discussion sections) were re-read. During this iteration there were four individual "dips back into the literature pool" that used iteratively delimited search terms toward theoretical saturation. In order to interpret how researchers--through their theoretical lens--have

conceptualized parental involvement, for each study analyzed, two questions were asked: (1) What does it mean to be a parent? (2) What does it mean to be involved? During the data collection process, data were collected from each purposefully selected study according to the two aforementioned analysis questions.

Extrapolated data were coded and presented in vertical columns within word tables in order to provide a way for points of convergence and divergence to be explicitly presented. Each column within each table (see Chapter III for more explicit explanation of tables)--read from left to right--is comprised of the author and date of the study, a brief description of the context of the study, the axial codes written in italics and the open codes presented directly underneath. Once data were collected from the initial dataset, subsequent literature searches were purposefully designed to reach theoretical saturation.

Therefore, once theoretical saturation was reached, collected data was organized and presented in word tables along points of theoretical convergence and divergence. The divergent conceptual data points formed the basis of the conceptual discussion of the findings and are upon which this study's theoretical model is generated. Methodologically, saturation was evident when no new data emerged from studies purposefully selected in this iteration.

Iteration three: Elucidating the discrepancy of divergence

Once saturation was determined to be reached and no new insights were emerging from examined data, the collected data were analyzed on theoretically grounded points of conceptual convergence and divergence. The data were then organized into word tables organized in vertical columns to be read from left to right. (See Chapter III for explicit description of the tables.) Conceptual divergence elucidated five divergent points of data:

protector/nurturer; aware/knowledgeable; understanding the role of discrete/away from school involvement; developing positive social relationships; and learner.

Iteration four: Saturation of theoretical divergence

Once data points of convergence and divergence were illustrated, the literature was searched using each divergent term and the anchor terms *parental involvement* and qualitative. These searches did not return any additional studies and as such, the decision was made that within the context of this study the theoretically underpinned divergent data was saturated.

Validity and trustworthiness: Meta-interpretation as applied

The data used for this study were the findings or interpretations presented in extant literature; so, there was complete access to the data during this process and there continues to be complete access to the data after this process has concluded. During the course of this research study, all of the data collection and analysis were conducted by hand and all researcher 'field notes' were maintained. As Coffey and Atkinson (1996) stated, it is anticipated that the use of computer aided software will "be subordinated to general analytic strategies" (p. 45). One of the ways a clear audit trail was left was through the technique of memoing and the re-reading of notes generated during the completion of this study. Certain reflective, methodological, theoretical, and conceptual memos are presented in the Appendices of this study. As this is a virtually unexplored methodological approach, the Appendices section was used as a place where some of the record of thinking during this study was captured. The use and availability of other data analysis and organization strategies--coding, thought experiments, colleague discussion, and reflection--also helped elevate the level of analysis needed through this iterative process. The techniques of

memoing and thought experiments were gleaned from Glesne (1999) and Maxwell (2005). The record of researcher thinking in this process is a standard of trustworthiness related to qualitative research.

As espoused, the meta-interpretation method (Weed, 2005b) outlined no pre-set criteria for study exclusion. Instead, the exclusion criteria are iteratively developed during the process of the meta-interpretation. In application, this study's expanded description of the iterative development of the initial dataset, through the iteratively grounded search delimiters is a clear point of explicit development with the meta-interpretation approach as espoused by Weed. Educational literature has been regarded as vast and expanding (Suri, 1999) and the parental involvement phenomenon of educational research is broad and diversely represented in the literature. A search of the educational literature using the terms *parental* and *involvement* returned over 5000 results. In this context, " . . . sustained presence . . . in the setting studied" also regarded as "intensive, long-term involvement" (Maxwell, 2005, p. 110) led to the development of delimiters--exclusion criteria--that are grounded in the research which fostered the identification of the research area for synthesis as well as substantial gaps in the literature. As such, the extensive development of delimiters for this study contributed to a trustworthy synthesis. The explicit explanation of the development of the iteratively delimited initial dataset can be regarded as a point of expansion in this methodology as espoused. The delimited research area ensured that studies selected for data collection, would not be "beyond the bounds of [the] current synthesis" yet the analysis process still was able to determine "if the quality of the research [was] flawed" (Weed, 2005b, p. 21-22). During the iterative data collection brief analytic memos (Glesne, 1999; Maxwell, 2005) were written about the themes, contexts, and methods of each

purposefully selected study. (See Appendix B). Additionally, consideration was given to the extent of purposeful theoretical selection and how and why and on what basis studies were chosen for inclusion. Studies were selected on the bases of expressed delimiters and theoretical saturation. In addition, the application of the meta-interpretation approach during this study presented a contrast in the approach of conceptual issue exploration as espoused by Weed (2005b). Once data saturation was reached, divergent data formed the basis of the conceptual issues for exploration. Each point of conceptual data divergence was explored and discussed. To reach saturation of divergent data, the literature was purposefully searched using the divergent data term and the anchor terms *parental involvement* and *qualitative*.

My work in the education field and role as a parent also contributed to validity and trustworthiness. As the principal of a Schoolwide Title I elementary school, I am knowledgeable of the reality Title I schools face in relation to parental involvement. Parental involvement is an indicator upon which we are measured and granted funding to ensure. I acknowledge my personal beliefs and experiences related to parent involvement in order to support my children as they move through their public education experience. As such, I have a keen interest in advancing knowledge in this area and practical experience with the realities of the context of parental involvement as a former student; parent; and public school administrator. An advance in holistic understanding of this area can potentially facilitate more educational success for children. Throughout the course of this study, my knowledge and experience has been used as a means of challenging myself to elevate this study design to be of most benefit to an area of public education that has been regarded as “elusive” (Herrold & O’Donnell, 2008).

Summary

With respect to research synthesis methods, many extant methods do not maintain the epistemological integrity of qualitative research. As discussed earlier in this chapter, many extant qualitative synthesis methods resort to the positivist paradigm and therefore create tension between data and analysis methods which can invalidate findings by substantially limiting their trustworthiness. The meta-interpretation approach for interpretative qualitative synthesis purports to be the only method to date that maintains the integrity of the qualitative tradition through its approach to synthesis.

Interestingly, Weed (2005b) noted,

> researchers seeking to review primarily qualitative research as a prelude to empirical work may find the meta-interpretation approach to be too time-consuming. This is because . . . [this method approaches] research synthesis as a primary research activity which can both develop and bring new insights to a body of knowledge. However, it would seem reasonable to suggest that the principles, if not the detailed procedures, of meta-interpretation should underpin any good literature review. (p. 24)

As initially espoused this new methodological approach to the synthesis of qualitative literature on a given topic is characterized by seven key features: (1) the role of the synthesizer as an active agent; (2) a recognition that the synthesis will be 'an interpretation' rather than 'the interpretation' of the collection of studies; (3) an ideographic (rather than pre-determined) approach to the development of exclusion criteria; (4) an iterative approach to the theoretical sampling of studies for synthesis; (5) a focus on 'meaning in context'; (6) interpretation as the 'raw data' for synthesis; and (7) a transparent

audit trail as a guarantor of the integrity and trustworthiness of the synthesis (Weed, 2005b, p. 21). In addition, four distinct while albeit iterative and non-linear, steps are hallmarks of this methodology: (1) identifying the research area for the synthesis and making an *initial selection* of around four or five contrasting studies; (2) conducting a *concurrent thematic and context analysis* of the studies in question; (3) identifying *conceptual issues* from the first analysis and searching the literature for further studies that address these issues; and (4) continuing iterative literature searches until *theoretical saturation* and then writing up of the final findings of the meta-interpretation, and any emergent insights (Weed).

In application, meta-interpretation was a good methodology to use and further develop in the instance of this study because the body of qualitative parental involvement literature to date had not been synthesized. The development of an initial dataset proved to be a decidedly complex and extensive part of the application of the meta-interpretation approach. Complexity of process notwithstanding, the meta-interpretation approach proved to be inherently appropriate for conducting an interpretive synthesis of qualitative literature at the theoretical level; something to date that has been a substantial gap in the context of synthesis of qualitative literature. A synthesis method that embraces contextual examination, acknowledges theoretical underpinning, validates the role of the researcher, and honors the interpretive research paradigm can fill a substantial gap in the literature. It is in this context, in combination with the desire for a more holistic view in order to develop a fuller conceptual understanding, that meta-interpretation (Weed, 2005b) is deemed to be a useful method/approach for the synthesis of qualitative educational research, and for development of the parental involvement in particular.

Chapter III: Findings

"The beginning of knowledge is something we do not understand."

-Frank Herbert

Overview

This chapter presents the findings from the iterative application of the meta-interpretation approach during the four distinct iterations of this study. Iteration one application was comprised of an extensive, iterative, explorative literature search, and critical review. The findings of iteration one ultimately were a delimited research area for synthesis and the initial dataset. Iteration two was comprised of an iterative process of data collection to reach theoretical saturation. The findings of iteration two were open and axial data codes. Iteration three was comprised of the identification of convergent and divergent axial data points. The findings of iteration three were patterns of theoretical convergence and divergence in the collected data. Iteration four was comprised of a systematic process to reach theoretical saturation of divergent data in the literature. The finding of iteration four was the development of a way to conceptually close the process of data collection and analysis. Substantive discussion of theoretical and methodological findings and insights of this study, a presentation of an interpretive theoretical model of parental involvement, and a contextually differentiated process of parental engagement are developed in Chapter IV.

Iteration One: Review of Parental Involvement Literature and Initial Dataset

An extensive explorative literature search, review, and critique occurred between 2005 and 2006 and included searches of ProQuest Research Library, Academic Primer, ERIC databases and the internet search engine Google. Search terms, used singly and in combination without date limitation, included: *parent, involvement, parental involvement,*

parenting, volunteering, communicating, decision making, learning at home, collaborating with community, qualitative, quantitative, Epstein, overlapping spheres of influence, meta-interpretation, meta analysis, synthesis, school, social capital, and *school improvement;* and returned over 5000 results. Researcher roles during this process encompassed reading abstracts, skimming studies, and noting various patterns associated with the concept of parental involvement and methods of research synthesis. It is within this context that a general understanding of substantive gaps in the extant literature became evident, and generic exclusion criteria emerged as the research area for synthesis became identifiable. Emergent inclusion criteria included: research studies presented in scholarly journals or published dissertations that examined the parental involvement construct; qualitative studies that examined parental involvement in public school settings; and studies that had expressed theoretical underpinnings.

In November 2007, two delimited searches of all databases within the ProQuest Research Library were conducted. The first delimited search used the terms *parental involvement* and *qualitative* without date limitation and returned 321 results. The second delimited search used six individual search-term groups (*parenting*, *parental involvement*, and *qualitative*; *volunteering*, *parental involvement*, and *qualitative*; *communicating*, *parental involvement*, and *qualitative*; *learning at home*, *parental involvement*, and *qualitative*; *decision making*, *parental involvement*, and *qualitative*; *collaborating with community*, *parental involvement*, and *qualitative*) and returned 70 results. Researcher roles during the examination of these 391 results encompassed reading abstracts, skimming studies, reading scholarly journal articles and dissertations in their entirety, and noting various patterns associated with the concept of parental involvement. It is within this context

that a more focused understanding of substantive gaps in the extant literature became evident; a general awareness of patterns and themes across extant literature developed; and inclusion criteria became more evident and delimited. The delimited area for research was identified as pure qualitative research present in scholarly journals or published dissertations with an expressed theoretical underpinning that examined the parental involvement construct in an American public school setting.

Before an explanation of the organization and content of this study's critical review of literature, it is important to highlight a contextual nuance and implication of the examination of the parental involvement construct. Parental involvement has long been an element of Title I, but now parental involvement is a statutorily mandated component of NCLB and thereby of Title I programs. The following contextual understanding of parental involvement is important to highlight as related to public schools. As espoused, Title I is a program that is focused on increasing the educational outcomes of the socioeconomically disadvantaged. It must be duly acknowledged that in public school settings the majority of students who have historically been classified as disadvantaged have been children of minority ethnic backgrounds, commonly referred to as children of color. Several research studies have intentionally and unintentionally illustrated this contextual relationship in their examination of the parental involvement phenomenon in public school settings. Therefore, it is within this context that an understanding of the at times inextricable relationship between parental involvement and educational outcomes of the disadvantaged is evident in the literature.

As previously indicated, iteration one comprised the critical review of parental involvement literature. This iteration yielded a variety of non-exhaustive understandings

from the extensive examination and review of extant literature: an awareness of a practical utility in the findings of qualitative literature over quantitative literature; recognition that the parental involvement phenomenon is complex in nature, transcends all levels of public schooling, is closely aligned with Title I programs, and has been examined in relation to its impact or influence on the academic achievement of students; an awareness that qualitative literature on the topic is dominated by an examination of ethnic (children/parents of color) participant experience; awareness that incongruence (perceptual and linguistic) exists between parents and school personnel; knowledge of various meta-analyses on the topic; and a recognition of an overwhelming presence of the overlapping spheres of influence theory (Epstein, 1995) among competing foundational theories--social capital (Coleman, 1988); posture of cultural reciprocity (Kalyanpur & Harry, 1997); and concept of parent role construction (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997)--used to examine parental involvement research.

As such, extant literature on the topic is critiqued along these patterns and the findings of this review are organized and presented as follows: (1) meta-analytic context of parental involvement; (2) utility of qualitative research findings; (3) simplistic view of a complex phenomenon that transcends grade levels; (4) perceptual and linguistic incongruence; (5) qualitative participants of color and competing theoretical underpinnings; (6) theoretical context of parental involvement; (7) Epstein's overlapping spheres of influence; (8) social capital; (9) posture of cultural reciprocity; and (10) parent role construction. Iteration one concludes with a summary of the key findings from this iteration and a brief discussion of this study's initial dataset.

Meta-analytic context of parental involvement

While meta-analyses of educational research have suggested that parental involvement has a positive effect on student achievement (Comfort 2004; Crimm, 1992; Darling & Westberg, 2004; Fan & Chen, 1999; Jeynes, 2003, 2005, 2007; and Rosenwig, 2000), the results of these studies, as presented through the lens of meta-analytic synthesis, are grounded in positivistic notions of behavior and action.

Comfort's 2004 meta-analysis of 94 studies about parent training initiatives for children between the ages of two and five produced 140 effects. In this study, intended to examine initiatives designed to enhance child outcomes, the overall mean effect of parent training was positive, highly significant, and consistent, as revealed by a follow-up study done one year later.

Crimm (1992) conducted a meta-analysis of 57 studies that investigated the effect of parental involvement on student achievement and produced an effect size that indicated parental involvement has a positive impact upon a child's academics. Crimm's results indicated that for students in grades three through five among a variety of approaches home visits by teachers had the greatest impact and reading improved as a result of parental involvement.

Darling and Westberg, 2004 conducted a meta-analysis of research literature to determine parental involvement's affect on the reading acquisition of children in grades kindergarten through three. For the purpose of this study parental involvement was defined as: (1) listening to the child read; (2) being trained to listen and provide feedback; and (3) being trained to teach the child specific reading skills (p.774). The results of this study

indicated that all types of parental involvement noted had a positive effect on the reading acquisition of study participants.

Fan and Chen's 1999 meta-analysis found that, "parental aspiration/expectation for children's education achievement has the strongest relationship, while parental home supervision has the weakest relationship, with students' academic achievement" (p. 3). They further noted that "the overall medium effect size of r=.25 . . . suggests that parental involvement does indeed have a positive influence on students' academic achievement" (p. 14). Fan and Chen asserted that their findings needed to be interpreted with caution because of the limited availability of useable studies for their meta-analysis. The researchers asserted that their findings were also limited by the exclusion of the context of the individual studies that had been synthesized. Further, the researchers did not take into consideration the multiple theoretical frameworks utilized across studies and how those frameworks influenced both inclusion in the meta-analysis and individual study conclusions. Many of these issues resurfaced in Jeynes' 2003 meta-analysis of parental involvement.

The results of Jeynes' 2003 meta-analysis of the impact of parental involvement on minority student's academic achievement suggested that "parental involvement does generally affect the academic achievement of the minority groups under study" (p. 207). All effect sizes reported for the groups under study indicated effect sizes of .43 or greater. While the results of this study were duly noted, there was still an absence of context. Jeynes acknowledged that "further research is needed to examine why it is that particular kinds of parental involvement are especially beneficial for certain racial groups" (p. 215).

In an attempt to advance meta-analytic synthesis of research in this area, Jeynes (2005) indicated that a significant relationship existed between parental involvement overall

and academic achievement. The results of this study indicated that "the relationship between parental involvement and urban elementary school student achievement holds for overall measures of parental involvement and for most specific components of parental involvement" (p. 246). These findings are similar to Fan & Chen's (1999) and Jeynes' (2003) findings in that they identify that certain aspects of parental involvement are positively associated with student achievement; but these study findings were not designed to lead to a holistic understanding of the body of literature synthesized. In addition, a meta-analytic study showed that parental involvement, as a whole, positively affected all of the academic variables under study related to urban secondary school children (Jeynes, 2007).

Rosenwig (2000) conducted a meta-analysis that indicated positive parenting practices associated with student achievement and negative parenting practices that may contribute to students' lack of success. The seven practices identified by Rosenwig that have the strongest association with student achievement are: educational aspirations and grade expectations; parent engagement; authoritative parenting; autonomy support; emotional support; providing resources and learning experiences; and very specific parent participation activities in school. Conversely, the eight negative practices the researcher found that may in fact be part of a student's lack of success are: restrictions for unsatisfactory grades; external rewards; negative control; homework surveillance; disengagement; encouraging conformity; permissiveness; and control.

The parameters of these studies focused on specific groups; but still a gap in theoretical and conceptual understanding related to the parental involvement construct being studied persisted. And again, nothing was gained beyond the fact that it matters, thus providing no direction for educators regarding how to promote parental involvement. In

addition to using the meta-analytic approach to synthesis, one common factor among the aforementioned meta-analytic research studies was the desire to conduct research because there was a void or lack of clear scientific evidence in the parental involvement literature. For example, a lack of evidence about parental involvement and literacy development (Darling & Westberg, 2004) and a lack of clarity about which parent training program is best for whom (Comfort, 2004) led to these studies. Addressing gaps in the parental involvement literature based on the notion that there is clear scientific evidence that can be gleaned furthers the positivist assumption that there is a particular, specific, correct answer to synthesis research endeavors. In relation to parental involvement research, this assumption is particularly problematic because of the inconsistencies in the definition of parental involvement in the literature. In many instances, what constitutes parental involvement is based on researcher operational definition of the construct (Englund, et al., 2004)--an artifact of quantitative research synthesis--rather than understood and interpreted in relation to its theoretical context. The lack of the ability to recognize the theoretical underpinning or conceptual context of the synthesized literature is a methodological weakness of meta-analysis which purports that there is one correct answer about which aspects of parental involvement have a standard effect in all situations.

Utility of qualitative research findings

In a qualitative study about the necessity to allow parent voices to help frame teaching and learning, Nicholson, Evans, Tellier-Robinson, & Aviles (2002) offered the following perspective about the utility of qualitative research.

> Qualitative research characteristically yields multifaceted findings that can guide us to participants' strengths as well as the relationships among variables that may be

> outside the focus of the study. Findings revealed within the qualitative paradigm are amenable to a variety of analytic approaches and to consideration from multiple theoretical perspectives (Ely, Vinz, Downing, & Anzul, 1997). On the other hand, the controlled structure of quantitative research has historically yielded a limited view of its subjects, due to the contrived nature of the research setting, with predetermined variables that have yielded a predominance of findings highlighting the deficiencies of those at risk. (p.177)

Within this context, a review of extant quantitative parental involvement literature (Fuentes, 2000; Hawes & Ploudre, 2005; Keith, et al., 1998; Lin, 2003) revealed findings that presented a narrow and limited view of the parental involvement construct. These peripheral views have contributed to the existing deficits (conceptualizing parental involvement as a certain set of actions or behaviors) rather than broadening and advancing understanding in relation to the construct under study. In contrast, this literature review highlighted that the findings of qualitative research on this topic (Countryman, 1994; Ivory Tatum, 2001) have more practical utility thereby allowing a reader to draw broader conclusions on this topic. It is not the intention of this study to denigrate quantitative parental involvement research. Yet, it is one supposition of this study that on grounds of practical utility and the ability to broaden understanding as related to the parental involvement concept there is an elevated necessity for a qualitative research synthesis on the topic.

Fuentes (2000) conducted a pre-test, post-test study using Pearson's *r, t* test, and multiple regression analysis in order to determine the relationship between the Student Study Team (SST) and parental involvement in the SST process. Results suggested that for the 200 fifth grade Hispanic students (100 SST and 100 non-SST) from five California elementary

schools, parental involvement in the SST process was a significant predictor in the math grades of the students. Within the context of this study it was suggested that parental involvement matters, but this study did not suggest any plan of how to implement parental involvement in the SST process. In addition this study did not offer any broad conclusions about whether or not characterizations of parental involvement differ by population.

Hawes and Plourde (2005) conducted a non-experimental, correlational study of 48 sixth graders designed to determine "the relationship between reading achievement of students and parental involvement" (p. 53). Parent and student surveys were used to identify themes related to parental involvement in this study. Reading achievement was measured by "the McLeod Reading Comprehension test" (p. 53). Descriptive statistics were used to compare the independent and dependent variables. The data was analyzed using the Person Product-Moment Correlation. The correlation between parental involvement and reading achievement with these sixth grade students, 0.129, showed a slight positive, but not statistically significant, correlation or relationship. From the results of this study it is difficult to obtain a more robust understanding of the parental involvement construct, process associated with it, and ways to enhance parental involvement.

Keith, et al., (1998) used National Educational Longitudinal Study data (1988, 1990) to draw a final sample of 15,703 tenth grade students and their parents for three distinct purposes of this study: (1) to determine the longitudinal effects of parent involvement on tenth grade students' learning, as measured by their grade point average; (2) whether the same pattern of influences existed for boys and girls; and (3) whether the same pattern of influences existed for students from different ethnic groups. Results indicated that while the pattern of influences of the variables in the model was indistinguishable for boys and girls,

there were differences in the constructs in the model and in their effects across ethnic groups. Nonetheless, parental involvement continued to have important effects for all groups. Again, a clear deficit of this research study is the lack of practical utility of the suggested findings beyond whether parental involvement matters.

Using existing data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study Kindergarten Class of 1998-99, Lin (2003) conducted a non-experimental study using descriptive and multiple regression analyses. This study sought to address the effects of racial and income or other background variables on parent involvement by analyzing the relative contributions of different types of parent involvement to several measures of children's academic achievement. Lin also sought to examine how these relationships vary for kindergarten children from very different racial-ethnic and economic backgrounds. Among the parent involvement composites, noticeable differences existed between minority children and white children. Although it can be gathered from the design of this study that context matters when investigating the topic of parental involvement, when examining the findings of this study, it is difficult to ascertain a greater understanding of the complexities of the construct. In addition, while minority status in America does not equate to disadvantaged, it is recognized that in comparison to academic achievement, gaps exist in the performances of children of color as a whole when compared to white children- hence NCLB legislation and mandates and Title I funding and programs designed to improve the educational outcomes for disadvantaged student groups.

While these quantitative bodies of research (Fuentes, 2000; Hawes & Ploudre, 2005; Keith, et al., 1998; Lin, 2003) suggested multiple outcomes related to the effect of parental involvement, the findings of these studies are narrow in scope when it comes to drawing

broader conclusions and enriching our understanding about parental involvement. In this context, upon juxtaposed examination, qualitative research (Countryman, 1994; Ivory Tatum, 2001; Seigler, 2007) has shown to have more utility with respect to the practical implementation of its findings and has provided greater insight into some of the nuanced complexities of this construct.

Simplistic view of a complex phenomenon that transcends grade levels

The parental involvement phenomenon transcends all levels of public education suggesting the need for theory extensions and expanded conceptualization. It is a prevailing notion that parental involvement in elementary school occurs at high levels with elementary school students typically having parents who are more involved in their children's education than parents of older students (Catsambis & Beveridge, 2001). Studies about the positive impact of parental involvement in the early years of schooling are prevalent in the literature (Coots, 1998; Englund, et al., 2004; McWayne, et al., 2004). Yet researchers have also suggested positive outcomes of parental involvement for middle school-aged students (Carmona, 2007; Earwood, 2006; Hernandez, 2007; Kim, 2002; Palmer, 2004; Shaver & Walls, 1998) and high school students (Catsambis & Beveridge, 2001; Jeynes, 2005; McNeal, 1999; Roulette-McIntyre, 2003; Stiffler, 2000; Woodson, 1999; Yan, 1999). Embedded in these extant examinations, is the notion that contrived analysis of this complex phenomenon (Coots, 1988; Englund, et al., 2004) perpetuates and advances the simplistic view that parental involvement is a set of quantifiable actions or behaviors that is applicable in all instances and contexts. It is along these aforementioned premises that this set of literature (Carmona; Catsambis & Beveridge; Coots; Denn, 1999; Earwood; Englund, et al.;

Hernandez; Jeynes, 2005; Kim; McNeal; McWayne, et al.; Palmer, 2004; Roulette-McIntyre; Shaver & Walls; Stiffler; Woodson; Yan) is reviewed and critiqued.

Carmona (2007) conducted a mixed-method study that sought to investigate different ways to promote parental involvement in a Department of Defense middle school in the south east region of the United States. Surveys were given to parents to assess their attitude about parental involvement; their present level of involvement; and their suggestions for improving parental involvement at the school. Volunteer hours pre-study and post-study were compared. Results suggested that volunteer hours after the six-week implementation of parental involvement activities increased from the previous year. From the results of this study it can be ascertained that the implementation of the program caused the positive effect, not an understanding of why parents volunteer.

Catsambis and Beveridge, (2001) used the parent and student components of the National Educational Longitudinal Study (1988) dataset to investigate family educational involvement in secondary education using Epstein's typology of six types of involvement (See Appendix D) to determine connections between parental involvement practices and the educational outcomes of high school seniors. Family practices positively associated with the seniors' enrollment in an academic high school program and with their coursework in core academic subjects included: (1) high levels of educational expectations; (2) consistent encouragement; and (3) actions that enhance the learning opportunities of children.

Coots (1998) examined the relation between various family and child factors and the amount and type of parent participation in schooling activities in a mixed-method study of 35 European American families of children aged seven and eight with developmental delays. Multiple regression analyses and qualitative analysis of interview transcripts indicated that

families organized schooling participation into their daily activities for different reasons. This study discussed similarities and differences with other models of participation (Epstein, 1987; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Lareau, 1989); yet, this comparative discussion was not used to advance the understanding of parental involvement theory as a whole. The findings of his study supported the subjects' "assertion that the decision-making process is not linear but rather recursive and complex" (p. 516).

Denn (1999) conducted a qualitative study of seven fathers and five mothers with children in kindergarten and the kindergarten classroom teacher. This study used methods of data collection that included participant journaling, interviews, observations, document analysis, and a focus group. Denn found that the fathers involved in this study believed that they played an important role in the education of their young children. The fathers were engaged in many interactive learning events with their kindergartners including reading, talking, playing, and teaching. The fathers who were involved in their children's early childhood education were provided with many personal emotional rewards. The findings of this study suggested the complex notion that a father's efficacy is positively impacted by opportunities for involvement in their child's learning experiences.

Earwood (2006), in a survey research study designed to examine the efforts of Title I and non-Title I middle schools in Georgia to involve parents, found that there was no statistically significant difference between the two groups in their efforts to involve parents. The findings of this study can be interpreted to suggest that at the middle school level parental involvement occurs at the same level across varying demographics. An assumption that can undercut the argument that parental involvement must be regarded as an important focus for Title I schools.

Englund, et al., (2004) conducted a longitudinal study of children from birth through the third grade that examined the relations among parental behaviors, parental expectations, and children's academic achievement for 187 low-income children and their mothers. Results of this study, presented in model form, suggested that early parenting factors are important for children's academic achievement. Results of the path analysis method indicated that mothers with higher (vs. lower) educational attainment provided more support for their children in problem solving situations in preschool, had higher expectations of educational attainment for their children in first grade, and were more involved in their children's school in first grade. Researchers indicated that causality could not be determined from this study because the examination of whether their model "accurately reflected the relation among variables under investigation" was perhaps convoluted by "other variables not included in this model [that] may add to an understanding of how parents influence their children's achievement in school" (p. 728). As suggested by this study, the complexity of the parental involvement phenomenon cannot accurately be understood using methods of path and multiple regression analyses.

Hernandez (2007) designed a correlational study to examine the relationship between 135 Hispanic parents' involvement and their educational aspirations for their middle school children and their achievement. Findings of this study indicated that parents were involved with their children's education with the most frequently reported activities being talking with the child about their day; checking that the child has completed homework; helping the child prepare for tests; and attending parent-teacher conferences. The simplistic findings of this study can be regarded as suggesting that the nature of the relationship under study may be too complex for correlational methodological design.

Jeynes (2005) used the 1992 National Educational Longitudinal Study dataset to assess the effects of four aspects of parental involvement--(1) family structure; (2) helping with homework, checking up on the child's friends, knowing the parents of those friends; (3) level of discussion about events at school with parents; (4) and extent to which parents were involved in events at school--on student achievement measured as standardized test scores. Results of this study utilized regression analysis and suggested that family structure was the single greatest predictor of academic achievement of high school children. The findings of this study do not advance an understanding about what schools can do that is within the context of the parameters of circumstances within their control.

Kim (2002) used survey research and investigated 209 seventh and eighth grade Korean American students in response to the lack of focus in the literature on the effects of parental involvement on the educational achievement of Korean American children. This study used social capital (Coleman, 1998) as the measure of parental involvement. The following parental involvement variables were selected for this model: (1) parents' educational expectations for their children; (2) parent-child communication about learning; (3) home supervision of children's school work; and (4) parents' contact with the school. Results of this study suggested that parents' contact with the school had no significant impact on children's educational achievement. Kim asserted that, "findings indicate that parental involvement makes a positive contribution to children's educational success. Thus, the primary hypothesis based on Coleman's theory (1988) has been confirmed" (p. 537). This study was designed to test social capital theory (Coleman) not advance theoretical understanding related to the parental involvement construct. Again, parental involvement is

characterized in this study as a set of specific actions that when applied can make a difference across contexts.

In an examination of 11, 401 cases from the National Educational Longitudinal Study, McNeal (1999) indicated that parental involvement is generally a salient factor in explaining behavioral but not cognitive outcomes, with greatest support for parent-child discussion and involvement in parent-teacher organizations. Specific dimensions of involvement have greater effects for more affluent and white students. This study conceptualized parental involvement as social capital (Coleman, 1988). This conceptualization implied that these concepts are interchangeable which would substantially limit the understanding of other nuanced aspects of the parental involvement concept.

McWayne, et al., (2004) studied 307 low-income, ethnic minority kindergarten children to test the Parental Involvement in Children's Educational Scale (PICES) (Fantuzzo et al., 2002), which was created using Epstein's (1997) parental involvement categories. This parent report instrument is a scale that provides information on "the frequency of specific involvement behaviors across three dimensions: Supportive Home Learning Environment, Direct School Contact, and Inhibited Involvement" (p. 364). The results of this multivariate analysis suggested that parents who actively promoted learning in the home, had direct and regular contact with school, and experienced fewer barriers to involvement, had children who demonstrated positive engagement with their peers, adults, and learning.

Palmer's (2004) random sample of 48 fifth and eighth grade classrooms, limited to 467 dyads where both mothers and fathers participated, found that a more multidimensional notion of parental involvement may be needed to capture important aspects of the construct. Palmer used structural equation modeling to suggest a multidimensional construct of parental

involvement that is present across different literature (p. 77). The purpose of this study was to determine the way to design best-fit models to study latent variables of parental involvement. The multidimensional aspect of this construct led Palmer to suggest that "a model depicting the five latent factors (behavioral control, resource (time) devotion, acceptance, psychological control, parental aspirations for education) as separate, yet interrelated forms of parental involvement, provided the best data fit" (p. 1).

Roulette-McIntyre (2003) surveyed 643 parents of high school-aged students to determine effective parental involvement strategies. After multiple linear regression analysis of the collected data, parental involvement activities that were found to be effective were parent school connection and parent involvement in school activities. This study also found that monitoring homework, discussion of program planning, and setting goals were significant predictors of parental involvement that were effective strategies used with high school students. The researcher identified and recommended multiple strategies for parents and schools which included: teachers maintaining an open line of communication with parents and community; schools convincing parents to attend regularly scheduled meetings/orientations and contacting teachers regularly; school districts using state holidays as days to have meetings at the school for parents to attend without missing work; and parents setting goals and expectations for their children. While suggesting a host of strategies that are characterized as effective for promoting parental involvement, the results of this study continue to perpetuate the conceptualization of parental involvement as a simple list of activities or strategies that apply in all high school settings.

Shaver and Walls (1998) investigated the effects of parental-school involvement on the reading and/or math achievement of second through eighth grade Title I students. A

sample of 335 students and parents generated data that was analyzed using analyses of variance to determine the effects of the level of parental involvement on achievement. Correlation coefficients were used to assess the relationship of socioeconomic status (SES) and gender factors to reading and math achievement. The results of this study suggested that parental involvement (regardless of the child's gender or socioeconomic background) is indeed a dynamic force influencing students' academic success. The effect held for total reading achievement (including comprehension) and math achievement and application of math concepts.

Stiffler (2000) designed a quantitative study that used an existing dataset of 202 high school juniors representing six high schools. Stiffler utilized path analysis technique to gain knowledge in order to determine the specific actions parents take with their children at home and at school that impact the academic performance of high school students. The results of this study suggested that only two aspects of parental involvement, measured as teen/parent agreement and teen/parent school discussions were significant, positive predictors of adolescent academic achievement. Again, the findings of this study, including the conceptualization of parental involvement as specific *behavioral actions,* do not advance understanding about the complexities of this construct.

Woodson (1999) conducted a mixed-method study of 174 student participants in their second year of high school. The findings of this study suggested that no significant relationships were found between students' perception of parent involvement and student achievement. Qualitative participant responses suggested that students were personally motivated by the involvement of their parents while participating in extracurricular activities. The qualitative finding from this study suggested that a broader notion may exist about the

concept of parental involvement that could manifest itself in areas outside of student academic achievement.

Yan (1999) used the 1988 National Educational Longitudinal Study to examine the role of parental involvement in promoting academic success in African American students. Academic success was defined as the successful completion of high school and enrollment in a post-secondary education institution. This quantitative study used social capital theory to examine parental involvement which was conceptualized as: parent-teen interactions; parent-school interactions; interactions with other parents; and family norms. The descriptive statistics indicated that students in this study who had experienced parental involvement completed high school and enrolled in college at higher rates than students who did not. In general, further findings suggested that parents of female students and those with a higher household income reported a higher degree of parent-school connection. The question that cannot be further understood by this study is *why*.

The aforementioned literature revealed the methodologically simplistic and individualized view that parental involvement should be regarded as specific identifiable actions or behaviors that hold for all situations or are only specific to certain types of groups under particular circumstances or contexts. As this phenomenon transcends all levels of education, the need for theory extension is suggested. A qualitative synthesis of parental literature has the potential to provide insight into understanding how parental involvement can be conceptualized using what we already know to advance extant theory in this area.

Perceptual and linguistic incongruence

Extant research has illustrated that differences in parent school perception (Boyd, 2005; Countryman, 1994; DePlanty, Coulter-Kern, & Duchane, 2007; Halsey, 2005; Ivory-

Tatum, 2001; Miller, 2003; Seigler, 2007) as well as the difference in spoken language (Lindsey, 2006) can build barriers and impair communication efforts between parents and school personnel. This research also has illustrated that at times stakeholders may not understand nor appreciate these complex aspects of the parental involvement phenomenon. As such, a holistic system of support needs to be encouraged, so that as students navigate between the two systems--home and school--incongruence related to involvement is better understood and minimized.

Boyd (2005) selected 24 participants (four elementary principals, four middle-school principals, and 16 parents) and used open-ended interviews to conduct a study that sought to develop a better understanding of the factors that significantly affect the level of parent involvement during the middle-school years. Findings from this qualitative study suggested a difference in perceptions between the factors that influence the decline in parent involvement during the middle-school years. Common perceptions among participants were those associated with the role of the parent, the positive effects of parent involvement upon student success, and the role of the principal in modeling the encouragement of parent involvement. This study suggested that there was significant disparity between parent and principal perceptions related to how well middle schools encourage parent involvement. The researcher recommended that middle schools communicate with feeder elementary schools to identify highly involved parents of rising middle-school students, develop a practice of personally contacting such parents as a means to encourage their continued involvement, and establish a dialogue among parents and educators related to the development of an action plan based upon best practices to involve parents.

Countryman (1994) examined four families in a qualitative study that examined parent involvement in an at-risk preschool program from the parents' point of view. Findings from this study indicated that even though the parents reported positive attitudes about their child's program and the teachers, parents still described themselves as not involved in the school-based parent activities because of external pressures and stressors related to poverty. Additionally, this study found that there was discrepancy between parent and teacher perceptions. Parents perceived themselves as competent, caring and able, yet the teacher did not hold these perceptions. The conclusion of this study was that parents considered *at-risk* need to be involved in program planning which meets their individual needs. Early childhood educators may be hindered by their perspective if their program planning is based on a child-centered approach rather than a family-centered approach. In addition, this study is evidence that an attempt to establish an awareness of understanding about what constitutes meaningfulness of, or what matters as related to, parental involvement can bridge the divide amongst teachers (schools) and parents (families) who often times hold very different perceptions in the same situation.

DePlanty, Coulter-Kern, and Duchane (2007) conducted a study that sought to better understand the types of parental involvement that teachers, students, and parents believe affect the academic achievement of middle school learners. Data from this survey research indicated that students and teachers have a higher expectation for involvement than do the parents; a discrepancy that can convolute understanding if not taken in context.

Halsey (2005) conducted an instrumental case study at a middle school over the period of seven months to explore the perceptions of parental involvement held by the 47 student, parent, and teacher participants. Barriers to communication were revealed among

participant groups. This finding highlighted the importance of advancing and deepening understanding related to involving parents.

Ivory Tatum (2001) conducted a qualitative study of seven African American families to determine if, how, and at what level the families' previously established high levels of effective parent involvement practices in a head start program were sustained into the elementary school years. Each case was analyzed individually and across cases and the results yielded several conclusions from the interviews. One conclusion was that breakdowns in communication between parent, teachers, and the school were prevalent as parents experienced several negative incidents that affected their relationships with teachers and staff. The findings of this study suggested that an inability to seek a broader understanding within the context of individual parent involvement instances can manifest poor communication that actually inhibits understanding and thereby can destroy or severely impair the family-school relationship potentially minimizing the opportunities for positive experiences for students.

Lindsey (2006) conducted a qualitative study that sought to identify barriers to Latino family involvement and establish strategies to increase the involvement of Hispanic families in their children's educational processes. Thirty-seven participants whose primary language was Spanish were selected. All participants had at least one child in elementary school. Within the context of this study, language, need for childcare, work schedules, transportation, and feelings of comfortableness at their children's school were identified as barriers to Latino family involvement. Participants identified the following as strategies for improving family involvement: consistent and quality written communication from schools in Spanish; encouraging Latino community meetings to discuss educational topics; increased parent

education opportunities; increased school-sponsored family events; providing childcare on campuses; and integration of Latino cultures in their children's educational curriculum.

Miller (2003) conducted a descriptive ten-month case study that investigated how family involvement was conceptualized and actualized within one Even Start family literacy program. This study examined how educators and family members perceived and experienced family involvement in their school-aged children's literacy and learning development. It also examined the relationships among the family literacy program, the home, and the school. This study sought to document events related to family involvement as they emerged within a family literacy program context, as well as to illuminate how culturally and linguistically diverse stakeholders interpreted these events. The ethnographic methods utilized included participant interviews, phenomenological interviews, focus groups, and the analysis of documents and artifacts. Major findings of this study suggested that families involved in the program demonstrated resourcefulness and resolve in supporting their children's learning and that educators had much to learn about becoming co-learners with families, thus effectively tapping families' rich linguistic, cultural, and community "funds of knowledge" and multiple literacies. Well-intentioned family literacy practitioners and school teachers in the study wrestled with the need to support families while also meeting accountability requirements. The study also elucidated the point that educators need more awareness of the complex issues families face as their children learn English and sometimes lose their native language. A final suggestion from this study was that when educators and families combine their expertise in support of children's learning, they have the potential to improve outcomes for families as well as to lay the groundwork for effective advocacy with policymakers.

Seigler (2007) conducted a qualitative case study that explored trends in the level of parental involvement (defined in this study as partnership between parents and schools) at a Georgia Title I school to determine; (1) what motivated parents to participate in their child's education; (2) to what extent parents of "at-risk" children were involved in school activities; and (3) what, if any, effect involvement had on the performance of the child. This study examined three Caucasian boys deemed to be middle class and was underpinned by theories of school readiness and parental involvement. Data analysis revealed that the participating kindergarten teachers held similar beliefs about readiness that were consistent with the Georgia Kindergarten Assessment Program Revised (GKAP-R). Data revealed that the participating moms were involved in their children's education, although the participating kindergarten teachers disagreed with their level of involvement. Again this study highlighted that parents and school personnel often have different perceptions about their understanding of involvement.

In relation to the construct of parental involvement, the qualitative works of Boyd (2005), Countryman (1994), Halsey (2005), Ivory Tatum (2001), Lindsey (2006), Miller (2003), and Seigler (2007) showed that there are discrepancies between parent and teacher perceptions of parental involvement supporting the notion that opportunities for school staff to learn about working with families toward a common purpose and increasing understanding must exist.

Qualitative participants of color and competing theoretical underpinnings

Another finding from the review of the literature revealed that qualitative studies tend to examine the experiences of participants of color and often have expressed competing

theoretical underpinnings (Auerbach, 2007; Galarza Hernandez, 1995; Hynes, 2006; Johnson, 2003; Kelly-Walsh, 2005; Mora, 1997; Payne, 2005; Rutter, 2000; White, 1995).

In 2007, Auerbach published work from her two-year case study of parents of eleventh and twelfth grade students in the Futures Project. This project was identified as a partnership between the University of California, Los Angeles and a small public school college access program. Auerbach studied the educational trajectories of 30 students of color. Using the theoretical lenses of concept of parent role construction theory (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997) and social reproduction and social capital theory (Bourdieu, 1973, 1987), Auerbach discovered that parents associated with this program could be classified along a continuum of support. The continuum represented multiple meanings of support as identified by the parents ranging from positive approval of the child's desire to go to college to specific forms of instrumental help.

Using a three part interdisciplinary theoretical framework and the concept of parent role construction, Auerbach (2007) theorized that parent roles in education are fundamentally (1) socially structured by class and race (2) culturally mediated by particular cultural schemas and scripts (3) psychosocially enacted according to individual psychosocial resources and relationships within families. Auerbach also asserted that main stream models of involvement or partnership are narrowly constructed and do not capture the efforts of marginalized parents who are involved in different ways. Auerbach's findings placed the concepts of parent roles along the continuum of support from moral supporters (less proactive, indirect behind the scenes moral support for education at home) to struggling advocates (more direct instrumental support provided and monitoring at home with advocacy

at school) to ambivalent companions (offered strong emotional support and occasional direct help but conveyed deeply ambivalent messages about schools and higher education).

Galarza Hernandez (1995) conducted a case study to address a gap in the literature related to the levels of Mexican American parent involvement by getting a better understanding of Mexican American parent involvement from the parent's perspective and the role of acculturation related to the parent's involvement. Eight parent participants were interviewed over a three week timeframe. Results indicated that the participating parents placed a high value on education and as a consequence viewed parent involvement as very important. Participants indicated that they participated in their children's education by attending parent teacher conferences, helping children with their homework, and by providing emotional support. Barriers to parent involvement were identified by the participants as lack of academic skills, lack of time, and lack of English proficiency. A finding of this study was that the majority of parents seemed to maintain their Mexican values and traditions. Overall this study found that educational level, work-related issues, as well as culture seemed to influence the degree of involvement for these parents.

Hynes (2006) used Epstein's six typologies of involvement as a conceptual framework for his case study. He interviewed purposefully selected participants "to investigate African American parents' perceptions and practices of the nature, purposes, and consequences of their involvement in a Long Island middle school and in their children's education" (pg. 6). While Hynes did not explicitly express a theoretical framework for his study, Epstein's overlapping spheres of influences theory is implied as her typologies of involvement were derived from this theoretical base. Consequently, it is through this lens that the interpretations of this study are viewed. Hynes sought the perspectives of

impoverished and non-impoverished African American parents with high and low achieving children in a Long Island middle school. Overall the findings of this study indicated that with respect to parental perceptions as classified within the context of this study, there are "minimal differences between parents of high and low achieving students" (p. 100). Hence, ethnic identity was more closely related to parental perceptions than poverty.

In 2003 Johnson conducted a qualitative "multiple case" (p. 14) study, underpinned by the posture of cultural reciprocity theory (Kalyanpur & Harry, 1997). Through individual interviews and a focus group, Johnson described and interpreted the insight and experiences of African American parents with high school students during the admission, review, and determination (ARD) meetings of the special education process. Within her study, Johnson conceptualized and interpreted parent participation in the ARD process along the following themes: "resiliency, self-assurance, facilitation, dissatisfaction and culturally void perceptions of professionals" (p. 96). Johnson found that "professionals in ARD meetings did not usually communicate . . . from the posture of cultural reciprocity" (p. vi) meaning that "meaningful communication between parents and professionals was limited" (p. vi).

Kelly-Walsh (2005) conducted a qualitative, ethnographic case study of four African American fathers to observe the influence African American fathers have regarding their children's early literacy development in the context of their respective home environments through a series of in-home literacy workshops. Using structured interviews, participant observations, field notes, and audio tapes this study suggested that fathers were empowered. Overall this study provided a forum for these participants to actively enhance, reflect, and share methods to support their children's early literacy development, while acknowledging the positive contributions of African American fathers. Findings of this study suggested that

forums that allow fathers to take an active and important role in participating in their child's literacy development are necessary in the African American community.

Mora (1997) conducted a qualitative study that examined the factors that promoted Hispanic parent involvement in middle school. This study used Epstein's framework as its theoretical underpinning. The results of this study suggested that working effectively with culturally diverse parents requires that educators need to understand and be aware of socio-political and cultural aspects of culture sensitivity, family values, language, belief systems, and traditions. The findings of this study allude to the broad perspective that will need to be embraced to enhance understanding of the complex nuances associated with working with culturally diverse families.

Payne (2005) used the concept of parent role construction theory in a qualitative study designed to clarify African American parents' beliefs and perceptions of their children and their children's schooling and to gain knowledge of the educational actions parents perform. Fifteen low to middle income African American parents or surrogates whose children attended high school participated in this qualitative study. Findings of this study suggested that parents' future aspirations for their children aligned with the children's level of achievement at the time. The parents who expressed stronger parenting self-efficacy tended to have children with average achievement while the parents with weaker self-efficacy had children with low achievement.

Rutter (2000) used social capital theory to underpin a study that examined what happened when parents were encouraged to participate in kindergarten classroom life. Parents in this study consisted of nine parents and one great-grandparent. The participants in this study volunteered in the classroom and then were interviewed to determine their

experiences. Findings suggested that participants viewed volunteering as an activity that supported the emotional and social development of kindergarten children and themselves.

White (1995) examined ten African-American and Hispanic parents whose children attended a Head Start center in an urban area of New York using a naturalistic inquiry design based on grounded theory methodology. Interviews were analyzed using inductive data analysis techniques. Results of this study suggested that the underlining philosophy of participants was that parent involvement is crucial to a child's educational achievement. The participants in this study accepted their parental responsibility as the facilitator of their children's education and as their primary teachers.

As earlier espoused, there exists an overwhelming presence of Epstein's (1995) overlapping spheres of influence theory (Coots, 1998; Hynes, 2006; Mora, 1997; Woodson, 1999) in the literature among competing foundational theories used to examine the concept of parental involvement. In addition to the studies actually critiqued in this literature review, other studies were identified that utilized Epstein as a framework on the topic of parental involvement (Cortes-Torrado, 2000; Egan, 1997; Frankes, 1996; Gonzalez, 1996; Suver, 2000; Vacca-Rizopoulos, 2001; Wiser, 2000). Competing theories include social capital (Coleman, 1998); posture of cultural reciprocity theory (Kalyanpur & Harry, 1997); and concept of parent role construction (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's 1995, 1997). As such, extant research purposefully selected for synthesis was underpinned by these divergent theoretical lenses providing the maximum variation essential to this interpretive synthesis. Furthermore, it is acknowledged that the research work of Auerbach (2007) is underpinned by the concept of parent role construction and social capital theories indicating that qualitative research may in fact be underpinned by more than one theoretical lens.

Theoretical context of parental involvement

Various theories related to parental involvement have emerged (Coleman, 1987, 1988; Epstein, 1977, 1986, 1992, 1995; Harry, Rudea, & Kalyanpur, 1999; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997). Four theories--overlapping spheres of influence (Epstein 1995), social capital (Coleman, 1988), posture of cultural reciprocity (Kalyanpur & Harry, 1997), and concept of parent role construction (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997)--were identified as having been used to underpin research on parental involvement. As such, these four theories were iteratively selected to delimit the theoretical base for synthesis and to provide maximum variation.

Epstein's overlapping spheres of influence

Developed by Epstein (1995) as outgrowth of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory which explains "how everything in a child and the child's environment affects how a child grows and develops. [Bronfenbrenner] labeled different aspects or levels of the environment that influence children's development, including the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, and the macrosystem (Mental Help.Net, April 2008). Epstein's 1995 theory of overlapping spheres of influence is about the social connections within organizations. With respect to students, the focus is on school, family, and community partnerships for a child's learning (Epstein). The basic premise of this theory is that when the three spheres--home, school, community--overlap

> frequent high-quality interactions between schools, families, and communities will increase the likelihood that more students will receive common messages from various people about the importance of school, of working hard, of thinking creatively, of helping one another, and of staying in school (p. 2).

The essence of the theory as related to parental involvement is encapsulated thusly:

> The way schools care about children is reflected in the way schools care about the children's families. . . . If educators view students as children, they are likely to see both the family and the community as partners with the school in children's education and development. Partners recognize their shared interests in and responsibilities for children, and they work together to create better programs and opportunities for students . . . the main reason to create such partnerships is to help all youngsters succeed in school and in later life" (Epstein, 1995, p. 1-2).

From this theory Epstein presented six typologies of parental involvement: (1) parenting, (2) communicating, (3) volunteering, (4) learning at home, (5) decision making, and (6) collaborating with community. Epstein has prolifically produced research in this area since the mid 1970s (1977, 1986, 1992, 1995, 1996) and her work grounds many extant studies and can be regarded as prevalent and influential on the topic. The interplay of the parental involvement constructs is not a point Epstein's theory explored and while she referenced the potential for the entire school to be improved and benefit from parental involvement (1995, 1996), this idea has garnered greater attention since the statutory definition of parental involvement and other ideas related to school improvement were presented in NCLB.

Social capital

Social Capital theory has been used to study parental involvement in education (Bourdieu, 1973, 1987; Coleman, 1987, 1988; Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Lareau, 1989). Social capital has been closely aligned with other aspects including human and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1973, 1987; Coleman, 1987, 1988; Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Lareau,

1989). Bourdieu was noted to be the "first sociologist to systematically analyze the concept of social capital" (Dika & Singh, 2002, p. 33). Additionally Bourdieu "defined social capital as the aggregate of actual or potential resources linked to the possession of a durable network of essentially institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (p. 33). Bourdieu's notion of social capital is in large part comprised of the concept of cultural capital (1987). Cultural capital is defined as "the cultural experiences in the home [that] facilitate children's adjustment to school and academic achievement, thereby transforming cultural resources into cultural capital" (1987).

Lareau (1987), in a study on family-school relationships, suggested that "middle-class families have cultural capital in specific settings" (p. 83). Her study went on to suggest that that there are " . . . historical variations in definitions of cultural capital. Family-school relationships have changed over time; what constitutes cultural capital at one point in time may or may not persist in a future period" (p. 83). While it is recognized that Bourdieu and Lareau have written on the topic of social/cultural capital with respect to parental involvement, in relation to educational research, the literature revealed a more prevalent conceptualization of social capital (Coleman, 1987) used to underpin literature.

Coleman (1987) espoused that students with stronger at-home resources and foundations do better in school. According to Coleman, social capital is defined as "the resources that reside in the social structure itself--norms, social networks, and interpersonal relationships that contribute to a child's growth" (Coleman, 1987, p. 36 & 1988, abstract). Coleman continued by asserting that, "the social capital contained by the school community is an important factor in a youth's educational attainment" however in contrast, "the social capital in American families and neighborhoods available for raising children has declined

precipitously over the past 25 years because of changes in society including increased individualism, the narcissistic trends among adults, and the migration of mothers into the labor force" (Coleman, 1987, p. 37 & 1988 abstract).

While Coleman's work in this area was focused on private schools, there are useful implications for public schools regarding the school's ability to influence social capital development in the families of the children who attend the school thereby potentially increasing the academic success for students. To this end, McNeal, 1999 offered that parental involvement can "clearly be conceptualized as social capital" (p. 120); yet, McNeal goes on to theoretically assert that the concept of parental involvement is generally a salient factor in explaining behavioral but not cognitive outcomes (abstract). McNeal offered a compelling argument, but his work lacked suggestions for implementation.

Posture of cultural reciprocity

The posture of cultural reciprocity (Harry & Kalyanpur, 1997) proposed that "professionals engage in a self-reflective and dialogic process toward identifying both their own and the families' cultural norms … [as a way of beginning] cross-cultural family collaboration" (Harry, Rueda, & Kalyanpur, 1999, p. 124). This theory "helps professionals view discrepant beliefs through multiple cultural lenses" (p. 125). This theory is purported to be "an effective starting point for effective cross-cultural family collaboration" (p. 124). The origins of this theory are rooted in cultural diversity and special education as collaboration among diverse groups has been a challenge against the *normalization* of certain groups who are targeted using mainstream strategies of communication and service delivery (Harry, Rueda, & Kalyanpur). In order for professionals to assume a posture of cultural reciprocity they must start by cultivating

> a habit of examining the cultural underpinnings of the specific beliefs from which our service ideals arise. As professionals we must first state clearly what circumstances and what normative behaviors we think represent quality of life, the is, what we believe would be socially valorizing for the individual with a disability. Then we must seek the cultural underpinnings of those beliefs, rather than assume that they represent universal values that should be shared by others. Through explicit dialogue with families, we then compare our differing beliefs and work towards collaboration the builds on family beliefs and strengths rather than setting goals derived from a set of values that may be alien to the people we serve. (p. 125)

Parent role construction

In an attempt to answer two specific questions--Why do parents become involved in their children's education? How does parental involvement have a positive effect on children's educational outcomes?--Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1995, 1997) developed a model that was built on the work of Eccles and Harold (1993, 1994) that examined parents' sense of efficacy in relation to involvement. In addition, the work of Eccles and Harold "has examined specific aspects of parental involvement as well as . . . focused on identifying and describing schematically--and to some extent, causally--the wide range of parent, child, school, and community variables that may be related to parental involvement and its outcomes" (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, p. 312). Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's work also examined the work of Epstein (1992, 1994, 1996) and Lareau (1989), among others, in their development of the concept of parent role construction theory which asserted that parents primarily become involved because: "(a) they develop a personal construction of the parental role that includes participation in their child's education; (b) they have

developed a positive sense of self efficacy for helping their children succeed in school; and (c) they perceive opportunities for demands for involvement from children and the school" (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, p. 310). According to this theory, parents select "specific forms of involvement in response to the specific domains of skill and knowledge they possess, the total demands on their time and energy, and specific requests for involvement from children and the school" (p. 310). Centered on a child's development of skills and knowledge as an outcome of the involvement process of parents, as espoused, the theoretical model suggested that "parental involvement then influences children's developmental and educational outcomes through: modeling, reinforcement, and instruction (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler). These processes are mediated by the parent's use of developmentally appropriate activities and the fit between parental activities and the school's expectations. This theoretical model focuses on parent motivation for involvement rather than what constitutes involvement.

Summary of key findings from iteration one

The vast field of parental involvement literature contained many individual quantitative and qualitative studies on the topic. A November 2007 search used the terms *parental* and *involvement* in all ProQuest databases and returned over 5,900 results. Quantitative syntheses, in the form of meta-analyses (Crimm, 1992; Fan & Chen, 1999; Rosenwig, 2000; Comfort 2004, Darling & Westberg, 2004; Jeynes, 2003, 2005, 2007), exist on the topic of parental involvement and student achievement; yet, qualitative literature on the topic of parental involvement to date had not been synthesized using an interpretive approach. There is practical utility as related to qualitative literature over quantitative literature on the topic of parental involvement which is prevalent at all levels of public

schooling. The iterative examination of the literature revealed an overwhelming presence of studies based on the overlapping spheres of influence theory (Epstein, 1995), among competing foundational theories of social capital (Coleman, 1998); concept of parent role construction (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997); and posture of cultural reciprocity (Kalyanpur & Harry, 1997) in extant parental involvement literature. It is the combination of these iteratively generated findings that identified the delimited and grounded research area for synthesis (pure qualitative research about parental involvement in American public schools that is underpinned by the aforementioned theories) and the selection of the initial dataset studies (Auerbach, 2007; Hynes, 2006; Johnson, 2003) for this interpretive synthesis (see Table 1).

Iteration Two: Collected Data

Collected data found during iteration two is presented in word tables. All data tables are labeled with a title identifying which round of iteration two the data is collected from and the question (represented in italics) used to gather data. For example, word table entitled Iteration 2.1: *What does it mean to be involved?*, means that the data presented was collected during iteration two, round one, using the question *what does it mean to be involved*. All tables are to be read in vertical columns (collected data from one study) and then from left to right (collected data across studies). Each round of collected data is presented in two tables: one table entitled *what does it mean to be a parent* (subsequently referred to as *parent*) and one table entitled *what does it mean to be involved* (subsequently referred to as *involved*). Data in the *parent* tables (2, 4, 6, and 8) are presented in vertical columns. From top to bottom, each column in these tables presents the author and year of the study, the broad context in which the study is situated, the theoretical underpinning(s) of the study, and the

collected data (open and axial codes) from that study. Data in the *involved* word tables (3, 5, 7, and 9) are also presented in vertical columns. When read from top to bottom, each column in these tables presents the author and year of the study, abbreviations for the theoretical underpinning(s) of the study, and the collected data (open and axial codes) from the identified study.

All collected data of iteration two is represented in open codes (not italicized) and axial codes (italicized). Open codes, the individual themes that emerged during analysis, are represented in the tables as non-italicized, indented words that are grouped together by similarity of interpreted meaning. Axial codes, the names given to thematic groupings of open codes, are represented by italicized phrases and are not indented. Search terms and parameters used to achieve saturation of data and study reviews for each iteratively selected study during iteration two are located in Appendix B. All data collected during this iteration is presented subsequently in word tables two through nine.

Table 2

Iteration 2.1: *What does it mean to be a parent?*

Johnson (2003) **Context:** African American parents in Texas with high-school children in special education during the admission, review, and determination process **Theoretical Underpinning:** Posture of Cultural Reciprocity	Hynes (2006) **Context:** Poverty and non-poverty African American parents in NY with high and low achieving middle school students **Theoretical Underpinning:** Overlapping Spheres of Influence	Auerbach (2007) **Context:** Working class African American and Latino parents with children in a college access program at a diverse metropolitan high school **Theoretical Underpinnings:** Concept of Parent Role Construction and Social Capital
Parent as supporter Supporting children/Honoring the requests of your children *Parent as advocator* Being involved/Advocating for your children	*Parent as supporter* Providing support/Telling kids "I love you"/Showing pride when kids do better or have goals *Parent as guider* Fulfilling the moral obligation of being a parent/Instilling values/Being strict at times, setting limits and establishing clear rules for expected behavior with consequences/Having high expectations, pushing kids, and encouraging kids to take initiative to learn what they do not know/Helping kids make proper choices/Making kids responsible for their actions/Holding kids accountable for doing household chores *Parent as provider* Providing a quiet place for the completion of homework, a warm home environment free from stress, and a structured, nurturing home life/Meeting the child's needs, ensuring the child has school supplies/Giving kids better than they had	*Parent as supporter* Providing moral and emotional support/Making sure that a child's only job is to study 100% *Parent as guider* Planting a seed/Involving kids in church to thwart risky behavior/Teaching children to respect their elders and help those in need/Ensuring children know that life has a plan/Letting child go his/her own way at some point *Parent as "life" teacher* Using dissatisfaction with their own parents' insufficient support or push to help create their role in their child's education and *cautionary* tales ("Do you want to be like me?") to motivate kids to do well in school or become something/Showing child how hard the parent's vocation is to motivate and help them understand that school is the way to have a better job

Table 3

Iteration 2.1: *What does it mean to be involved?*

Johnson (2003) **Theoretical Underpinning:** Posture	Hynes (2006) **Theoretical Underpinning:** Overlapping	Auerbach (2007) **Theoretical Underpinnings:** Concept and Social
Involvement as communication w/school Talking with teachers/Making sure people involved with the special education process understand the kids	*Involvement as communication w/school* Dropping a note to the school once in a while *Involvement as communication w/child* Communicating honestly with your children/Asking the child specific questions	*Involvement as communication w/school* Talking with a teacher about grades or concerns *Involvement as communication w/child* Listening to the child to learn their needs/Relying on the child to share information given at school/Communicating closely with the child/Finding a way to 'get through to the child'
Involvement as visibility Attending ARD meetings/Being visible at school conferences/Attending various school functions	*Involvement as visibility* Meeting teachers and attending teacher initiated conferences/Making time to be involved when one can *Involvement as interest, support, and directed guidance* Being active in children's lives/"Staying on" the kids/Keeping one's guard up/Knowing the child's school schedule and daily routine/Showing interest/Telling kids to do their homework and then following up on what the kids did/Not doing homework for or with child/Physically going through all books and folders to see what needs to be done at home/Telling kids to pay attention, listen, and learn in school/Establishing a relationship between all people in a child's life/Expecting and encouraging the child to communicate with teachers *Discrete/Away from school involvement* Realizing that it is not necessary to be physically present at the school to be involved	*Involvement as visibility* Attending school parent events and a child's sporting events *Involvement as interest, support, and directed guidance* Relying heavily on cultural narrative advice and teachings as parent support for education/Projecting the parent's experience on the child/Stressing the importance of education and hard work/Setting limits on behavior/Keeping a child in the 'right' direction/Monitoring students at home/Urging students to be proud, strong, strivers in the face of barriers/Cheerleading to boost the child's self-esteem/Offering occasional tangible help like assisting with school projects/Monitoring homework/ Keeping track of students' tests grades/Making students keep all papers and comparing these grades with report card grades/Providing moral, emotional, direct, and tangible support/Saving money/Making sacrifices and clearing the way of distractions/Shaping the role a parent will play to encourage a child's studies based upon child's motivation to learn
Involvement as advocacy/empowerment Demanding for services/Having training in special education processes		*Involvement as advocacy/empowerment* Advising a child to investigate college options/Talking with child and school about college and career choices/Seeking information on financial aid/Ensuring that child takes the SAT/ Using connections to get "good" teachers or "good" school/ Choosing classes for child/Advocating for child at school

Table 4

Iteration 2.2: *What does it mean to be a parent?*

Mahler (1997) **Context:** African American parents, with varying socioeconomic levels, of high achieving elementary school children living in Nevada **Theoretical Underpinning:** Overlapping Spheres of Influence	Kalyanpur (1998) **Context:** Native American mothers who attended a government sponsored parent support group on their reservation **Theoretical Underpinning:** Posture of Cultural Reciprocity
Parent as supporter Supporting learning at home through the completion of homework/Supporting child outside of classroom (plays, concerts, etc)	*Parent as protector/nurturer* Being suspicious of outsiders/ Being perceived as needing help, but unwilling to accept help from outsiders/Providing warm, frequent, non-verbal displays of physical interactions with the child/Looking after one's own
Parent as guider Teaching/instilling basic values: importance of having an education, a strong work ethic, taking pride in their work, and doing your best/Making sure kids know that one does what one has to do first then one can do the things one wants to do/Raising the child/Challenging kids to think beyond their current academic level/Making kids look up words they do not know/ Monitoring the child's school dress	
Parent as "life" teacher Using past experiences to shape parenting style/Being responsible for disciplining children, correcting behavior/Recognizing that lack of involvement and placing focus on material things can have damaging effects on children/Realizing that for a black male child with a single mother it's going to be hard/Being concerned about the education of black male students/Teaching kids *the rules of the game* (society)/Being concerned about the racial identity development of children/Instilling pride in children related to being African American	*Parent as "life" teacher* Allowing kids to learn through experiences
Parent as learner Being a role model by furthering one's own education	
Parent as provider Providing resources for learning	
Parent as responsible for their child's learning Being concerned about current teacher placement practices/Making sure that the child is educated/Understanding that it is a parent's responsibility to ensure the child is learning/Making sure that the child gets taught at school/Recognizing that the education of children cannot be successful without parent participation to some degree	
Parent as part of a collaborative unit Working together to complement each other in the development of the child; and to understand that sharing responsibilities in the education of children depends on a relationship	*Parent as part of a collaborative unit* Helping each other watch and take care of the children

Table 5

Iteration 2.2: *What does it mean to be involved?*

Mahler (1997) **Theoretical Underpinning:** Overlapping	Kalyanpur (1998) **Theoretical Underpinning:** Posture
Involvement as communication w/ school Establishing systems of communication based on need	
Involvement as communication w/ child Asking kids questions about projects they are working on	
Involvement as visibility Visiting the classroom	
Involvement as interest, support, and directed guidance Working together to *insure* student success/Using extended family members to compensate for a parent's inability to get as involved as he or she would like with their child's schooling/Helping kids make plans to bring up low progress report grades/ Demonstrating that homework comes before all else/Getting kids to think about and to rehearse the presentation of the project	
Involvement as advocacy/empowerment Asking for clear explanations of where a student is 'educationally' in relation to where the child should be and where parents would like for the child to be/ Seeking clarifying of teaching methodology from the teacher/Educating kids at home too; not just depending on the teacher to do the educating/Sharing concerns with a teacher's performance with appropriate school personnel/ Joining the PTA to have the interests of African American children represented/ Influencing instructional decisions in the classroom related to the individual child like insisting that a child can do the math with and without a calculator/Finding community resources to start a math-science program at the child's school/Expecting a child to ask questions of the teacher until he/she (the student) understands	*Involvement as advocacy/empowerment* Ensuring children have a strong cultural identity
Involvement as academic reinforcement Reinforcing the importance of school by helping children with school-related activities at home, especially homework/Using everyday experiences outside of school to practice or reinforce what was learned at school/Filling in where the teacher left off (gaps in learning)/Making kids redo work with grade of C or lower/Acquiring a tutor if finances allow	

Table 6

Iteration 2.3: *What does it mean to be a parent?*

Escoffery (2007) **Context:** Low income and working class minority participants in a Head Start Program in southern California **Theoretical Underpinning:** Social Capital
Parent as supporter Spending time with the child/Having pride in what has been achieved/ Supporting a child's interest by returning to a fieldtrip site/Supporting learning at home
Parent as "life" teacher Using past experiences to guide present parenting decisions
Parent as advocator Advocating for your child/Demanding a proper education/Acquiring and seeking resources/ Developing a network of integrated support so that the child benefits/Advising other parents on the benefits of the Head Start Program
Parent as part of a collaborative unit Learning to communicate better with spouse
Parent as willing to learn and develop Developing parenting skills- patience, controlling temper, dealing positively with little problems, addressing the child in a positive manner/Evolving, changing, and growing as an individual/At home modeling of observed or learned behaviors/Gaining confidence/Being empowered/Realizing that parents possess certain inherent strengths regardless of income levels
Parent as teacher Being the primary educator of the child/Making learning at home fun

Table 7

Iteration 2.3: *What does it mean to be involved?*

Escoffery (2007) **Theoretical Underpinning:** Social
Involvement as communication Working with all persons involved in the life of a child to ensure the child reaches his/her maximum potential
Involvement as interest, support, and directed guidance Be "on top" of what is happening with the child at school
Involvement as advocacy/empowerment Being involved with every level or component of the Head Start Program including curriculum and lesson planning/Sharing parental talents at school (i.e. cooking, artistic, etc.)/Being part of the decision making process/Taking advantage of parent education initiatives and applying them in the future to situations/Using participation and procedures learned in a policy council group to teach children how to communicate ideas and feelings/Having the capacity to make informed decisions/Informing and advising others about the benefits of the program/ Networking and communicating with other parents/Becoming informed/Asking for progress updates from the teacher/Learning the language of the education profession
Involvement as academic reinforcement Filling in educational gaps or areas in which the child is lacking

Table 8

Iteration 2.4: *What does it mean to be a parent?*

Bell-Baptiste (2003) **Context:** Head Start parents (who formerly participated in ACORN) with students currently enrolled in public school in NY **Theoretical Underpinnings:** Overlapping Spheres of Influence and Social Capital	Gaffney (1998) **Context:** Parents of adolescents mentored by other parents in a community initiated program at various site locations **Theoretical Underpinnings:** Overlapping Spheres of Influence and Social Capital	Smith (2002) **Context:** Minority parents of urban high school students in the college choice process in Los Angeles **Theoretical Underpinning:** Social Capital
Parent as powerless/alone/afraid/confused Feeling disenfranchised and powerless *Parent as supporter* Being a supporter of the educational process *Parent as advocator* Advocating for the best schools *Parent as provider* Getting kids ready for school by reading to them and playing counting games	*Parent as powerless/alone/afraid/confused* Feeling isolated and hesitant *Parent as willing to grow and develop* Being transformed through experience/Willing to grow/Becoming a better communicator *Parent as ultimately responsible* Being responsible for the choices and actions of the adolescent child	*Parent as powerless/alone/afraid/confused* Frightened to be a single black mother raising a black son/ Overwhelmed/Afraid for children when they go away to college/ Worrying about the welfare and social impacts of being one of the few in a multi-cultural higher education setting/Hesitant to "let-go" of the child/Worried about an institution of higher learning's ability to care for children/Frustrated with school staff; communication between parent and school staff/Suspicious of the lack of information sharing that occurs in schools that are "unconnected" to a college outreach program/Confused about the financial aid application/Unaware of the process of college choice and admission because of personal experience *Parent as aware/knowledgeable* Aware that student's heritage is a source of conflict/Aware and knowledgeable of the college choice process, of the privileged academic atmosphere of their children/Aware of the position of the black parent/Aware of the child's moves at all times/Aware of the place of prominence of the HBCU /Aware of the historical context of blacks and other minority groups in America/aware of the media's portrayal of certain cultural aspects of African American youth and other societal factors *Parent as willing to grow and develop* Attending Saturday classes/Receiving academic support *Parent as ultimately responsible* Understanding that expectations for the child must be set and that they are the responsibility of the parent *Parent as supporter* Being accepting of the child's best effort/Providing parental encouragement/Ensuring children believe in themselves/Caring Parent as guider Letting child go own way at some point/Encouraging a child's independence

Table 9

Iteration 2.4: *What does it mean to be involved?*

Bell-Baptiste (2003) **Theoretical Underpinnings:** Overlapping and Social	Gaffney (1998) **Theoretical Underpinnings:** Overlapping and Social	Smith (2002) **Theoretical Underpinning:** Social
Involvement as advocacy/empowerment Getting active in making the community a better place for all of its residents/ Organizing/ Planning/ Implementing/ Mentoring	*Involvement as advocacy/empowerment* Growing/Being empowered/Taking responsibility	*Involvement as interest, support, directed guidance* Imposing consequences for the child's actions/setting expectations that are clear to the child/Caring and trusting children/
Involvement as interest, support, and directed guidance Signing notebooks daily	*Involvement as developing positive relationships* Sharing/Developing friendships/ Communicating	*Involvement as advocacy/empowerment* Aggressive in the process of choosing a college for their children/Desiring to gain knowledge about the college choice process from college-affiliated community organizations/Advocating for the child to take the SAT as many times as needed to improve scores/Learning about the college financial aid process
Involvement as participation at school Outfitting the parent room at the school/Volunteering/Dealing with discipline problems		*Involvement as participation* Committed to participate in the research study despite obstacles

Summary of key findings from iteration two

Key findings from this iteration included: open and interpreted axial codes; theoretical exhaustion; and theoretical saturation of collected data.

Interpreted axial codes for each of the analysis questions were derived from an extended thematic analysis of the thematically grouped open codes that were collected. Open codes, derived from individual analysis of each study, were organized and grouped according to thematic commonality. Each group of open codes was analyzed and an interpreted meaning was subsequently developed. Axial codes associated with the question *what does is mean to be a parent* were interpreted to be: supporter; advocator; protector; nurturer; part of a collaborative unit; guider; provider; "life" teacher; learner; being responsible; powerless/alone/afraid; willing to grow and develop; protector/nurturer; and aware/knowledgeable. Axial codes related to the question *what does it mean to be involved* were interpreted to be: communicating with the school; being visible; advocating; being empowered; communicating with the child; showing interest, giving support and directed guidance; advocating; understanding the role of discrete/away from school involvement; providing academic reinforcement; participating at the school; and developing positive relationships.

Another finding from this iteration was the exhaustion of posture of cultural reciprocity theoretical underpinning in the parent involvement literature. In an attempt to achieve saturation of data from studies underpinned by this theory, a search of all databases within the ProQuest Research Library was conducted using the terms *posture of cultural reciprocity* and *parental involvement* and *qualitative* delimited by date on or

before November 2007 which yielded no additional returns. This finding resulted in the exhaustion of parental involvement literature underpinned by this theory.

Theoretical saturation of data was another key finding from this iteration. In sum, for each theoretical underpinning selected, iterative literature searches, of all databases within the ProQuest Research Library, were conducted using the terms *overlapping spheres of influence* and *parental involvement* and *qualitative*, *social capital* and *parental involvement* and *qualitative*, and *concept of parent role construction* and *parental involvement* and *qualitative* delimited by date on or before November 2007, occurred during this iteration until theoretical saturation of collected data was achieved. Each search yielded research studies (presented in Tables two through nine), that were iteratively analyzed one at a time until saturation was determined. Studies purposefully selected met the inclusion criteria of being pure qualitative research (published in a scholarly journal or published dissertation) on the topic of parental involvement in an American public school setting with expressed theoretical underpinning as previously identified. During the data collection phase of this iteration, when no new individual themes (represented as open codes) emerged from the analysis of the study findings of the purposefully selected research, it was determined that theoretical saturation of each theoretical underpinning was reached.

Iteration Three: Convergent and Divergent Theoretical Data

Upon theoretical saturation, convergent and divergent theoretical findings were elucidated. Convergent and divergent theoretical findings are defined as the axial codes from iteration two and are presented subsequently in two word tables. The titles of the tables identify which analysis question (*what does it mean to be a parent* or *what does it*

mean to be involved) yielded the presented findings. All vertical columns within each table are to be read from left to right. Column one presents the theoretical underpinning, author, and year of the study. Column two presents all of the collective conceptual findings (axial codes). Column three presents the points of conceptual convergence; axial codes which appear across studies. Column four presents the points of conceptual divergence; axial codes which appear only in one study. When read from left to right--across columns--axial codes are grouped according to their respective theoretical underpinning(s). These findings are organized and presented subsequently in word tables 10 and 11.

Table 10

Iteration 3 Conceptually Convergent and Divergent Theoretical Findings: *What does it mean to be a parent?*

Theoretical Underpinning(s), Author, and Year of Study	Conceptual Findings	Conceptual Convergence	Conceptual Divergence
Posture of Cultural Reciprocity Johnson (2003) Kalyanpur (1998)	Supporter Advocator Protector Nurturer "Life" Teacher Part of a Collaborative Unit	Supporter Advocator "Life" Teacher Part of a Collaborative Unit	Protector/Nurturer
Concept of Parent Role Construction and Social Capital Auerbach (2007)	Supporter Guider "Life" Teacher	Supporter Guider "Life" Teacher	
Overlapping Spheres of Influence Hynes (2006) Mahler (1997)	Supporter Guider Provider Learner "Life" Teacher Being Responsible Part of a Collaborative Unit	Supporter Guider Provider "Life" Teacher Being Responsible Part of a Collaborative Unit	Learner
Overlapping Spheres of Influence and Social Capital Bell-Baptiste (2003) Gaffney (1998)	Powerless/Alone/Afraid/Confused Supporter Advocator Provider Willing to Grow and Develop Being Responsible	Powerless/Alone/Afraid/Confused Supporter Advocator Provider Willing to Grow and Develop Being Responsible	
Social Capital Escoffery (2007) Smith (2002)	Supporter "Life" Teacher Advocator Part of a Collaborative Unit Willing to Grow and Develop Powerless/Alone/Afraid/Confused Aware/Knowledgeable Guider	Supporter "Life" Teacher Advocator Part of a Collaborative Unit Willing to Grow and Develop Powerless/Alone/Afraid/Confused Guider	Aware/Knowledgeable

Table 11

Iteration 3 Conceptually Convergent and Divergent Theoretical Findings: *What does it mean to be involved?*

Theoretical Underpinning(s), Author, and Year of Study	Conceptual Findings	Conceptual Convergence	Conceptual Divergence
Posture of Cultural Reciprocity Johnson (2003) Kalyanpur (1998)	Communicating with the school Being visible Advocating Being empowered	Communicating with the school Being visible Advocating Being empowered	
Concept of Parent Role Construction and Social Capital Auerbach (2007)	Communicating with the school Communicating with the child Being visible Showing interest, giving support and directed guidance Advocating Being empowered	Communicating with the school Communicating with the child Being visible Showing interest, giving support and directed guidance Advocating Being empowered	
Overlapping Spheres of Influence Hynes (2006) Mahler (1997)	Communicating with the school Communicating with the child Being visible Showing interest, giving support and directed guidance Understanding the role of discrete/away from school involvement Providing academic reinforcement	Communicating with the school Communicating with the child Being visible Showing interest, giving support and directed guidance Providing academic reinforcement	Understanding the role of discrete, away from school involvement
Overlapping Spheres of Influence and Social Capital Bell-Baptiste (2003) Gaffney (1998)	Advocating Being empowered Showing interest, giving support and directed guidance Participating at the school Developing positive relationships	Advocating Being empowered Showing interest, giving support and directed guidance Participating at the school	Developing positive relationships
Social Capital Escoffery (2007) Smith (2002)	Communicating with all involved in the life of a child Showing interest, giving support and directed guidance Advocating Being empowered Participating at the school Providing academic reinforcement	Communicating with all involved in the life of a child Showing interest, giving support and directed guidance Advocating Being empowered Participating at the school Providing academic reinforcement	

Summary of key findings from iteration three

Related to *what does it mean to be a parent*, this iteration revealed theoretically conceptual convergence: supporter; advocator; "life teacher"; part of a collaborative unit; guider; being responsible; powerless/alone/afraid/confused; provider; and willing to grow and develop. In addition, theoretically conceptual divergence was revealed related to *what does it mean to be a parent:* protector/nurturer; learner; and aware/knowledgeable. In relation to *what does it mean to be involved*, points of theoretically conceptual convergence were revealed: communicating with the school; communicating with the child; being visible; showing interest, giving support and directed guidance; advocating; being empowered; providing academic reinforcement; participating at the school; and communicating with all involved in the life of a child. In addition, theoretically conceptual divergence wad revealed, in relation to *what does it mean to be involved*: understanding the role of discrete, away from school involvement; and developing positive relationships.

Iteration Four: Saturated Conceptual Divergence

All five points of divergence (protector/nurturer, learner, aware/knowledgeable, understanding the role of discrete/away from school involvement, developing positive relationships) were used to conduct individual literature searches of all databases in the ProQuest Research Library, on or before November 2007 using the anchors *parental involvement* and *qualitative* to determine saturation of conceptual divergence. No new studies were returned and as such the data collection phase of this study was closed. While this study was not designed to test extant theories, a review of the purposefully selected theories revealed that the divergent concepts elucidated in this study were not

part of the current collective cannon of the extant parental involvement theoretical base. This notion is further discussed in Chapter IV.

Summary of key findings from iteration four

A determination that saturation of discrepant data for this study was reached after searches of extant literature revealed no new studies that merited examination based upon the previous analyses conducted. As such, the data collection part of this study was deemed to be conceptually closed.

Summary

This chapter presented the findings from the application of the meta-interpretation approach during the four distinct iterations of data collection comprised of the following: (1) extensive explorative literature search, review and critique to delimit the research area for synthesis and to develop the initial dataset; (2) iterative process of data collection to reach theoretical saturation; (3) identification of points of theoretical convergence and divergence; (4) reaching theoretical saturation of divergent data in the literature to conceptually close the process of data collection. Findings of this process revealed five points of discrepant data: (1) *parent*: protector/nurturer; (2) *parent*: learner; (3) *parent*: aware/knowledgeable; (4) *involvement*: understanding the role of discrete, away from school involvement; and (5) *involvement*: developing positive relationships.

Chapter IV: Discussion, Limitations, Suggestions for Future Research, and Conclusion

"The sum of us together is greater than all our parts."

-Maya Angelou

Overview

This study was conducted as a quest for knowledge shaped by the interpretivist epistemology or research paradigm in an effort to accomplish the following goals: (1) conduct a meta-interpretive synthesis of qualitative parental involvement literature underpinned by divergent parental involvement theories to: holistically offer insight into how researchers conceptualize parental involvement, understand the convergent and divergent relationships among selected theories of parental involvement, and advance the theory related to parental involvement in schools; and (2) present a change in the paradigm of qualitative literature synthesis by establishing meta-interpretation (Weed, 2005a, 2008) as a viable approach for the interpretive synthesis of qualitative literature. Additionally, this research effort attempted to better understand the following inquires: (1) Do extant interpretations offer the potential for any conceptual or theoretical extensions or differences as presented in qualitative research related to parental involvement? (2) Will a holistic interpretive synthesis provide a greater *understanding of* or *insight into* the overlap or interplay between and within these extant theories?

This chapter presents a discussion of theoretical, methodological and conceptual insights, a new theoretical model of parental involvement, a process for parental engagement, limitations, suggestions for future research, and the conclusion of this study.

Discussion

With respect to the first research question posed--Do extant interpretations offer the potential for any conceptual or theoretical extensions or differences as presented in qualitative research related to parental involvement?--findings of this study suggest while there is a great deal of overlap in the conceptualization of parental involvement, there are clear points of divergence. In response to what it means to be a parent, collected data illustrated the following points of conceptual divergence: protector/nurturer; being aware and knowledgeable; and learner. In response to what it means to be involved, collected data illustrated the following points of conceptual divergence: understanding the role of discrete (away from school) involvement and developing positive relationships.

Divergent Conceptual Findings

As related to the concepts *protector* and *nurturer* a protector "prevents somebody or something from being harmed or damaged" and a nurturer is one who "takes care of a young thing" (Encarta, 2008). Nurture connotes caring for something so that it can grow. As conceptualized in a study underpinned by the posture of cultural reciprocity theory, what it means to be a parent elicited the theme of protector/nurturer with respect to parental involvement. It is surmised that the context of this study played a key factor in the emergent divergent data (concept). Within the Native American culture as described in the work, the observed parental orientation to the child, while outside of mainstream concepts of involvement, clearly showed how the protective and nurturing capacity of these mothers were grounded in their culture and were in place to assist their young to grow and develop. While the concept nurturer is synonymous with care (coincidentally Epstein (1995) noted that all of her types of involvement are synonymous with caring) it

is interesting to note that the concept of protector is not. By definition, the concept of protector is synonymous with the phrase 'shielding from harm'. In the study, an emerging insight about what it meant to be a parent elucidated the need for parents to protect their children from the outside influences of American mainstream educational institutions or programs that were viewed by participants as trying to take their children and their culture away, and hence can be interpreted as being harmful.

The concepts *aware*, "having knowledge of something from having observed it or been told about it" and *knowledgeable,* "possessing or showing a great deal of knowledge, awareness, or intelligence" are often used interchangeably (Encarta, 2008); yet, knowledgeable connotes greater depth. With regard to social capital theory, awareness and knowledge can be conceptualized as a form of capital especially when activated to acquire advancement. Awareness and knowledge can be thought of as a sort of human capital fund. Within the context of social capital, and the process of navigating the college choice process, parental awareness and knowledge were used to facilitate the advancement of their children. Parent involvement in this instance can be conceptualized as a personal quality a parent possesses in regards to seeking information, comparing and contrasting information, talking with school staff, talking with other parents, and conducting independent research about other issues such as the college choice process, teacher choice, and homework expectations for their children.

While theories of parental involvement (Epstein, 1995; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997) recognized that parental involvement does occur away from school (discrete involvement) it is still a common notion that parental involvement is measured in large part by the at-school participation of parents (Bowen, 2003; Carmona, 2007;

Halsey, (2005). Yet, it was noted by data collection underpinned by the overlapping spheres of influence theory, that some parents' understanding of what it meant to be involved was identified by their recognition that one did not have to go to the school--hence *discrete*--to be involved. Further, extant literature suggests that parents and schools often have different perceptions of involvement related to the school's definition. This understanding highlighted that meaningful action taken outside of the school could promote the positive effects often associated with parental involvement even if one did not actually volunteer, participate, or go to the school. Within the contexts of parents who may have had negative school experiences or who do not have the time to be physically present at the school, the understanding that parental involvement can be conceptualized as completely separate from school, but still of positive benefit to their children is key.

Relationship is defined as "the connection between two or more people or groups and their involvement with one another, especially as regarding the way they behave toward and feel about one another" (Encarta, 2008). Therefore *developing positive relationships* can be conceptualized as being beneficial or producing good results. The relational social context of involvement encompasses the idea that being involved means developing positive relationships amongst all individuals in a child's life, of which parents, schools, families, and communities are major stakeholders. The notion that this is one of the products of being involved is significant. Social capital and overlapping spheres of influence theory gave rise to this divergent data point. As the goal of being educated is firmly centered in the capacity for all individuals involved in a child's life to develop positive relationships, it is an extremely nuanced perspective that what it means

for a parent to be involved is to take the lead to ensure that positive relationships are established.

Being a *learner* means to gain knowledge, comprehension, or mastery through experience or study. Within the context of this study's findings, learner can be interpreted as a personal quality and a meaningful action that illustrates a parent's desire for education in order to serve as a model for one's children. A conceptualization of a parent as a learner can advance educational efforts to engage parents in self-learning opportunities and thereby further the engagement of parents as role models for their child's education.

Upon saturation, each divergent point of data was explored. The exploration of these points of conceptual divergence provided a context for the building of a new theoretical model of parental involvement. Again, the five points of divergence about what it meant to be a parent were: protector/nurturer; being aware and knowledgeable; learner; and about what it meant to be involved were: understanding the role of discrete (away from school) involvement; and developing positive relationships.

Meta-interpretive theoretical model of parental involvement

A more robust conceptualization of parental involvement should include implications that cross theoretical disciplines. It is within this recognition that insights from this study have yielded a new theoretical model of parental involvement. Figure 6 is a Meta-Interpretive Theoretical Model of Parental Involvement. This figure is comprised of four overlapping circles. Outside of the circles are the interpretations of the divergent data points: personal quality; orientation to child; relational social context; and meaningful action. Inside of each circle are the divergent points of collected data. The

awareness and knowledge data point is inside of the personal quality circle; the discrete involvement data point is inside of the meaningful action circle; the building positive social relationships data point is inside of the relational social context circle; the protector and nurturer data point is inside of the orientation to child circle; and the modeling learning data point is in the overlap of the personal quality and meaningful action data points. The findings of this study suggest that a more holistic way to conceptualize and understand parental involvement occurs in the overlap of all of the circles by considering and seeking to understand a parent's personal quality, their orientation to the child, their relational social context, and meaningful action.

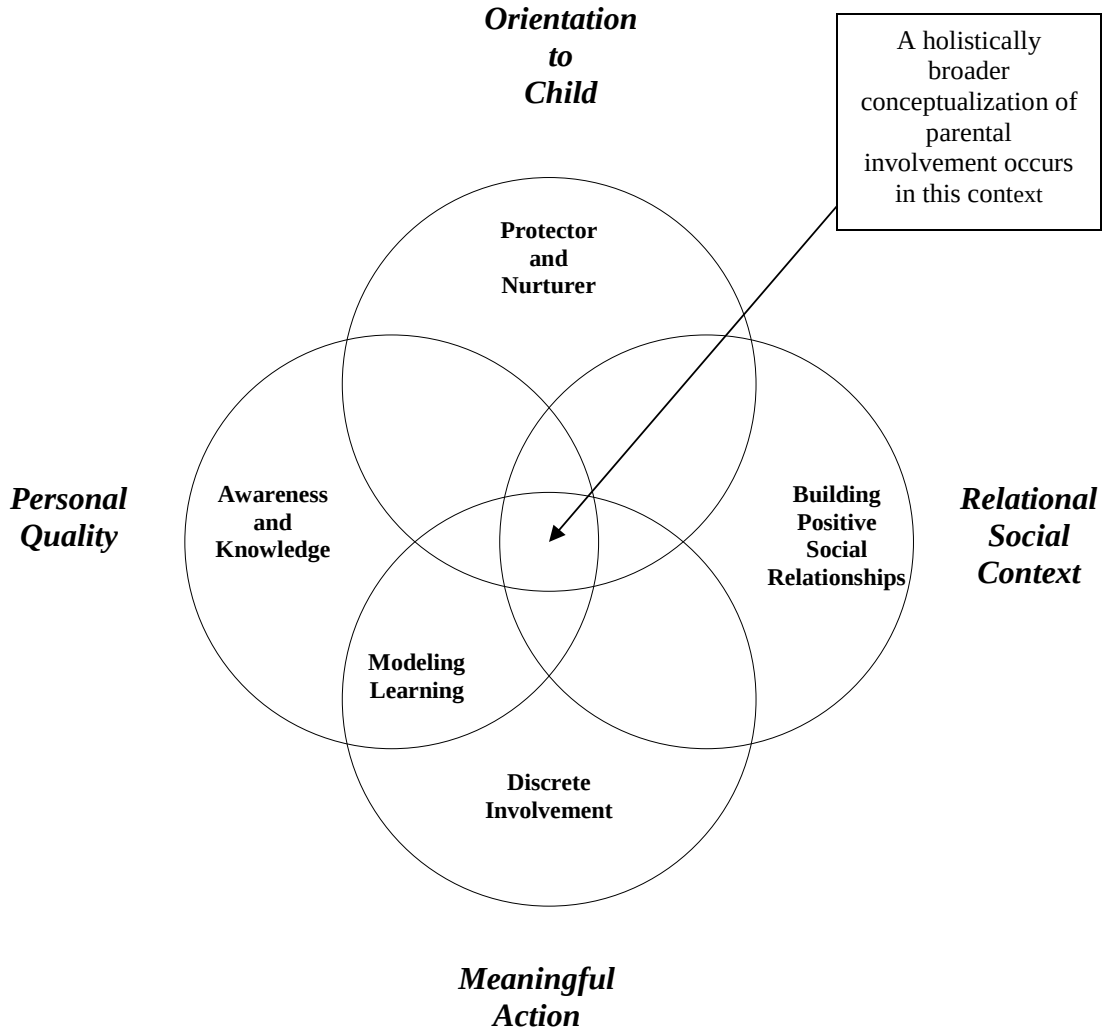

Figure 6 Meta-Interpretive Theoretical Model of Parental Involvement

This research-based theoretical model of parental involvement, which is interpretive and context specific, offers a holistic conceptualization of the topic as schools and families work to implement, increase, and sustain parental involvement across all grade levels. The Meta-Interpretive Model of Parental Involvement presented provides a holistic view of what parent involvement means as grounded in theoretically underpinned points of conceptual divergence. As all of the contexts of the studies synthesized represent individual contexts that are outside of the predominate culture, ultimately, this model can be regarded as an innovation on the extant concept of parental involvement. This model yields new insights on the concept of parental involvement and is based on an interpretation of what happens when points of difference converge to make new meaning. These insights can lead to a fuller understanding of the idea not only of parental involvement, but also the process of parental engagement.

Conceptual insights

Holistically this interpretive synthesis of qualitative parental literature at the theoretical level found that parental involvement is conceptualized as being multi-dimensional, relational in nature, context specific, and is based on a variety of researcher assumptions. This synthesis of interpretations revealed that the theoretical underpinning or lens allowed for the prioritization of different characteristics in the conceptualization (interpretation) of the parental involvement construct. To this end the results of this study also suggest that parental involvement can be idiosyncratic and that there exist different conceptualizations of parental involvement even with the same players, based on different circumstances, timing, and individual capacity at the time. Therefore, a one

size program of parental involvement does not fit all. This conceptual understanding of parental involvement is in contrast to the ideas set forth in extant parental involvement theory. In addition it suggests that the current mandate of what parental means is identified in NCLB as a narrow and lock-step definition that is to be applied the same way to all circumstances, is lacking.

Data from this synthesis was iteratively collected from within the following contexts: special education, head start, elementary, middle and high school settings, the college choice process, poverty and non-poverty settings, and minority participants including African American, Native American, and Latino American. Within these contexts and amongst the four theories selected, this synthesis noted interpretations that conceptualized several points of convergence--supporter, life teacher, guider, provider, advocator, and powerless--about what it means to be a parent. In addition, several points of convergence were noted about a holistic meaning of what it means to be involved: communicating, being visible at school, advocating, being empowered, demonstrating empowerment, showing interest, and giving support, and directed guidance. It is noted that all of these aforementioned points of convergence are all behaviors. It was the points of divergence related to being a parent and being involved provided new interpreted meanings. Findings of this study suggest that practitioners seeking to embrace a fuller understanding of parental involvement should build positive social relationships, understand parents as protectors and nurturers, gain insight of their knowledge base and awareness, recognize parents' desire to learn in order to serve as a role models for their children, and learn what forms of discrete away-from-school involvement are evident. This fuller understanding of parental involvement can prove important and promote

parental engagement in their children's educational process as practitioners embrace individual differences and understand the many nuances that are present in the changing face of today's public school. Parental involvement, based on the institutionalized norms present in current law and educational policy, does not offer the ability to promote an open atmosphere of parental engagement and tolerance as related to individual differences of the actors. While all of the studies purposefully and iteratively selected for this interpretive synthesis are about children of color, this was not an expressed delimiter in this study. Yet as parental involvement is a construct inextricably linked with Title I programs in public schools that accept these grant funds, and students of color are disproportionately poor, it stands to reason that any exploration of this construct would reveal groups of minority individuals.

Current educational practice is predicated on the uniqueness of each student learner and existing conceptualizations of effective instructional practices espouse that for maximum student engagement and learning, instruction is best delivered in a differentiated approach (McTighe & Tomlinson, 2007). Yet parental involvement, publicly regarded as an important part of the education process of children, is still based on the assembly line model of one size fits all as indicated in NCLB. NCLB outlines a certain set of behaviors and actions that are characterized as involvement including: (1) monitoring attendance; (2) monitoring homework completion; (3) monitoring television watching; (4) volunteering in their child's classroom; (5) participating, as appropriate, in decisions relating to the education of their children; (6) participating, as appropriate, in decisions relating to the positive use of extracurricular time; (7) communication between teachers and parents on an ongoing basis; (8) parent-teacher conferences in elementary

schools; (9) frequent reports to parents on their children's progress; (10) reasonable access to staff; and (11) opportunities to volunteer and participate in their child's class, and observation of classroom activities (NCLB, section, 1118 (d)). The findings of this study suggest that a context-specific conceptualization of what it means to be a parent and what it means to be involved is grounded in theoretical notions that out of individual points of difference a new paradigm can be embraced.

The insights from this study suggest that current policy related to parental involvement needs to incorporate the conceptualization that parental involvement needs to be viewed in a context-specific manner and practiced in a differentiated fashion. As each learner is unique, so are their parents. Currently some major components of public education of which parental involvement is regarded to be important include: Title I-funded parent involvement specialist positions; parent education programs; involvement policies/procedures; connecting families to resources; conference nights; PTA; IEP committee and various special education meetings; parent attendance at school performances and at school in general; and in some instances medical needs that are provided at school through school-based health clinics. For many of these major components, current training is offered based on extant ideas of the one size fits all notion of parental involvement. For example, teachers receive parent involvement training and organizations have developed parental involvement packages for principals, including newsletter formats, home study guides, and how to develop a “homework” hotline. A more holistic understanding of the concept of parental involvement will garner a new age conceptualization of parental engagement as contextually process-oriented rather than as ascribed to a certain set of behaviors as espoused in current law.

It is recommended that educational policymakers provide schools with the flexibility and funding needed to help families with identified needs. Schools should have more freedom to recommend and provide services for children as their context warrants. For example, Vermont established nearly universal health care coverage for children and gave schools and local agencies flexibility and funding to provide services to children.

> A school in Bennington [Vermont] set up a dentist's office that treated fifty-seven eligible kids its first month. Six children who'd never been to a dentist before had to go to the emergency room and have decayed teeth extracted. One sixth-grader later told his principal that he never knew what it felt like not to be in pain. (Dean, 2003, p. 69)

Increased flexibility and funding along these lines would broaden the conception of parental involvement and allow schools to contextually engage parents according to individual needs in order to manifest success and support for students in different ways.

Contextually differentiated process of parental engagement

Figure 7 outlines a contextually differentiated process of parental engagement. Step one of the process is to identify concern(s) and set realistic goal(s). During this process actors will identify the level of mutual understanding about the concern and identify the level of mutual understanding related to the common goal, seek to understand and acknowledge individual differences related to culture, context(s), and perceptions; and clarify assumptions to seek mutual understanding. Step two of the process is to assess the readiness of stakeholders to achieve the agreed upon goal and to offer support if needed. During this step, the capacity of all actors--school and home--is assessed.

Step three of this process is to suggest various methods and strategies to achieve the agreed upon goal(s) based on stakeholder readiness (personal quality, meaningful action, relational social context) and knowledge of context and culture (orientation to child). Step four of this process is to set follow-up schedules to assess the progress toward the achievement of the goal. This process will recommence as needed by establishing new goal(s) and/or implementing new strategies if no progress is able to be determined. This process-oriented approach to conceptualizing parental engagement has commonalities with a process oriented conceptualization of resilience. Rather than conceptualizing resilience as a fixed characteristic Braverman (as cited in Stanley, 2001) offered this alternative.

> Resilience is a concept that incorporates two components: (a) exposure to significant stressors or risks, and (b) demonstration of competence and successful adaptation. By this definition, resilience is a set of processes rather that a fixed characteristic of the child. Children who appear resilient at one age may or may not remain so through later years as their life circumstances change. Growing up in poverty is a particular concern because it encompasses a host of specific risks to the child such as limited access to health care, economic stresses on the family, increased exposure to environmental hazards and limited opportunities for employment. (p. 2)

As a result, parental engagement is viewed as an iterative process throughout the child's school career. And, an understanding of the context of each opportunity to engage parents provides the flexibility needed to in turn promote resilience building in children's families, and in particular families from diverse socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds.

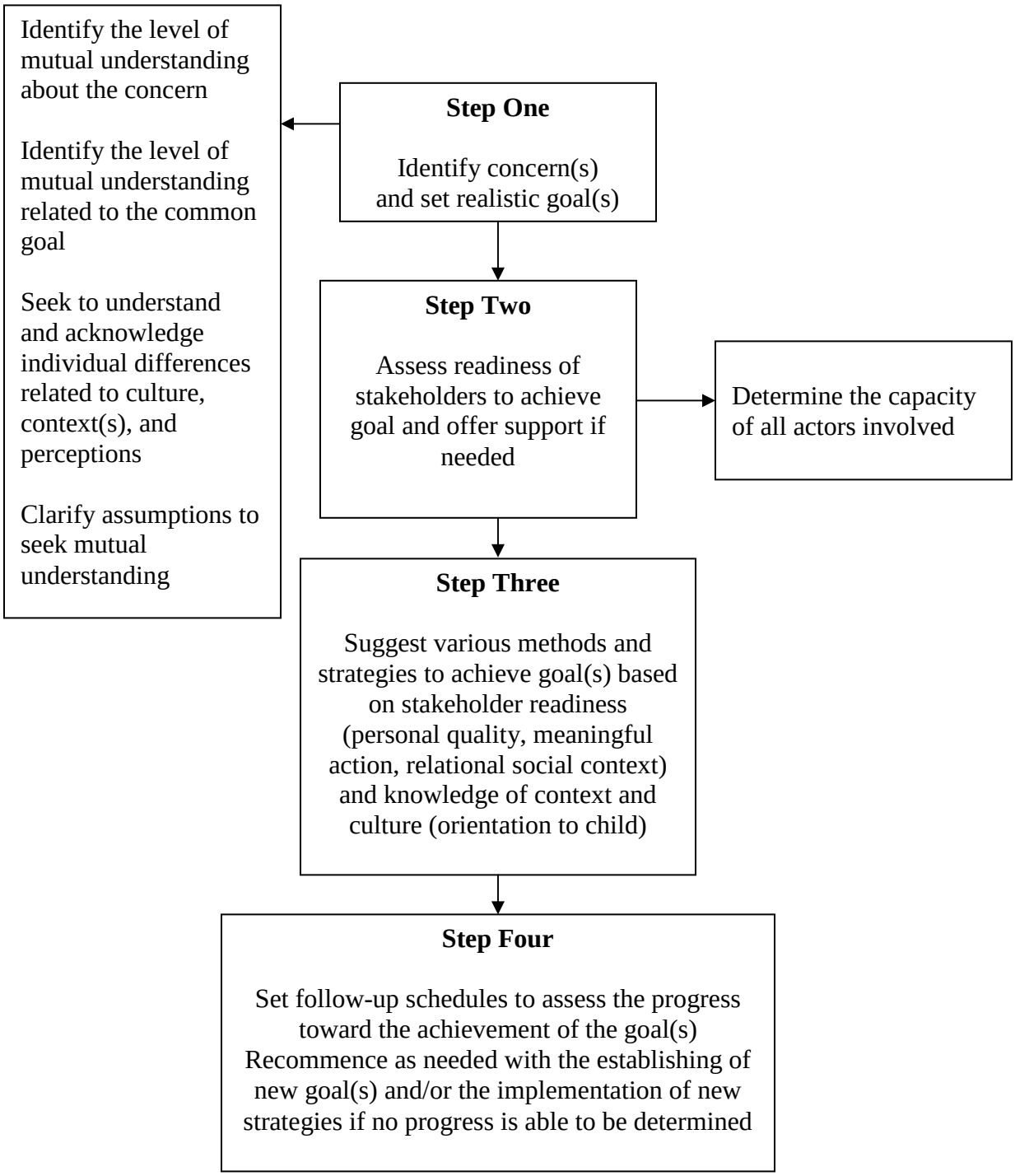

Figure 7 Contextually Differentiated Process of Parental Engagement

Theoretical insights

In answer to the question, "Will a holistic interpretive synthesis provide a greater understanding of or insight into the overlap or interplay between and within these (the purposefully selected underpinnings) extant theories?" The posture of cultural reciprocity (Kalyanpur & Harry, 1997) was the theoretical underpinning of the conceptual divergence noted as *protector/nurturer*. Social capital theory (Coleman, 1998) was the theoretical underpinning of the points of conceptual divergence noted as being *aware and knowledgeable*. In terms of parental involvement literature, as evident in this study to date, the theory of the posture of cultural reciprocity which proposed that "professionals engage in a self-reflective and dialogic process toward identifying their own and the families' cultural norms . . . [as a way of beginning] cross cultural family collaboration" (Harry, Rudea, & Kalyanpur, 1999, p. 124), has not reached the level of notoriety as mainstream theories of parental involvement including overlapping spheres of influence (Epstein, 1995) and concept of role construction (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997), or social capital theory (Coleman 1998). As such, the contexts of these points of conceptual divergence have the potential to add nuance to existing mainstream theories of parental involvement. Findings of this study indicated that regarding parents as protectors and nurtures of their children is not an aspect of parental involvement that is inherent in mainstream concepts or theories of parental involvement.

Methodological insights

The second goal of this study was to present a change in the paradigm of qualitative literature synthesis by establishing meta-interpretation (Weed, 2005a,b, 2008)

as a viable approach for the interpretive synthesis of qualitative educational literature. Methodological insights gleaned from the use of the meta-interpretation approach in this study suggest that this approach is viable for the synthesis of qualitative educational literature. The iterative, non-linear approach to the synthesis that is grounded in the literature, the understanding that this approach does not aim for comprehensive coverage, and the recognition that this approach offers *an* answer not *the* answer to the posed question, makes this approach a viable alternative to the stated difficulties of synthesizing qualitative literature. For research areas that have a large multidimensional body of literature, the innovation of using an iterative and grounded approach to delimit the research area for synthesis is time consuming and extensive. This process, in keeping with the epistemological integrity of the interpretive paradigm, allows for the extensive long term involvement in the literature that is necessary to identify a research area for synthesis and develop iteratively grounded exclusion/inclusion criteria. In addition, the use of a clear and consistent question or questions for analysis (e.g. *what does it mean to* . . .) provide a way to guide the interpretive process of the application of this methodological approach and help frame the beginning and end of the work.

The desire for a more holistic view of qualitative parental involvement literature and the interest in advancing qualitative synthesis methodology were the bases on which this study was designed. Complete access to the data and the transparent process of data collection and analysis ensured validity and a trustworthy synthesis. The interpretive synthesis of qualitative parental involvement literature occurred at the theoretical level based upon the principle of maximum variation. This synthesis proceeded through four iterations until saturation was reached. It is acknowledged that there may exist other

theories that underpin extant qualitative parental involvement literature, however an extensive iterative examination of the literature indicated prominent parental involvement theories purposefully selected for use in this study. The analysis of collected data yielded a new interpretive model of parental involvement based upon conceptual divergence. This meta-interpretive theory of parental involvement offers a holistic interpretation of a more robust conceptualization of this concept based on a parent's personal quality, meaningful action, relational social context, and orientation to the child. A suggested finding of this study is that a more robust conceptualization of parental involvement should include the implications that cross theoretical disciplines. This nuanced perspective of the parental involvement construct is not present in any previously synthesized parental involvement literature to date and must be interpreted to be one answer among a whole host of possible answers. Essentially, it is recognized that the findings of this study can be regarded as a part of a larger story about the parental involvement phenomenon.

Limitations

Just as this study held multiple possibilities to increase understanding within the research area, this study also has clear limitations which include: (1) focusing only on four theories to be the basis of the synthesis; (2) being amongst the first to use a virtually unexplored methodology; and (3) not aiming for comprehensive coverage and not purporting to be the answer, rather focusing on being one of a limitless number of answers that could be derived based on the questions that could be asked about parental involvement in education. Another limitation is that this meta-interpretation does not

include mixed methods studies that contain qualitative data and that unpublished reports and position papers are not included in the synthesis.

Suggestions for Future Research

This study represents one point of departure for exploring parental involvement with the goal of theory extension and development. Other future studies are suggested from this research, including:

1. Synthesize the actual studies that contributed to the development of parental involvement theories. Do points of convergence and divergence exist among the theories? What are the major theoretical differences?
2. Conduct a meta-interpretation of qualitative parental involvement literature based on studies conducted in rural, urban, and suburban settings. What are the key similarities within the construct among the diverse settings?
3. Conduct a meta-interpretation of qualitative parental involvement literature based on studies that examine the home schooling and charter school phenomena. What does parent involvement mean in these contexts? Are there points of convergence and divergence evident amongst these contexts?
4. Use mixed-methods studies on the topic of parental involvement and perform a meta-interpretation of the qualitative data as found in these studies. Do contextual implications regarding the collected data exist?
5. Conduct a meta-interpretation of research that investigates the implementation of school improvement models that have parental

involvement as a component. Is parental involvement considered to be a major or minor component of the improvement model as implemented? (Readers will note that this aspect was explicitly excluded from this study)

Conclusion

Several literature searches over the course of this study suggested that there are different theories related to parental involvement that underpin qualitative research. What was not able to be gleaned from the individual studies were any potential contextual connections and holistic insights. More specifically, the individual studies did not provide answers in relation to the guiding questions: Do extant interpretations offer the potential for any conceptual extensions or differences as indicated in extant qualitative research related to parental involvement? Will a holistic interpretative synthesis provide a greater understanding or insight into the overlap or interplay between and within these extant theories?

As evidenced by the lengthy and iterative development of the initial data set, and the iterative process of data collection, this research process was not linear. The initial data set was created upon the principle of maximum variation sampling (Glesne, 1999) and further analysis was commenced upon saturation. It is hoped that the findings of this study provide an answer to posed research questions and presented a paradigmatic shift related to the synthesis of qualitative educational research.

As noted, to date, there existed no interpretive qualitative synthesis on the topic of parental involvement using the meta-interpretation approach. This gap in the literature provided an opportunity to make connections that could be made in these funds of 'undiscovered public knowledge' (Swanson 1986, as cited in Fuller, 2005, as cited in

Weed, 2005, 2008). So much of what is important about parental involvement occurs between spheres of actual people (home, school, and community) and students as they strive to make meaning of their world. Qualitative parental involvement literature merited synthesis using a method that maintained the integrity--the recognition of richness of the data and context of the and within the study--of the qualitative findings in order to make these connections. Learning directly from the descriptions of qualitative participants and conceptualizations of qualitative researchers provided some answers to questions that have not been able to be accomplished with meta-analytic parental involvement syntheses.

After conducting this study, Weed's assertions are acknowledged. As indicated, meta-interpretation [was] able to highlight differences between studies resulting from different data collection methods or different researchers [. . .] such differences [were] not 'corrected for', but acknowledged in the analysis, and in many cases celebrated, because differences in data collection methods and researcher approaches [were] important in obtaining insights that have not [been] featured in other studies (Weed, 2005b, p. 8, 2008). Peshkin (1993) identified a variety of outcomes from qualitative literature. He noted, "the variety of this array reflects the breadth of our need to know as we try to understand the inevitably complex phenomena of educational research" (p. 24). So, as researchers, we must acknowledge that meta-interpretation is a viable method of qualitative research synthesis that can lead to a holistic and deeper understanding of divergent concepts.

The findings of this study led to the development of a meta-interpretive model of parental involvement that can lead to a fuller understanding and holistic interpretation of

additional conceptualizations that may lead to a more effective notion of promoting parental involvement. Where existing parental involvement is based on behavioral notions of involvement, the theory generated from this study indicated that a process orientated approach to the understanding of context-specific parental involvement can lead to greater understanding of the complex concept. It is my hope that this study is a contribution to greater understanding of some of the nuances of the parental involvement construct. Parental involvement not only means a set of concrete specific actions it can also include understand conceptualizations that can lead to further engagement of parents.

We are at a defining stage in the evolution of the purpose of American public education. Today's purpose of education can arguably be deemed to prepare students for the world of work, life, and citizenry in the 21 Century-what is known as the conceptual age of knowledge (D. Pink, personal communication, December 2008). It stands to reason that the lens with which we are viewing how to improve educational outcomes for all students necessitates an examination of the role parental involvement can play in the closing of the achievement gap and assisting with the educational preparation necessary to equip today's students for their lives tomorrow. Ultimately, it must be acknowledged that as long as there are students there will be parents who will to some extent be engaged in their child's educational process. Educators must contemplate that the way to leave no child behind is to have a more holistic understanding of parental involvement and about what it means to be a parent and what it means to be involved. It is a recommendation of this study that current law regarding parental involvement incorporate a flexible process of engaging parents in turn to support students that is based on a parent's personal quality, orientation to the child, relational social context, and meaningful action as

presented in this study rather than on a set of standard behaviors as currently espoused. Perhaps this broader level of understanding will allow us to reconceptualize our notions of the elusive nature of parental involvement enabling us to focus on what we can do to engage and understand parents rather than suggesting what behavior or action they can do that we equate to involvement.

It is hoped that this study will change the way that educators work in this area by developing an understanding that parental involvement is bigger than the widely recognized six typologies (Epstein, 1995), extant conceptualizations of the phenomenon, and even bigger than the work presented in this study. It is desired that this work, in combination with others, will promote a broader conceptualization of parental involvement by expanding and enriching the dialogue that promotes a deeper understanding about how we as educators make sense of what parents do as involvement. As indicated by this research, there are true concepts of discrete involvement; parents may not step into the school, but are still involved. So, an active understanding of this recognition can change the way that educators think of parental involvement, by allowing a focus on the meaningful actions that parents take for the child, promoting a deeper understanding of this concept, and recognizing that parental involvement does not look the same for everyone. By doing so, there is potential to positively change the way many of the students in public schools feel about their parents' involvement and by extension their school experiences. After all, when it comes down to it, parent involvement is ultimately about students.

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Appendix A: Methodological Memos

Memo #1 November 22, 2007

After a recent (November 20) phone conference with my dissertation chair and my methodological committee member, I have had a mind full of ideas and have come to an understanding. For several years I have been grappling with the organization of my critical literature review of related parental involvement literature. I could not understand how to organize the voluminous literature so that I could provide a critique of relevant literature for my study. It never occurred to me that I was actually in the initial stages of my first iteration of analysis for my study. Dr. Wright referenced that what I was providing would be an innovation to the meta-interpretation approach. This term resonated with me and for the past couple of days I have been trying to organize my mind around this understanding.

As I understand it for the past few years I have been in, "One giant iteration," (M. Wright, personal communication, November 20, 2007). I have actually begun some initial analysis as I have consulted and combed through parental involvement research determining which studies and articles I would place in the pool of acceptable research for my study. Since the meta-interpretation approach is used to synthesize qualitative research, when I decided upon this methodology for my study, I decided that I wanted to include purely qualitative research in the pool for potential analysis. In doing so, I have become very familiar with the qualitative studies based on using Epstein's framework. To my best recollection, my steps have looked like this:

1. (2004) I searched Dissertation Abstracts with the term parental involvement. My search resulted in so much literature that I was absolutely overwhelmed. I looked

through hundreds and hundreds of abstracts and tried to organize them into categories for management purposes. I had many digital folders that held these abstracts. As I read the abstracts I made notes of studies that I wanted to explore further. This is when I located Fan & Chen's 1999 meta-analysis.

2. (2005 & 2006) I conducted searches of Academic Primer databases and found voluminous literature. I followed a similar process as indicated in Step 1. I had no idea about what I was looking for or what I was trying to do with all of this literature. In 2005 I located Weed's meta-interpretation approach and determined that I wanted to include purely qualitative research in my study.
3. (2006) I used the search terms Epstein, qualitative, and parental involvement trying to obtain a sample that I would draw from to begin my meta-interpretation.
4. In early 2007 a light bulb sort of went off in my head. Since I was recognizing Epstein as prominent in the field of parental involvement and that her theory and typology of involvement underpinned/was the conceptual framework for many of the studies that I had encountered over the past 3 years- why not just use the six types of involvement in my search terms? That way I would be able to manage my search, and have the studies organized so that I could better identify the studies I selected as my initial studies for my meta-interpretation. I chose to use ProQuest database because the organization of this search engine made most sense to me and after sitting with the distance librarian from main campus, I understood that the terms I used in my searches and my database selections (all) would merit a good return of literature. I conducted additional searches in July and November of 2007. Each time I read many, many abstracts, some complete

articles, and skimmed many dissertations, in an effort to ensure I had pure qualitative literature. I would have to say that my November search is the most delimited search to date that I have conducted. I have set up alerts to be informed of new research in the categories and terms that I have used.

Considering these steps as part of my analysis process is a paradigm shift for me. Looking at this "giant iteration" as an innovation to the meta-interpretation approach is very exciting. The complete discussion of how this differs from what Weed outlines occurs in my methods chapter. Through the development of my initial dataset I began to think of the studies that I will include in my synthesis as participants. Each purposefully selected and able to offer rich interpretations of the parental involvement or other conceptually relevant phenomenon, related to their context.

Memo #2: December 2, 2007

Ok so just when I thought I understood…

I have decided that I will not include any critique of parental involvement literature in my proposal. The whole nature of my actual study is an interpretive synthesis of extant parental involvement literature. I think that the critique of this literature in depth is pointless and not necessary as it relates to the method I have chosen to use for my study. I am worried that my critique of this literature will move me beyond *theoretical sensitivity* into *theoretical callousness*. I may have to perform some sort of critique of other literature as conceptual issues arise that I am going to address as my analysis progresses, but now is not the time for the inclusion of these critiques. I am supposed to be entering into this process without pre-conceived notions. As such, I have more knowledge than I need to at this point and will not develop any further knowledge until I

begin the first iteration of data analysis. Hopefully I can clearly communicate my reasons to my committee as this is a change that occurred from what we last discussed.

Memo #3: December 17, 2007

Since my proposal defense I have been in deep reflection trying to conceptualize the process and changes that were discussed and agreed upon at my defense. The video made at my defense has proven to be extremely helpful. I was able to go back and hear the actual conversation that we engaged in during my defense. In one word this experience alone was invaluable to my research.

From what I understand I am now on my third iteration of the literature and as such I have to reshape my thinking about this process and about the way I am going to approach my work.

Originally I was focused on the synthesis of the content of extant parental involvement literature rather than the synthesis of how researchers have conceptualized or interpreted participants through their chosen theoretical lens.

The idea that my study aims to interpretively synthesize parental involvement literature on theoretical grounds caused another shift within me. It took me to a higher level and as such I have reframed my thought process. I am sure that this will not be the *last* 'reframing' I engage in during this process!

So if I understand correctly…

1. I am no longer using Epstein's six typologies the organization of my extant parental literature search or as one of the basis to illustrate maximum variation within my dataset as it pertains to her theory.

2. Rather I will go back to the search that generated the 327 results and *physically sort/group* them along their theoretical grounds to note points of theoretical divergence.
3. Then I will select three studies based on the premise of maximum variation according to theoretical divergence. (see **Sidebar** below)
4. It is at this point that my analysis will commence once I am approved to begin my study.
5. My committee and I will have a conversation about the three studies and our interpretation of the interpretations of the original researchers.

Sidebar…

6. Since I have become familiar with this literature, I am able to generate my initial dataset of three studies because I am aware of three extant studies, from the search that generated 391 studies that are theoretically divergent. I will then critique the purposefully selected theories related to parental involvement.

Memo #4: December 2008

What has been so difficult about recording the steps in this non-linear process is that sometimes I have had to literally take two steps forward, three steps back, seven steps to the left, etc. and try to remember where I began. In addition, there have been many creative solutions to combat the instances of ambiguity that have ensued because meta-interpretation is a virtually unexplored methodology. As I think about the methodological process of meta-interpretation espoused by Weed, I recognize that my process has not followed what he outlined lock-step. However, I have sought and worked so that this process is hermeneutic and grounded in the qualitative tradition at each phase.

The development of the initial dataset (Weed's second step in his process and a very early beginning point for this method of interpretive synthesis) was iterative and grounded in the research review and critique I conducted from 2006-November 2007. At the outset, I had difficulty with conceptualizing the extensive nature of the development of my initial dataset. As presented in Weed's paper on the meta-interpretation approach it was difficult to determine how one could "pick" four contrasting studies. In order to select contrasting studies for my synthesis a substantive review of the literature was conducted, exclusion criteria was developed, and gaps in the literature were iteratively discovered. As such, iterative delimiters (completely grounded in the extant data reviewed) developed as theoretical sensitivity advanced. While the data selection was not based upon criteria that were established at the outset of this process, I had to strived to understand and recognize (as I reflectively looked back on the process of this study) the initial dataset selection.

Appendix B: Analytic Review Memos

Analytic Review Memo #1: Data Collection Iteration 2.2

Iteration 2.2 of data collection included the search terms: *Overlapping Spheres of Influence* and *Posture of Cultural Reciprocity* and *parental involvement* and *qualitative*. Researcher roles during this iteration consisted of: (1) critically reading and taking notes on each selected study; (2) asking the two analysis questions and collecting data accordingly; and (3) memoing.

Through the theoretical lens of overlapping spheres of influence, Mahler (1997) investigated the perceptions of African American parents, with varying socioeconomic levels, of high achieving elementary school children living in Nevada. Through a focus group session or an individual in-depth interview twelve parents offered information about "their role in education and how these perceptions translate into specific parent involvement practices both at home and at school" (p. iii).

While this study examined various models of home-school relationships and home-school partnerships, Mahler (1997) posited that Epstein's model was most germane to this study. Mahler stated,

> [t]he model of overlapping spheres of influence will be useful in this exploration of the home-school relationships of high-achieving African American students. As the theoretical framework of this study, this theory has the potential to increase our understanding of how all families, especially African-American, and schools can develop strong partnerships which can withstand disagreements, provide avenues for problem solving, and ultimately help all students succeed in school" (p. 26).

Findings of Mahler's study "revealed that parent participants were able to distinguish between the responsibilities of families and the responsibilities of schools in the education of children but also recognized that families and schools must work together to insure student success" (p. iii).

In 1998, Kalyanpur studied a group of nine Native American mothers as they participated in a parent group facilitated by various professionals connected with a program run by the city's Developmental Services Office (p. 319). Conducted by one of the original author's of the posture of cultural reciprocity theory, this study illustrates how "cultural blindness" (p. 318) can afflict professionals, albeit unbeknownst to them. Through participant observations and in-depth interviews (p. 319) over nine months, Kalyanpur sought to "describe the puzzlements the professionals encountered and analyze the cultural assumptions underlying these puzzlements" (p. 318). According to Jacob (1993) a *puzzlement* can be thought of as an interruption in understanding based on an individual's assumptions often attributed to cultural difference.

Kalyanpur's findings, grounded in a discussion of the posture of cultural reciprocity theory, suggested that

> [c]urrent professional practice manifests two inherent assumptions about parenting skills. The first is that since child development and developmental psychology are scientifically-based, the theories are objective and therefore universally applicable. Further, behaviors that are considered normative by the mainstream have become the standards of behavior for all other groups. The second assumption is that any variation from these norms is a deviation, and therefore wrong practice, necessitating remediation (p. 328).

Validating the need for cultural recognition and respect among education professionals and the families they serve, this study highlighted the cultural mismatch that can impede the educational process of children from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

Memo #2: Data Collection Iteration 2.3

Iteration 2.3 data collection included the search terms: *Social Capital Theory* and *parental involvement* and *qualitative*. Researcher roles during this iteration consisted of: (1) critically reading and taking notes on the selected study; (2) asking the two analysis questions and collecting data accordingly; and (3) memoing.

Social reproduction theory, also referred to as social capital theory, is the theoretical underpinning of a 2007 study conducted by Escoffery. The author's study is underpinned primarily by Coleman's (1988) social capital theory, but is also influenced by Bourdieu's (1973, 1987) interpretation of social reproduction theory--"specifically the constructs social and cultural capital" (p. 50).

Escoffery's case study focused on low-income and working-class minority parents with children involved in a head start program in southern California. This study is distinguished as a "process oriented research perspective" rather than "the outcome oriented research perspective which presently exists" in the literature on the topic (p. 8). The ultimate goal of Escoffery's work was to potentially provide "Head Start program administrators and staff with an increased understanding from the perspective of an involved parent, which programmatic aspects support and benefit parental development of social and cultural capital resources" (p. 8). This author contextually defines parental involvement as it is presented by the vision for parental involvement of the Head Start program. Escoffery collected data through in-depth interviews, focus group interview,

observation, and document analysis over a five month time period. Results of her work indicated that “parents perceived of themselves as gaining social and cultural capital resources as a result of their participation within the Head Start program” (p. vi).

Memo #3: Data Collection Iteration 2.4

Iteration 2.4 data collection included the search terms: *Social Capital Theory* and *Overlapping Spheres of Influence Theor*y and *parental involvement* and *qualitative*. Researcher roles during this iteration consisted of: (1) critically reading and taking notes on the selected study; (2) asking the two analysis questions and collecting data accordingly; and (3) memoing.

In 2002, Bell-Baptiste conducted a qualitative study that investigated how schools tap into the social capital that parents who have received training under the Head Start Program or through the parents involvement in the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) community development and improvement project. Conducted in central Brooklyn neighborhoods, this study sought to determine if there was a translation of "social capital into comprehensive parent involvement in the schools" (p. 9) with respect to parents of color. One of the specific questions this research sought to investigate was "under what conditions are the organizational structure and environment of inner-city public schools conducive to sustaining parent participation that has previously been developed?" (p. 12). Ultimately, the purpose of Bell-Baptiste's work "was to find out whether parents of color, especially those who already have been involved on the community level and in the Early Childhood education of their children, have surfaces as partners in the urban public schools that their children not attend" (p. 25).

Using a qualitative design, this six-month long study of parental involvement in three schools was underpinned by overlapping spheres of influence in conjunction with the six types of involvement (Epstein, 1992) and social capital theory (Coleman, 1990). Specific reasons for participant selection indicate the principles of purposeful selection and maximum variation. Participant selections include parents, school staff, school administrators, and program administrators. In addition, data collection methods indicate triangulation and the use of a software program to "designate the boundaries of data and attach code symbols to them" (p. 84).

Gaffney (1998) conducted a year-long study in which she examined whether parents mentored by other parents through a community-initiated program called Parent Share, perceived support in mediating their early adolescents' risk-taking behavior, influencing their early adolescents' student development, improving their families' well-being, and improving their own well-being. Using a critical qualitative method with a grounded theory approach guided the data collection through structured telephone interviews with two comparison groups, using theoretical, exhaustive sampling and constant comparative method of analysis. While underpinned by overlapping spheres of influence theory, this study focused its examination on a specific type of involvement as presented in Epstein's framework--collaborating with community--which the author characterized as "a large, diverse category of involvement generating growing interest" (p. ix). One of the main purposes of Gaffney's work was to analyze "involving families in the lives of their early adolescents through the support of mentor parents in a community-based program" (p. 6). Through the experience of participating in the mentorship program, parents perceived themes of "isolation, hesitation, growth,

responsibility, communication, transformation, sharing, and friendship" that in turn defined four functional roles that conceptualized the experience of the mentored parents. The roles are: "respect and care shown by the mentors provided support and strength for families, promoting active care for early adolescents, mediating their risk-taking behavior, and influencing their development as students" (p. viii).

Using theories of social and cultural capital grounded in social reproduction, Smith (2002) investigated how "African-American parents from Los Angeles are involved in" their children's college choice (p. 48). Smith collected data through semi-structured and open-ended interviews, and focus groups from 39 African-American parents, of which 77% were women, at six schools. In addition to theories of social and cultural capital, Smith also employed the use of black feminist epistemology (Collins, 2000) in his data analysis. As described in this study, black feminist thought is subsumed under the over arching theories of capital previously identified. As stated, black feminist thought is "a system of beliefs, taken-for-granted approaches, and attitudes that produce a black women's standpoint" and ultimately black feminist thought is characterized as the "collective approach to negotiate relationships with those who dominate them" (p. 70). Through the constant comparative data analysis method Smith discovered key themes evident in the data: the use of cultural and social capital was more important than possession of said capitals; both forms of capital intermingled; the capital possessed by African American parents is distinct and shaped by history; the impact of single parent families; families rely on college outreach organizations to provide knowledge; and a larger social struggle existed in reference to how these parents guide their children.

Appendix C: Reflective Memos

Memo #1: My Journey

I began my pursuit of an educational doctorate knowing that I wanted to explore some area of parental involvement as it related to the educational process and achievement of children. My research desire was an outgrowth of my personal and professional experiences and my knowledge of the statutory definition of parental involvement in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001.

In retrospect, the conceptual development of my study evolved over many years of personal experience, study, and exploration of the literature. There are key milestones in the evolution process that I have experienced which resulted in my selection of meta-interpretation (Weed, 2005, 2008) as the methodological approach for my synthesis of qualitative parental involvement literature in order to better understand the role parents played in their children's educational process.

My parents had a profound influence on my educational process. I remember many evenings at the table with my mother as I worked to complete homework or school projects. I remember many positive, encouraging words from both of my parents as I encountered educational expectations that challenged me. My parents were extremely proud of my success in school; yet, they made it known that they would settle for nothing less than my best effort. Even today, they are still the biggest champions of my educational successes and my biggest motivators when I face educational challenges and experience episodic educational failures. From my personal experience, I am passionately convinced that the positive role of my parents in my education substantially contributed to positive educational benefits for me. This personal knowledge prompted

me to ask questions as I sought deeper understanding. Was I alone in my experience? Did other individual stories of such experiences exist in extant qualitative literature? How did these experiences relate and connect? Now that I am a parent, I am urgently interested in understanding these questions as I desire to be involved and provide support necessary to ensure that my children maximize their educational process.

As a public educator, I frequently read about aspects of parental involvement in education. Earlier in my career I became aware of various educational resources and information about the parental involvement concept. Upon review of this information I could ascertain a holistic understanding of for whom and under what conditions does parental involvement have an impact. I then became acquainted with the work of Joyce Epstein, and her prominence in relation to parental involvement research. My experiences as a classroom teacher and a public school administrator illustrated, on a daily basis, the paramount importance of parental involvement and the key role of school personnel to facilitate such involvement.

In the infancy of my doctoral studies, NCLB emerged with a statutory definition of parental involvement. I desired to understand how the implementation of the requirements related to this statutory definition would look and how schools would work to ensure that they were meeting the parental involvement requirements of NCLB. I worked in a Title I school during this time and questioned my administrative role in making sure our school followed the expectations as outlined in the law. How would I communicate and support two-way meaningful communication? Furthermore, I wondered and sought to understand exactly what *two-way and meaningful* communication was.

I recognized, and still do, that NCLB has many controversial tenants, and that currently the reauthorization of this educational policy is politically polarizing (Hoff, 2007). Given such, I wondered if statutorily defining parental involvement provided an opportunity to better understand, through research, a construct that has been referred to in educational research literature as multi-dimensional and vague, and at times operationalized to support various research needs (Darling & Westberg, 2004; Fan & Chen 1999; Jeynes, 2003, 2005, 2007; Zipnick, 1996) and provide researched-based policy recommendations.

Memo # 2: Epilogue Reflection

My dissertation has not only been an intellectual journey, but also a very personal one. Through this process I have challenged my own beliefs and come to new understandings. Peshkin (1993) recognized the " . . . goodness [of] . . . and therefore warrant for the inquiries of educational researchers-in a multitude of types of outcomes" (p. 28). In this context, my dissertation rebuffs existing structures, is not a linear process, and has taken on a shape and form all its own.

My intrigue and fascination with the synthesis of educational research, specifically parental involvement research and the qualitative research paradigm, led me to *meta-interpretation* (Weed, 2005, 2008). Meta-interpretation is an emergent, virtually unexplored methodological approach used to holistically synthesize qualitative research. The course of my dissertation journey has taken many turns and this process has changed many of my assumptions about the overall process of 'doctoral research.' The outline of my thinking was integral and important to my research process. As such, I have included the most germane *memos* (Glesne, 1999; Maxwell, 2005) in the Appendices.

My role as the researcher is integral to the selected meta-interpretation methodology. Readers can think of this study as the record of inquiry-based, intellectual quest charted along three interrelated contexts--methodological, conceptual, and subjective--seeking to provide an answer to two distinct questions: (1) Do extant interpretations offer the potential for any conceptual or theoretical extensions or differences as presented in qualitative research related to parental involvement? (2) Will a holistic interpretive synthesis provide a greater understanding of or insight into the overlap or interplay between and within these extant theories?

I began my journey imagining that there existed many assumptions about parental involvement and the process of synthesizing qualitative research. Hopefully, readers will find that my work has contributed to this discussion and challenged or advanced what we already know about understanding the phenomenon of parental involvement.

Appendix D: Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement and Sample Practices

(Retrieved May 30, 2006 from http://parent.sdsu.edu/aboutpi.htm#epstein)

Parenting: Help all families establish home environments to support children as students	(1) Parent education and other courses or training for parents (e.g., GED, college credit, family literacy), (2) Family support programs to assist families with health, nutrition, and other services, (3) Home visits at transition points to pre-school, elementary, middle, and high school.
Communicating: Design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children's progress.	(1) Conferences with every parent at least once a year, (2) Language translators to assist families as needed, (3) Regular schedule of useful notices, memos, phone calls, newsletters, and other communications.
Volunteering: Recruit and organize parent help and support.	(1) School and classroom volunteer program to help teachers, administrators, students, and other parents, (2) Parent room or family center for volunteer work, meetings, resources for families, (3) Annual postcard survey to identify all available talents, times, and locations of volunteers.
Learning at home: Provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning.	(1) Information for families on skills required for students in all subjects at each grade, (2) Information on homework policies and how to monitor and discuss schoolwork at home, (3) Family participation in setting student goals each year and in planning for college or work.
Decision Making: Include parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives.	(1) Active PTA/PTO or other parent organizations, advisory councils, or committees for parent leadership and participation, (2) Independent advocacy groups to lobby and work for school reform and improvements, (3) Networks to link all families with parent representatives.
Collaborating with Community: Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development.	(1) Information for students and families on community health, cultural, recreational, social support, and other programs or services, (2) Information on community activities that link to learning skills and talents, including summer programs for students, (3) Service to the community by students, families, and schools (e.g. recycling, art, music, drama, and other activities for seniors or others).

Appendix E: Permission

Permission to reproduce and use Meta-Interpretation figure

From: Amanda Corbin-Staton [mailto:Amanda.Corbin-Staton@nn.k12.va.us]
Sent: 16 March 2009 14:04
To: Weed, Mike (mike.weed@canterbury.ac.uk)
Cc: Virginia Roach
Subject: Meta-Interpretation Request

Dear Dr. Weed-

I received an out of office reply from an email I sent to you this past weekend. As such, I am following up today. I know you are probably catching up and I apologize for this repeated request.

I have successfully defended my dissertation (using your Meta-Interpretation approach) and am completing the final stage of this journey. As I am preparing for the upload of my document, I am requesting permission to reprint/use your Figure of the Meta-Interpretation method in my dissertation with full acknowledgement. Do I have your permission to do so?

Thank you for the groundbreaking work you have done in qualitative synthesis methodology. Hopefully we can meet someday!

Sincerely and Respectfully,
Amanda

From: mike.weed@canterbury.ac.uk [mailto:mike.weed@canterbury.ac.uk]
Sent: Monday, March 16, 2009 12:36 PM
To: Amanda Corbin-Staton
Subject: RE: Meta-Interpretation Request

Dear Amanda

Apologies for this very quick eMail (I'm rushing between meetings) – yes, feel free to include the diagram…can you credit it to both the FQS source and the Intl J. Social Research Methodology source?

Congratulations on your dissertation defence

Best wishes

Mike