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West Indian Parents', Guardians', and Caregivers' Perceptions, Understandings, and Role
Beliefs About K-12 Public Schooling in the United States

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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On the Death by Drowning of the Poet Eric Roach

By Martin Carter

It is better to drown in the sea
than die in the unfortunate air
which stifles. I heard the rattle
in the river; it was the paddle stroke
scraping the gunwale of a corial.

Memory at least is kind; the lips of death
curse life. And the window in the front of my house
by the gate my children enter by, that window
lets in the perfume of the white waxen glory
of the frangipani and pain

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West Indian Parents', Guardians', and Caregivers' Perceptions, Understandings, and Role
Beliefs About K-12 Public Schooling in the United States

Susan Chanderbhan Forde

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this exploratory study was to examine the understandings and perceptions that West Indian parents and caregivers residing in the U.S. have about U.S. public schools. A second purpose of this study was to examine the consistency between these findings and the cultural-ecological theory advanced by Ogbu (1974) which posits that immigrant minorities to the U.S. hold different perceptions and expectations in relation to U.S. schools.

Using interviews with 13 families in the Tampa Bay area, the study examined West Indian parents' and caregivers' understanding of the American public schooling process, expectations for education, role beliefs, and roles they played in their children's schooling. Several themes emerged from the interviews regarding these areas. These themes included: families viewed education in very instrumental ways (a finding that aligned with Ogbu's cultural-ecological theory), families had overwhelmingly positive perceptions of resources and opportunities offered by U.S. public schools, and most families were satisfied with the home-school relationship. A minority of families described negative relationships with schools. In addition, families reported that they believed school-based involvement was important. However, they reported very low levels of school-based involvement, but high levels of home-based involvement.

Obstacles to parent involvement included logistical barriers, and lack of familiarity with the U.S. school system. Implications of the findings for school personnel are discussed and suggestions for further research are offered.

Chapter One

Introduction

The population of the U.S. is becoming more and more diverse. At present, immigrants comprise over 12% of the U.S. population, about 35 million people (U.S. Census, 2000). About one in five children in the United States currently lives in an immigrant household (Suárez-Orozco, Todorova, & Louie, 2002) and the parents of over 15 million children in the U.S. are immigrants (Urban Institute, 2004). If current trends continue, by 2010 at least 25% of all American children will be the children of immigrants (Urban Institute, 2004). Historically, the largest number of immigrant families has been concentrated in six states (California, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey New York, and Texas). However, recent U.S. Census data indicate that some Midwestern and Southern states (e.g., Idaho, Iowa, Georgia, and North Carolina,) are outpacing these states in the number of immigrant families (Urban Institute, 2004). For instance, between 1990 and 2000 North Carolina and Iowa saw 270% and 182% increases, respectively, in their population of immigrant families (Urban Institute, 2004).

In large school districts, the percentage of immigrant families is often high. For instance, 48% of the children in the New York City public schools are from immigrant households (Suárez-Orozco, Todorova, & Louie, 2002). Concurrent with these immigrant population increases, the immense increases in communication technologies means that the distance between the country of origin and the destination country for immigrants has dramatically decreased (Suárez-Orozco, 2000). Thus we face a

generation of immigrants who will not assimilate as easily as previous waves of immigrants did, perhaps not at all (Suárez-Orozco, 2000; Waters, 1999). Sassen (1999) notes that in an era of globalization and increasingly transnational populations, we need to rethink our conception that a cultural group of people is shaped mainly by conditions and events in their particular geographic context. According to Sassen (1999), in contemporary times, due to communication networks and the large scale movement of labor (both skilled and unskilled)

...the immigrant workforce operate[s] in contexts which are both local and global; they are members of a cross-border culture that is in many ways ‘local’...immigrant communities...have international linkages with their home countries and local cultures of origin. In a different manner, they nonetheless also have experience of deterritorialized local cultures, *not predicated on proximity* [italics added] (p. 135)

These changes mean that educators can no longer rely on the forces of assimilation and Americanization to quickly acculturate immigrants into American society as was the case with earlier generations. Thus, for educators to work successfully with contemporary immigrant populations they will have to possess a better understanding of the cultures of these groups.

Specifically, it is vital that we develop our knowledge base about the understandings these groups bring with them about schooling in the United States. In light of research demonstrating the linkage of home-school collaboration and parental involvement with successful academic outcomes for students (e.g., Christenson, 1991; Halle, Kurtz-Costes, & Mahoney, 1997), many researchers and practitioners (e.g., Dauber

& Epstein, 1993; Christensen, 2004; SEDL, 2002) have identified the need for higher levels of home-school collaboration and parental involvement as integral to American education. In addition, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (2001), the legislation aimed at increasing accountability in education, requires schools to develop ways to involve parents in efforts to improve schools. Some researchers, (for example Crozier, 2001) have argued that parental involvement policies are bound to be flawed if they fail to recognize the diversity among ethnic minority parents. This is supported by a solid body of research on home-school communication. For instance, one study (Lopez, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001) examined school districts with large migrant populations that had developed successful parent involvement programs. The researchers found that a key reason for the schools' success was that they understood the varying needs of the families they served and met those needs on an ongoing basis. Pena (2000) in a study of a Texas elementary school with a majority Mexican population found that parents felt the school officials' understanding of their culture and home situations was an important factor in their involvement in their children's education. Starkey and Klein (2000) found that parent programs and interventions worked best when the needs of families and parents were taken into account. Findings such as these led the National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools to note in their synthesis of research on school, family, and community connections that, "Increasingly, the communities served by public schools are diverse in terms of class, ethnicity, and culture" (Southwestern Educational Developmental Laboratory (SEDL), 2002, p. 66). The synthesis noted that "educators should make every attempt to learn about the

concerns of the families and how they define and perceive their role in the school”
(SEDL, 2002, p. 66).

In addition, a theoretical approach and a separate body of research from anthropology indicates that immigrant populations may view schooling in different ways and play different roles in their children’s education (e.g., Hayes, 1992, Ogbu, 1978; Ogbu, 2003). Ogbu noted that because of their different beginnings in their country of residence, ethnic groups can be described as involuntary (nonimmigrant) and voluntary (immigrant) minorities. Involuntary minorities (e.g., African Americans).are minority groups that did not choose to come to America; they were forcibly incorporated into America. Voluntary minorities (e.g., immigrants, refugees) are groups that choose to come to the U.S. in pursuit of a better life. Because of this history, these groups have a different relationship to mainstream American society and institutions, including schools. As a result, involuntary and voluntary minorities approach schooling differently. Involuntary minorities distrust schools and teachers and feel distanced from them. In addition, these minority groups have high verbal aspirations for education but may not match this verbal commitment with behaviors conducive to school success. In contrast, voluntary minorities tend to have a pragmatic view of schooling, viewing schools as possessing knowledge they (voluntary minorities) need to gain credentials essential for success in the new society.

Furthermore, these minority groups match their verbal commitment to education with behaviors conducive to school success. More recent theory and research have complicated this picture with examination of factors like segmented assimilation (e.g., Foley, 1991; Gibson, 1997; Lee, 1994). However, Ogbu’s theory remains an influential

one in examining the relationship between different minority groups and the schooling process (Gibson & Trueba, 1991). Thus the study of specific immigrant groups and their experiences with the education systems of their destination countries has the potential to add to this existing body of theory and research.

In sum, it is clear that as the immigrant population in the U.S. continues to diversify, a concomitant expansion in the knowledge base regarding immigrant families will be required to meet this need.

Among the immigrant groups for which there is a paucity of psychological research in general (e.g., child rearing and disciplinary styles, parental beliefs, impact of migration on children and families) and research on educational issues, in particular, are those immigrants from the English speaking West Indies (e.g., Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Grenada, and the other smaller islands of the eastern Caribbean). There has been very little research on parents/guardians and primary caregivers from these populations in the areas of attitudes toward schooling and education and perceived roles in the schooling process (Roopnarine, 1999). As Roopnarine points out, teachers and school staff who serve Caribbean families, even in areas with large Caribbean populations, “appear to lack basic knowledge about childrearing beliefs and practices in these families...their natal-culture beliefs about schooling, and the linguistic competencies of children and their parents” (2000, p. 338).

The English-Speaking Caribbean Context

The English speaking West Indies consists of the islands located in the Caribbean Sea (e.g., Jamaica, Trinidad & Tobago, St. Vincent) as well as Guyana which is located on the continent of South America. Vickerman (1998) notes that the English speaking or

Anglophone Caribbean “has exhibited basic cultural similarities because of the existence of a common language, educational system, pastimes...political institutions, and, under colonialism, policies originating in London and directed toward the region as a whole” (p. 10).

People from the English speaking Caribbean are an ethnically diverse group united by a common history. The birth of the modern day English speaking West Indies can be traced to European political and economic engagement with the region. In 1492, Christopher Columbus, in his attempt to find India, found the islands of the Caribbean Sea (hence the name “West Indies”). Upon Columbus’ arrival, the region was inhabited by various tribes native to the region (Williams, 1983). The Arawaks and Caribs were the largest of these tribes. Following contact with the Europeans, these groups were decimated by diseases the Europeans carried, particularly smallpox. By the mid-1600s, the British sphere of influence included the West Indies. Britain saw the region as a profit making venture and set up plantations (mostly tobacco) on many of the Caribbean islands (Applied History Research Group, 2006). By the mid-1700s, the islands of the Caribbean functioned as large agricultural concerns, growing crops like sugar and tobacco, for the mother country, Britain. The labor for these agricultural concerns came from Africa during the years of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. These plantations were managed by skilled workers imported from Britain. A small number of the owners of these enterprises lived in the West Indies. However, the majority remained absentee landlords due to the rigors of the climate (Rogonzinski, 2000).

After the abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade in the 1830s, Britain needed labor to keep its’ agricultural enterprises in the West Indies functioning. To this end,

indentured labor from China and India was utilized. To a lesser extent, indentured labor from England and Portugal was also used (Applied History Research Group, 2006).

During the early 1900s, the shift to the colonial era meant that the British established the use of English as the common language in the colonies and political, judicial, and educational institutions that mirrored those of the mother country (Rogonzinski, 2000). In the contemporary West Indies, these British institutions continue in original or modified form. These institutions and similar populations play a major role in shaping the regional identity of the English speaking Caribbean. Today, the Caribbean or West Indies as a region shares a university system (the University of the West Indies), is united in an economic block through the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) association, and fields a team for its most beloved sport, cricket. In addition, the unique fusion of diverse Old World populations in a new geographic environment has created a Creole language, customs, foods, and music (e.g., calypso and reggae) specific to the region. In sum, it is arguable that the West Indian cultural group shares attitudes to schooling shaped by a common local culture and an educational system instituted by the same colonial power. In addition, some anthropological theory and research (e.g., Ogbu, 1983) shows that immigrant or voluntary minorities may bring different perceptions and beliefs to schooling in the U.S. Consequently it is important to study the perceptions of this immigrant group regarding the schooling process in the U.S.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this exploratory study was to examine the understandings and perceptions of West Indian parents/guardians and primary caregivers residing in the U.S. about schooling in the U.S. Specifically, the study examined West Indian

parents'/guardians' understanding of the American public schooling process, perceptions of the process, and their beliefs about their roles in their children's schooling. The findings of this study will help to address the lack of information on West Indian parents and caregivers in the research literature, as it relates to schooling in the United States.

Research Questions

To generate information about the perceptions of West Indian parents/guardians and caregivers about the schooling process in America and their roles in their children's schooling, the following research questions were addressed in the study.

1. What are the beliefs/values of West Indian parents/guardians and primary caregivers about the desired outcomes of education and the value of public education in the U.S?
2. What expectations do West Indian parents and caregivers have about the American schooling process?
3. What are the beliefs of West Indian parents and caregivers in the United States about the roles they should play in their children's schooling process?
4. What is the nature of the involvement that West Indian parents report with regard to their children's schooling process in the United States?
5. What obstacles do West Indian parents report with regard to their efforts to become involved in their children's schooling process in the United States?

This study used a critical qualitative research methodology to examine the perceptions that West Indian families hold about schooling. The researcher interviewed 13 families, using a semistructured interview, about their perceptions of schooling and their role beliefs about the schooling process. Fifteen participating parents/guardians,

representing seven families from Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago and six families from Jamaica were interviewed. Each participant had lived in the U.S. for at least two years and held either permanent resident status in the U.S. or was a U.S. citizen.

Significance of Study

Although exploratory in nature, this study can make a meaningful contribution to the field of education. In order to work successfully with culturally diverse families, particularly in the area of home-school collaboration, professionals working in the schools need to understand the cultural background, understandings about schooling, and role beliefs that these groups bring to the schooling process. In addition, these findings may assist educators who wish to implement parental involvement and home school collaboration programs in communities that include West Indian families.

Definition of Terms

West Indian/Caribbean. This term generally includes people from the English-speaking Caribbean (e.g., Barbados, Guyana, Grenada, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago). It also refers to people from the smaller islands of the eastern Caribbean including St. Kitts and Nevis, Antigua, and St. Vincent). It is important to note that this population is ethnically diverse and includes Black Caribbean, Chinese Caribbean, European Caribbean, Indo-Caribbean, and ethnically mixed individuals.

Black Caribbean. This term refers to inhabitants of the West Indies/Caribbean who are the descendants of African slaves. The ancestors of these present day West Indians were brought to the Caribbean during the trans-Atlantic slave trade to work primarily on plantations, specifically sugar and tobacco plantations.

Chinese-Caribbean. This term refers to inhabitants of the West Indies/Caribbean who are the descendants of Chinese indentured laborers. By the mid-1830s, abolishment of the trans-Atlantic slave trade by Britain put pressure on the British West Indian colonies to find new sources of labor for their agricultural enterprises (Applied History Research Group, 2001). China was the second largest source of this indentured labor. Many of the Chinese inhabitants of the contemporary Caribbean are the descendants of these workers.

Europeans/White. This term refers to Europeans who are the descendants of plantation owners, European indentured laborers (specifically from Portugal), skilled workers who came to the Caribbean during the colonial era, and present day European immigrants to the Caribbean.

Indo-Caribbean/East Indian. This term refers to inhabitants of the West Indies/Caribbean who are the descendants of Indian indentured labourers. Between approximately 1838 and 1917, the ancestors of these present day West Indians migrated to the Caribbean. Due to the need for labor on large plantations, poor East Indians, primarily from North India, were encouraged to migrate to the Caribbean, often with false promises of wealth and prosperity from dishonest recruiters.

Mixed. This term refers to inhabitants of the West Indies/Caribbean who are a product of unions between varying combinations of the different ethnic groups (e.g., Blacks, Chinese, Whites, and Indians) that inhabit the Caribbean.

Schooling process. This is defined as all experiences and activities related to schooling in the American public education system, including those before school entry and leading up to the end of high school. These activities range from attendance at

school to engaging in out of school experiences that support educational progress and academic development (e.g., SAT preparatory classes). Activities and experiences that prepare students for post-secondary education are also included.

Delimitations of Study

This study was limited to West Indian families residing in the State of Florida. The 2000 Census data note that about 491,783 West Indians reside in Florida (U.S. Census, 2000). Since the study population was limited to the State of Florida, this study may not have captured aspects of the experiences of West Indian families who reside in other states in the U.S.

Limitations of Study

The sample used in the study was small in number and limited to one state (Florida). Thus the sample may not represent the range of experiences of West Indian families residing elsewhere in the U.S. In addition, a sample of this size may not capture the ethnic diversity of the West Indian population in the U.S, or even in Florida. Since the sample was primarily recruited through a community association, they may not be representative of the West Indian community in terms of income, education level, acculturation, and country of origin. In addition, those who volunteered for the study may differ in their beliefs and experiences from those who did not volunteer for the study.

Another limitation is that due to social desirability participants may not have been open about their understandings of the American schooling process and may have tried to cast themselves in a favorable light by speaking very positively about the role they play in their children's schooling.

Finally, as in all research, particularly research utilizing interview data, there is a possibility that researcher bias may have influenced the nature of the data collected and how the data were analyzed. All attempts were made to reduce such bias.

Based on the method used, critical qualitative research, another limitation of the study was the lack of observational data (e.g., observations regarding how the participating families interact with their children relative to academic issues) to support any conclusions drawn about the role West Indian families play in their children's schooling.

Chapter Two

Review of Related Literature

This review examines the literature relating to families' understanding of the K-12 public schooling process and their role in this process. The review is divided into three sections: (a) research in this area that focused on parents/guardians, in general, without focusing on immigrant parents, (b) research in this area using immigrant populations other than West Indians, and (b) research in this area using West Indian groups. For immigrant parents and caregivers, their understanding of the schooling process in their destination country (e.g., Canada, U.K, U.S.) and their role in this process will be discussed.

Schooling Process and Roles: Parents

Perceptions of the Schooling Process

Much of the research on parents' perceptions of the schooling process has examined parents' perceptions of very specific aspects of the schooling process, for instance, school climate (e.g., Griffith, 1998) and school outreach behaviors. In the area of parents' perceptions of the schooling process, Griffith (1998) examined characteristics, particularly school characteristics, which affected the parental involvement behaviors of 153 African American, Asian, and Hispanic parents of public elementary school children. The study found that parents who perceived their child's school climate as empowering but not very informative were more likely to be involved in school activities. In addition, when parents considered the academic quality of their child's school to be

satisfactory, they were more likely to have higher levels of involvement. Parents in the study with lower educational expectations for their children, or whose children attended larger schools, reported lower levels of participation in school activities.

Parents' high expectations for their children's educational future and school characteristics were also found to influence parent school relationships in a study of 159 low SES African-American parents (Overstreet, Devine, Bevans, & Efreom, 2005). The study found that when parents perceived schools as welcoming of parent involvement (what the researchers called school receptivity) and had higher educational aspirations for their children, they were more involved in school activities.

Grolnick, Benjet, Kurowski, and Apostoleris (1997) found that aspects of the school environment, in this case teacher attitudes and behavior, influenced the home-school relationship. In a study of 209 (81% White, 11% Hispanic, 4% African American, and 4% other minority) mothers of 3rd-5th grade children, the researchers found that mothers who had high levels of self-efficacy and perceived themselves as teachers of their children were more actively involved when teachers had more positive attitudes towards parent participation and actively invited parental participation.

In a study of how school and neighborhood assets contribute to the psychological health of children, Jutras and Lepage (2006) interviewed 260 Canadian parents of elementary and middle school-aged children about their perceptions of school climate. One hundred and sixteen of the parents in the study were from a low SES background while 144 parents were from middle and high SES backgrounds (characterized by the study authors as non low SES). Overall, many parents viewed teachers as the primary people who foster psychological wellbeing in children. Parents also viewed school

personnel as helping their children through the provision of emotional support, warm relationships, positive reinforcement, and encouragement. The researchers found that low SES and non low SES parents differed in how much support they felt their children's school provided. Specifically, proportionally fewer low SES parents than non low SES parents believed that teachers fostered their child's psychological wellbeing (63.8% vs. 75.4%). Low SES parents were also less likely to talk about the presence of warm relationships in their children's school in comparison to middle and high SES parents (24.1% vs. 48.6 %). More low SES parents saw the parent-school relationship as important to their children's mental health than did middle and high SES parents (18.1% vs. 7%). However, both groups of parents saw the school-parent relationship as less important to their child's psychological wellbeing than other school characteristics.

Standardized testing, now an integral part of the schooling process, was examined from the perspective of parents in a study that examined 251 parents' perceptions of the value of standardized testing (Mulvenson, Stegman, and Ritter, 2005). The authors found that that 55% of the parents in the study believed in the importance of standardized testing, most were interested in the results (88%), most (76%) did not believe that the climate around testing was too stressful for their children, and few (13%) reported feeling pressured to help their child score well on standardized tests. Similar to other studies of parent perceptions of schools, the researchers found the area of home-school communication to be lacking. One-half of the parents in the study reported that they had received only a partial explanation or no explanation of their child's standardized test scores.

As part of a cross-national study of parent satisfaction with schooling, American parents from eastern Kentucky were asked their level of satisfaction with their children's academic achievement. They indicated that they were largely satisfied even though they thought their children could do better in school. Parents were also asked about the importance of factors such as the home and the classroom in increasing their child's academic achievement. In contrast to a comparison group in Russia, the American parents believed the classroom had a much larger role than the home in increasing their children's academic achievement.

In a study of 129 African American parents' satisfaction with the public school system, Thompson (2003) found that for parents of elementary aged children, how parents rated their child's teacher was the strongest predictor (30% of the variance) of how positively they rated the public school system as a whole. Parents' beliefs about whether school administrators cared about their children was the second strongest predictor of their overall satisfaction with the public school system.

Expectations of the Schooling Process

The only study to explicitly address parental expectations of the schooling process was a 1997 study sponsored by the National Association of School Psychologists. Christenson, Hurley, & Sheridan (1997) assessed 217 (63.8% White, 77% Nonwhite) parents' perspectives on home-school communication, and ways to facilitate parental involvement in education.

In reporting the results, the authors focused on parent perceptions of parent involvement programs they said they would like to see offered in school. The activities that parents rated that they would most like to see schools engage in were activities aimed

at improving parents understanding of school policies, giving them the skills needed to negotiate the schooling process, and giving parents information to help them support their children's learning and development. Specifically, Christenson et al. (1997) found that the four activities that parents rated they would most like to see schools engage in were:

- (1) Provide information on how schools function (e.g., how grades are earned, scheduling, transitions, homework);
- (2) Provide information on "how tos" for parents (e.g., how to enhance self-esteem);
- (3) Provide information on how to structure children's learning at home (e.g., how to help with schoolwork, monitor children's progress at school);
- (4) Provide information on how children develop socially, emotionally, and academically. (p. 14)

In addition, parents in the study also reported that they would find it helpful if they were provided with specific strategies they could use to support their children's learning and development.

Lawson's ethnographic study (2003) of low SES African American parents' perceptions of parent involvement shed light on parental expectations of schools. The parents resided in a community with high levels of crime and drug use. The study included parents who were parent volunteers as well as parents who had very little contact with the school. The parents in the study reported that they perceived schools as having additional responsibilities in contemporary times, that is, they (schools) are responsible for teaching academics as well as educating children about dangers like drugs. Parents believed that schools were doing their best to cope with these increased responsibilities. However, parents also believed that school staff were often tired of dealing with the particular issues of their community and afraid of the children and

families they served. Parents saw this reflected in indicators such as bathroom passes, increased security, and monitoring cameras and believed that these types of actions made the children feel negatively. Parents also believed that the problems in the community changed how teachers viewed children in the school. For example, they believed that the teachers viewed the children as needing to be controlled rather than taught.

As in other studies of parent perceptions (e.g., Griffith, 1998) parents saw home-school communication as deficient because the school did not listen to parents' voices and concerns. In fact, parents in the study reported that poor home-school communication was the chief barrier to their children's future success in school. Parents viewed the cause of poor communication as originating within the school and believed it stemmed from school staff's beliefs that they (the staff) were the experts and parents did not care about their children's education and were responsible for the academic deficits of their children. Parents believed that schools could start the process of working together by listening to parents' concerns. Parents also discussed the need for better methods of home-school communication about school events. The primary method the school used was to send flyers home with children and often these flyers did not reach the parents. Parents also expressed the feeling that they did not trust the school and they believed that other parents in the community did not trust the school because when parents had negative experiences with the school, these stories spread in the community. Finally, parents expressed their desire for the school to provide programs that would involve parents and children in activities and programs (e.g., GED classes, job training) to support parent development.

Some research (e.g., Thompson, 2003) indicating that caring administrators are important to the satisfaction of African American parents in their evaluation of their children's schools fits with John Ogbu's (2003) findings from an ethnographic study examining causes of achievement differentials between White and African American students in Shaker Heights, a suburban community in Ohio. Ogbu (2003) found that when asked to evaluate schools, African American families emphasized that it was important that schools be caring.

In addition, it was also important to the families that their experiences and perspectives be included in the curriculum. Parents also believed that the onus for learning and achievement was on teachers and that their children were passive consumers of the knowledge that the teachers were responsible for imparting. It is important to note that Ogbu (1978, 1992) uses this and data from other ethnographic studies to support his theory regarding the different approaches to schooling taken by some ethnic groups. Ogbu advanced a cultural ecological theory that looks at the role of community forces in the achievement outcome of different minority groups. This theory, supported by a body of ethnographic research (e.g., Hayes, 1992, Ogbu, 1978; Ogbu, 2003) posits that different ethnic groups view schooling in different ways and that this results in different outcomes. While this theory focuses on students in school and the behaviors in which they engage, it has much to say about immigrant parents and their beliefs about and approach to education.

Ogbu classified ethnic groups into involuntary (nonimmigrant) and voluntary (immigrant) minorities. Involuntary minorities (e.g., Native Americans, African Americans) are minority groups that did not come to America willingly, they were

incorporated into America unwillingly. Voluntary minorities (e.g., immigrants, refugees) are groups that come willingly to the U.S. in pursuit of a better life. Because of this history, these groups have a different relationship to mainstream American society and institutions, including schools. For involuntary minorities even though the forced incorporation happened generations ago, Ogbu (2003) notes, “the community forces that developed among their forebears continue to influence their educational ideas, attitudes, and behaviors.” (p. 51).

Involuntary and voluntary minorities also approach schooling differently. Involuntary minorities are mistrustful of schools and teachers, feel alienated, are concerned with how they are represented by the school’s curriculum, and how caring schools are. In addition, these minority groups have high verbal aspirations for education but these but not matched by behavior, and they hold schools rather than children responsible for performance.

In contrast, voluntary minorities tend to have an instrumental view of schooling, that is they see teachers and schools as having the knowledge and skills they (voluntary minorities) need to advance in the new society. Though these minorities may view schools as not having the interest of minorities as a primary concern, this is far less important to them than the pragmatic value of schooling and its role in their success in the new society. In addition, these minority groups match their verbal commitment to education with behaviors (studying, complying with class rules) conducive to school success. More recent scholarship has argued that the interaction between immigrant status and education is more complex (e.g., Foley, 1991; Gibson, 1997; Lee, 1994) but

Ogbu's theory remains an influential one in examining the relationship between different minority groups and the schooling process (Gibson, Trueba, 1991).

One of the few studies to explicitly address non-immigrant parents' overall perceptions of the schooling process was conducted with 15 poor and working class Caucasian parents in an urban school (O'Connor, 2001). The study used interviews to ask parents about their expectations of the school, perceptions of both school staff and school programs, and involvement with school activities. Parents believed that the school was responsible for teaching the "basics" (math, reading, and writing), and were interested in learning ways they could support their children's learning. Parents also expressed the need for better communication from school staff. In addition, the parents expressed the difficulty of paying for medical care for their children and thought that a school clinic or a school nurse present on a daily basis would be helpful to children and parents. Finally, parents talked about the need for more after-school and weekend activities for their children, but said they were aware that financial constraints prevented such activities from being implemented.

Parental Roles in the Schooling Process

Role Beliefs

While research in the area of parental perceptions of the schooling process has tended to focus on very specific aspects of schools and the schooling process, there has been surprisingly little research in the area of parents' role beliefs. As Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) point out in a review of research on parental role beliefs, this area has been "examined in the literature only tangentially with reference to parental involvement in children's schooling" (p. 11).

In their review of six relevant studies in this area, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) concluded that the studies showed that parents' beliefs about their role in their children's education varied according to class background, achievement level of the child, and nationality of the parents. The studies reviewed indicated that working class parents, parents of high achievers, and Chinese parents (residing in China) took a more active role in their children's education than did upper-middle-class parents, parents of low achievers, and U.S. parents (regardless of ethnicity) who took a more passive role in their children's education.

Another study of 234 low-income African American, Caucasian, and Latino parents of second and third graders used a telephone survey to assess parents' beliefs about their role in their children's learning (Drummond & Stipek, 2004). Parents reported that it was very important for them to help their children with reading and math, help them with their homework, and be aware of what they were learning in school. Asked what other things they thought it was important for them to do to enhance their child's success in school, parents' most common responses were being supportive, teaching social skills, and teaching another skill such as the piano or time management.

In a cross-national comparison about the role beliefs of U.S. and Chinese parents, researchers (Stevenson, Lee, Chen, Lummis, Stigler, Fan, & Ge, 1990) found that U.S. parents (regardless of ethnicity) held more passive beliefs about their role in their children's schooling in comparison to Chinese parents. Specifically, the American parents in the study did not view home support as including help with homework, communicating the importance of achievement, and monitoring their children's work.

Parent Roles

Dauber and Epstein (1993) examined eight schools in Baltimore, Maryland that were being supported through a grant to help improve parent involvement. The researchers examined parent understandings of school practices, specifically with regard to parent involvement and parent perceptions of their roles in their children's education. These schools served parents living in public-housing projects, rentals, and homes in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods. Participants in the study were 2,317 parents of elementary and middle school-aged children who completed a questionnaire that asked about their perceptions of how well their children's schools conducted parental involvement activities in nine areas, including home-school communication and practices to involve parents at home. The questionnaire also asked parents about the kinds of roles they played in their children's education in several areas, including homework assistance. However, in reporting their conclusions, the researchers focused on the role parents played in assisting with homework activities.

With regard to understandings of the schooling process, the researchers found that overall parents perceived the schools had few successful practices in place to communicate with them, inform them of expectations in their children's classrooms, and would have liked for the schools to give them specific strategies they could use to help their children at home. Parents in the study reported assisting their children with homework for most of the time children were engaged in homework. However, parents reported that they would spend more time assisting their children if they were given more specific guidance from teachers.

Another study that examined parent roles in their children's education used a population of Headstart parents with children in eight schools in a large Northeastern city (Seefeldt, Denton, Galper & Younoszai, 1998). Seefeldt et al. examined 246 parents (45% Latino, 39% African American, 11% White, and 4% Asian) whose children had completed a Headstart program previously and were in the spring of their kindergarten year at the time of the study. Due to the different ethnic groups included in the study the researchers used race/ethnicity as a control in interpreting their results. One hundred and fifty-seven parents were part of a demonstration project to increase parent involvement while 96 were in a comparison group that did not receive the services that the demonstration project provided. Questionnaires were used to assess parents' beliefs about their ability to impact their children's learning relative to other variables, and their involvement behaviors. Parents in the demonstration project and the comparison group reported playing similar roles in both home-related involvement (e.g., talking to their children about their school day almost every day) and school-related involvement (participating in school activities, and keeping in touch with their child's teacher). Parents with higher self-efficacy beliefs played more active roles in school related activities (e.g., volunteering in their child's school).

Another study using low-income parents investigated the types of roles parents reported playing at home and school. Patrikakou & Weissberg (2000) administered a survey to 246 African American and Latino parents whose children attended three Midwestern inner-city schools. Parents reported assisting with homework completion and checking homework completion as the most common roles they played at home. At school, parents' most common form of involvement consisted of picking up their

children's report cards. Parents rarely volunteered in their children's classroom, attended PTA conferences, initiated phone calls or meetings with their children's teachers, or asked teachers for strategies to help their children at home. Results also indicated that African American parents were more involved than Latino parents at home. The researchers noted that 50% of the Latino parents in the sample indicated that Spanish was their only language and that this, consistent with previous research (e.g., Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001; Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991), probably acted as a barrier to them assisting their children with homework.

Finally, in his ethnographic study of the Shaker Heights community, Ogbu (2003) also found that parents did not play an active role in assisting their children at home. Ogbu found in the sample of African American parents that, although they expressed high expectations for their children's academic achievement, they did not engage in behaviors such as assisting with and monitoring homework completion.

Schooling Process and Roles: Other Immigrant Groups

Perceptions of the Schooling Process

In a study of Latino immigrant parents' role beliefs, Chrispeels and Rivero (2001) also examined parent perceptions of the schooling process. They found that participants reported feeling excluded from the schooling process as the schools their children attended had no bilingual staff. In addition, the parents, including those involved in their children's school, reported feeling disrespected on many occasions by school staff. For example, the parents reported feeling that on many occasions their concerns were trivialized or dismissed by school staff.

As in the case of Latino parents, there is a small body of research on the views and perceptions of Asian immigrant parents in the countries to which they immigrate. In a study of 87 East Asian parents (Taiwanese, Chinese, and Hong Kongese), Zhang, Ollila, and Harvey (1998) found that parents perceived Canadian schools were not strict enough with students and there was not enough discipline for children. In addition, a majority of the sample helped children with homework.

In a test of Ogbu's voluntary/involuntary thesis (1978, 1992), researchers (McNall, Dunigan, & Mortimer, 1994) examined attitudes toward education among a sample of 105 Hmong adolescents and 111 Hmong parents in Minnesota. Overall, the researchers found that their sample fit into the voluntary minority category. The Hmong adolescents reported that their parents had specific educational goals (e.g., Master's degree) for them and most students reported that their parents expected that at a minimum they complete a college degree.

Similar to the findings with the Hmong parents, Lee (1994) found in an ethnographic study of Asian students at a high school in Philadelphia that parents held strong beliefs about the importance of education to succeeding in American society. Students also reported that parents managed their children's time out of school to ensure that children devoted enough time to studying.

Finally, to explain achievement differences between East Asian students and Anglo students, Schneider & Lee (1990) conducted an ethnographic interview study in two Illinois elementary schools. As part of the study, they interviewed 36 East Asian parents and 26 Anglo parents regarding perceptions of school related behaviors. Interviews with East Asian parents revealed that they had higher expectations for their children than

Anglo parents for specific grades in school and for eventual educational attainment. They viewed education as critical to success in America and particularly key in overcoming discrimination in employment. Parents also believed that education would make their children better people.

Role Beliefs

Much of the research on immigrant parents' understandings of the schooling process and their role beliefs has focused on Latino parents. Some research on this population has found that Latino parents tend to define their place, roles, and responsibilities in their children's education as a more supportive one (Valdes, 1996; Delgado Gaitan, 1991). They feel it is necessary for them to meet their children's basic needs and teach them family norms (Valdes, 1996; Delgado Gaitan, 1996). Valdes (1996) found that Latino parents do not see it as necessary for them to initiate communication with schools and engage in commonly accepted American forms of parent-school interactions such as volunteering in the classroom. Valdes (1996) also found that when Latino parents were invited to their children's schools by school personnel, the parent's perception of their lack of competency in English and lack of knowledge of the school system often prevented them from responding to these invitations. Chrispeels and Rivero (2001) describe this as Latino parents holding a "circumscribed sense of place" (p. 123). They attribute these behaviors in part to Latino parents holding different cultural constructions about parents' roles in their children's education.

Few studies have directly examined the understandings immigrant parents hold of schooling and their role and responsibilities in the schooling process. One study that directly addressed these issues was a study by Chrispeels and Rivero (2001) of Latino

parents. In a study of the implementation of a parent education program, Chrispeels and Rivero (2001) examined “How...Latino parents define their role and perceive their place in their children’s education and their relationship with the school?” (Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001, p.121). The authors were interested in examining how a parent education program (the PIQE) influenced parents’ understanding of their role in their children’s education. They theorized, based on earlier work, that parents’ level of involvement in their children’s education is influenced by how they define their role and responsibilities in their child’s life, whether they perceive themselves as having the skills to participate effectively in their children’s education and how they perceive the school’s opportunities for parent involvement.

Four themes emerged in the study that were related to the Latino parents’ concept of their role (or “place” as the authors term it) in their children’s education. These themes were parent participation, aspirations for their children’s future, literacy, and homework. Chrispeels and Rivero (2001) found that prior to the implementation of the PIQE, parents attended school events and meetings and visited classrooms infrequently. In addition, they indicated that they felt they had very little power over what happened at school and perceived that the responsibility for decisions belonged to teachers and children.

In the area of future aspirations, some parents had never considered the option of higher education for their children. Overall, whether they had considered higher education or not, parents knew very little about what was involved in the college application, financing, and completion process. In the area of literacy, parents engaged in very few literacy activities, such as reading to children and taking them to the library. Finally, prior to the implementation of the parent education program, most parents did

not supervise or help with homework. They attributed this to their lack of knowledge about homework content, language barriers, and their lack of time.

Hayes (1992) in examining Ogbu's voluntary/involuntary minority typology among a sample of 12 Mexican American teenagers in suburban California looked at the beliefs of their parents regarding schooling. She found that the parents in the sample exhibited the characteristics of voluntary minorities in their beliefs about education but did not exhibit these characteristics in the role they played in their children's education. Parents in the sample strongly believed in the value of American education to their children's success. Parents believed that their children's education gave them the chance to go to college and to find work that paid higher wages and was easier than the manual jobs they (the parents) sometimes held. Parents also desired to contribute to their children's education through homework assistance and communicating with teachers regarding progress. However, they cited language as a barrier to homework assistance. A few parents also expressed that they did not feel the school was concerned about Mexican children.

Though not explicitly expressed by parents, another barrier that the researcher found was the sample parents' belief that it was the school's job to make most decisions concerning their children. Thus parents' role in their children's education consisted of signing paperwork brought home. Overall, there was a profound lack of communication between parents in the sample and the school, resulting in situations such as parents being unsure exactly why their children had entered special education, not knowing that teachers assigned homework, and one student dropping out for weeks without his mother knowing.

In interviews with three immigrant parents (two Latino parents and one African parent) as part of a larger ethnographic study, Paloma McCaleb (1994) found that the parents valued education and communicated the value of education to their children and that parents felt they were responsible for educating their children in the home. Parents also felt that it was important for them to maintain communication with the school and the classroom teacher so they could more effectively help their children. Parents felt that assisting children with the completion of homework and ensuring that it was completed was one of the best ways they could help their children succeed in school and cooperate with the school. However, aside from assisting with homework completion, Paloma McCaleb did not ask parents to describe other ways they undertook to educate their children in the home.

Parent Roles

In an ethnography of the relationship between home and school in a Latino community in California, Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba (1991) found that Latino parents in the study rarely engaged in literacy activities with children at home. In addition, many of the parents in the study did not help their children with homework because they felt they were unable to and that the children were more capable of doing the homework alone as they had been schooled in the U.S.

As for expectations of schooling, the authors reported that the parents in the study valued education highly, expected their children to take advantage of their education so they could find good jobs, and viewed education as preparation for a career and learning to maintain and respect parental values. Parents often perceived schools as being permissive of inappropriate behaviors. Parents had clear expectations for behavior in and

out of school and reprimanded children when they behaved badly in school. However, parents did not reprimand children for poor academic performance in school but did reward them when they performed well in school.

Perez-Carreon, Drake, and Calabrese-Barton (2005) used a case study approach to examine the engagement of immigrant parents in their children's education. They identified three types of engagement: the "strategic helper", the "presence/questioner", and the listener. The strategic helper form of engagement was illustrated by the experience of one of the parents in the study, Celia, who worked to gain an understanding of her son's school and classroom so she could use that knowledge to advance her son's education. Celia volunteered as a classroom helper to make herself valuable to her son's teacher and school. She was able to then use her knowledge about classroom activities to advocate for a better education for her son, e.g. questioning the English instruction that he received.

One of the fathers in the study, Pablo, illustrated the presence/questioner form of engagement. Pablo was not involved with his children's schools as Celia was, partly because he was an undocumented alien and feared detection. However, Pablo found other, mostly out of school, ways to be active in his children's education and advocate for a better educational future for them. For instance, he completed homework with them, even though he sometimes only served in a monitoring role due to his limited knowledge of academic subjects. In addition, Pablo was able to advocate for his son's placement in a better middle school because he utilized his relationship with his son's teacher and his (Pablo's) social networks to find out the procedure for requesting a school change.

The third form of engagement that the authors identified was that of a “listener”. The experience of Isabel is descriptive of the experience of a listener. Isabel was a very recent immigrant to the U.S. and, as the authors point out, lacked any knowledge of how U.S. schools work and lacked a social network in her community from which she could obtain information. Isabel did not form a relationship with her child’s teacher. Her child’s teacher mistreated her and Isabel’s strategy was to complain to the principal. Isabel spoke to the principal twice but nothing was ever done and her daughter continued to be mistreated by the teacher. The authors classified Isabel’s form of engagement as a “listener because she was not able to (for many reasons beyond her control) take an active role in her child’s education. Her role was that of a passive listening posture in most of her interactions with the school system.

In the previously described Schneider and Lee study (1990) that examined possible causes of differences in academic achievement between East Asian and Anglo children, the behaviors of East Asian parents and Anglo parents that might contribute to the academic success of their children were examined. In relation to parent involvement activities, the authors found that the East Asian parents were less likely than Anglo parents to spend time assisting their children with homework, but indicated that they had invested a lot of time teaching their children basic academic skills before they entered school. Many of the East Asian parents perceived the schools as not giving enough homework so they assigned work to their children using materials they purchased themselves. In addition, a striking difference between the East Asian and Anglo parents was the amount of control exerted over children’s time. Many of the East Asian parents reported that they closely controlled their children’s time outside of school, often

establishing a specific amount of time for studying and limiting activities (e.g., t.v. watching) that interfered with this. Many of the East Asian parents paid for private lessons outside of school; these lessons included things like music and language. Academic lessons were particularly popular.

In the previously mentioned study with Hmong parents (McNall, Dunigan, & Mortimer, 1994), researchers found that because of language barriers and low levels of formal education in their country of origin, few parents in the study had the capability to assist their children with homework. However, parents had strong beliefs about how much time should be spent studying each day and controlled their children's time to ensure this.

The management of children's time was also reported in an ethnographic study with Asian high school students in Philadelphia (Lee, 1994). These students reported that their parents managed their time out of school to ensure that they devoted enough time to studying.

Schooling Process and Roles: West Indians

As previously noted, there has been very little research on West Indian populations in the U.S. Most prior research on West Indian populations in the U.S. has concentrated on ethnic identity (e.g., Waters, 1999) or examined mobility and income differentials between West Indian Blacks and African Americans (e.g., Sowell, 1981). Much of the research examining understandings of West Indian parents about the schooling process has been conducted in England (e.g., Crozier, 2005).

Perceptions of the Schooling Process

Using a qualitative design, Crozier (2005) examined the educational experiences of a group of Black Caribbean and mixed race students through interviews with 25 parents. Unfortunately, this study is limited because it examined the experience of Black Caribbean students in England and not the U.S. Also, Crozier was primarily interested in capturing information on the students' experiences in school and did not focus on parent perceptions of the schooling process. However, some of the findings are relevant to this area. For instance, the parents in Crozier's sample reported that they found school officials unwilling to engage in open and frank discussion about children's behavior and progress in school.

In addition, parents perceived teachers and schools as having considerable power over their children but believed that they did not use this power for the best interest of their children. Parents saw teachers as more interested in managing parental concerns as opposed to actually addressing them. Parents also reported that they felt teachers had low expectations of their children which resulted in teachers not communicating with them when there were issues in academic performance.

Windrass and Nunes (2003) also found that Caribbean parents held negative perception of schools. The authors examined 2 recent Montserratian immigrant mothers' perceptions of teaching and learning in English schools and how it differed from those of a White British teacher. The authors found that the mothers were dissatisfied with the level of home-school communication. They reported that in Montserrat teachers kept in close contact with parents about children's progress. Mothers were particularly dissatisfied with the level of information they received about the academic tasks their

children engaged in at school. The mothers in this study reported that they always knew what was being learned in Montserrat because children brought home their books and they could get an overview of the content being covered. However, in England, because, children's homework was in the form of worksheets, mothers felt they had only a limited idea of what was being covered in school. Moreover, this limited their ability to help their children with their homework because they sometimes misunderstood the intent of the worksheets.

Finally, in a review of research on Afro-Caribbean parents in England and their relationships with the education system there, Crozier (2001) notes that these parents often reported feeling both frustrated by their encounters with teachers and school officials and often silenced when they expressed their concerns about their children and about school practices.

Expectations of the Schooling Process

Using a second generation sample of 16 Caribbean parents of 11- year-olds in England, Nehau (1999) examined home, school, and child influences on academic achievement. Among the areas she assessed were parent attitudes toward education. Nehau (1999) found that parents placed a high premium on academic achievement and saw education as a vehicle for upward mobility. In fact, parents named specific grades and credentials (e.g., A levels) that they wanted their children to achieve in school. In addition to seeing education as a means for upward mobility, the parents saw education as opening up a wider variety of opportunities and also valued education for their selves personally.

Nehau's (1999) findings regarding the attitudes of Caribbean parents towards education was supported by Rong and Brown's (2001) research with a sample of Caribbean immigrants in the U.S. The authors found that the parents strongly believed in the value of education for upward mobility and saw education as a remedy for discrimination (Rong & Brown, 2001).

Roopnarine et al., (in press) examined the relationship between parental beliefs and academics among a Caribbean sample that had lived on average 13 years in the U.S. and had young children. Roopnarine also found that the Caribbean parents believed strongly that the preschool and kindergarten curriculum should include academic content. Specifically, almost all parents noted they felt children in preschool and kindergarten should learn ABCs, mathematics, reading, and spelling. Parents overwhelmingly expressed the belief that it is appropriate to require preschool and kindergarten children to do homework. Parents explained that they believed the preschool and kindergarten years were a critical period when it is easier for children to learn basic academic concepts and that they needed to learn these concepts in order to get a good start in school.

Waters (1999) in an ethnographic study of 59 West Indian immigrants in New York City found that many West Indian parents in her sample did not know enough to be well involved with their children's education or assumed that the schools are like the schools back home. Additionally, Waters' interviews with teachers revealed that they felt West Indian parents sent children to school with the impression that teachers would do their best and they (parents) didn't really need to participate. Teachers also perceived that many West Indian parents, particularly in comparison to African American parents, tended to believe that the teacher is always right. These findings led Waters to conclude

that the West Indian parents in her sample did not possess what sociologists of education call “cultural capital”, that is the knowledge to reinforce what is learned in school and the resources and knowledge to monitor the school’s performance, which is one of the reasons middle class children do well in school.

Parent Roles

Roopnarine (in press) found in a sample of Caribbean parents that parents were very involved in selecting and enrolling their children in private schools that focused on strong discipline and early academic training, and they spent several hours each week engaging in educational activities with their children.

Nehau (1999), using a second generation sample of 16 Caribbean parents in England, examined the role parents played in their children’s education. The majority of the sample consisted of working class parents. Most were single-parents who worked part-time or full-time. Nehau (1999) assessed parent attitudes towards education and parent perceptions of their support for their children’s learning. She defined this much more broadly than assistance with homework, defining learning as “the gaining of information and understanding; the developing of the ability to analyse, make connections and solve problems; and last but not least, the acquiring of specific curricular skills and concepts including those for literacy, numeracy and science and other national curriculum subjects” (Nehau, 1999, p. 43). In addition to interviewing parents to determine what forms of support they provided for their children’s education, Nehau (1999) also conducted in home observations of parent-child interactions.

In the domain of parental support for education, Nehau (1999), classified parents into two distinct groups based on their patterns of support for children’s learning. Group

Group 1 parents strongly endorsed the value of education and took specific and direct actions to support their children's learning. During the preschool years, as well as drawing, coloring, and learning object names and letter names, these parents engaged their children in learning games, and engaged in activities to build writing, reading, and numeracy skills. Group 1 parents encouraged their children to become independent readers and often maintained an extensive home library or used the public library to do so. Once children started school, these parents engaged them in completing "school-type work" at home, using materials they obtained from teachers or from courses they had pursued. Parents actively assisted children with homework on a regular basis and used home activities such as cooking to teach children academic concepts.

Group 2 parents endorsed the value of education at the same level as Group 1 parent but "supported their children's learning...at a more superficial level" (Nehau, 1999, p. 48). In the preschool years, they spent little time on literacy or numeracy skills. Reading skills were not a focus until children started school and parents supported this by encouraging children to read their school books. Rather than a focus on academic activities, the focus of Group 2 parents was on maintaining communication with the school about their children's academic progress and behaviour. Parents assisted children with homework only when asked by children. Group 2 parents placed more emphasis on self-discipline and raising their children to organize and motivate themselves.

In examining the possible reasons for the differences between the two groups of parents, Nehau (1999) noted that Group 1 parents had a stronger personal interest in education and that they themselves were often pursuing additional education. In addition, their children tended to be the oldest in the family. For Group 2 parents, Nehau noted

that they sometime prioritized their current employment over their children's education. Finally, the children of Group 2 parents tended to have more emotional needs, and a history of difficulty in primary school (elementary school).

In a study of 14 high achieving Afro-Caribbean professionals in the U.K., Rhamie and Hallam (2002) found that participants reported several types of parental roles in their schooling. These included parental support and encouragement in the form of tutoring, homework monitoring, and academic work in addition to what the school provided. Participants also discussed parental guidance in the form of high expectations for educational achievement and occupational attainment, and goal setting. Finally, participants reported that their parents took deliberate action to understand the British education system and what actions they needed to take to ensure their children's success in the system.

Finally, some research indicates that some beliefs West Indian parents hold may negatively influence the educational success of their children. In her ethnographic study of West Indians in New York, Mary Waters (1999) also interviewed teachers and school staff at two high schools that served a largely West Indian student population. She found that guidance counselors at these two schools perceived some beliefs that West Indian parents hold as counterproductive to their children's educational success. For instance, guidance counselors at the two high schools Waters examined said that an issue with West Indian parents was that they often refused to let their children attend good colleges where they had scholarships because they did not want children, particularly girls, to leave home.

Differences in West Indian parents' view of education based on gender were also reported in a study of Guyanese parents. Using a sample of 654 Guyanese parents living in Guyana, Wilson, Wilson, and Berkeley-Caines (2003) found that parents viewed education as important for their sons as they matured. However, as girls matured, parents saw education as less important for them.

These studies address, in limited ways, the perceptions and beliefs of West Indian parents about their children's education. However the majority of these studies have been conducted with West Indian parents residing in the U.K. In addition, examined in a focused fashion, a literature search found no previous published studies that examined West Indian parents residing the in the U.S. and their perceptions of schooling and their role in their children's education.

Critical Qualitative Research

Given the nature of the questions asked (an in-depth examination of the understandings of a particular group), this study was conducted using a qualitative approach, specifically critical qualitative research. Qualitative research assumes that meanings are developed in people's experiences and these meanings are made sense of through the investigator's own perceptions (Merriam, 1998). Guba and Lincoln (1998) note that "human behavior...cannot be understood without reference to the meanings and purposes attached by human actors to their activities" (p. 198). In addition, many qualitative researchers and theorists point out that the etic (outsider) view brought to bear on research problems may not shed much light on these problems without the emic (insider) view of groups, individuals, and cultures under study. The aim of this study was to gain an emic view of a particular cultural group (in this case West Indian parents).

Thus, critical qualitative research was the form of research used to conduct this study. It is a form of qualitative research that is founded in the tradition of ethnography, which comes to us from anthropology, the work of Jurgen Habermas, the German philosopher and sociologist, and postmodern insights. Ethnography is a form of qualitative research that studies the beliefs, values, and attitudes that structure behavior patterns of a group of people (Merriam, 1998).

Historically, ethnography has been used to study groups of people, particularly those from different cultures (Carspecken, 1996). Habermas in his *Theory of Communicative Action* argued for a consensus approach to truth. Many critical researchers (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994; Lather, 1991; Quantz, 1992) have taken Habermas' ideas, and some of the interpretative and deconstructive approaches of postmodernism to formulate what comprises critical theory today. Some call this critical qualitative research. Critical qualitative research is concerned with social inequalities and bringing about positive social change in society (Carspecken, 1996). Kincheloe & McLaren (1994) define critical research in this way:

We are defining a criticalist as a researcher or theorist who attempts to use her or his work as a form of social or cultural criticism and who accepts certain basic assumptions: that all thought is fundamentally mediated by power relations which are socially and historically constituted; that facts can never be isolated from the domain of values or removed from some form of ideological inscription; that the relationship between concept and object and signifier and signified is never stable or fixed and is often mediated by the social relations of capitalist production and consumption; that certain groups in any society are privileged over others and,

although the reasons for this privileging vary widely, the oppression which characterizes contemporary societies is most forcefully reproduced when subordinates accept their social status as natural, necessary, or inevitable; that oppression has many faces and that focusing on only one at the expense of others (e.g., class oppression versus racism) often elides the interconnections among them; and finally, that mainstream research practices are generally, although most often unwittingly, implicated in the reproduction of systems of class, race, and gender oppression. (p. 139-140)

This definition captures the two defining features of critical qualitative research: (1) its value orientation and (2) its epistemological approach. As stated, critical researchers tend to be concerned with social inequalities and to be dedicated to producing research that addresses these inequalities. However, Carspecken (1996) notes that the defining feature of critical qualitative research is not its value orientation but its epistemology. Unlike empiricism, which derives its truth claims from sensory experience and other forms of qualitative research (e.g., constructivism) that derive their truth claims solely from the subjective experiences of individuals), critical epistemology derives its truth claims (called validity claims) from communicative situations.

Based on everyday communication, critical epistemology posits three types of ontological categories: subjective, objective, and normative-evaluative. These three ontological categories are the basis for the three possible types of truth claims, subjective, objective, and normative-evaluative. Truth claims are structured by the audience we appeal to for verification of the claim. Subjective truth claims can only be verified by the actor himself as no one else has access to his subjective world. One can judge the

truthfulness of subjective truth claims by using external indicators but ultimately there is no method for ascertaining the truthfulness of subjective truth claims. Objective truth claims are multiple access truth claims, that is, multiple actors have access to verifying these claims. Normative-evaluative claims are claims for which we appeal to ideas about right and wrong and what should and should not be.

Given that critical epistemology is based on communicative situations, power must be addressed as “unequal power distorts truth claims” (Carspecken, 1996, p. 21). Thus, Kinchloe and McLaren’s definition tell us that critical research is concerned with the relation between truth and power and presenting a version of the truth that is as free as much as possible from the influence of unequal power relations. Thus, Carspecken (1996) concludes that critical research “gives us principles for conducting valid inquiries into any area of human experience” (p. 8).

In sum, this research was an in-depth examination of the beliefs and views of a specific minority group in U.S. society. Critical qualitative research was the approach selected because of its epistemological approach and because of its concern with examining the experience of groups in society whose articulation of their experience may be influenced by social inequalities.

Chapter Three

Method

This study examined the perceptions and role beliefs held by West Indian parents/guardians and caregivers residing in the U.S. regarding their children's schooling. Specifically, the study examined West Indian parents'/guardians' and primary caregivers' understanding of the American schooling process, perceptions of the process, and their beliefs about their roles in their children's schooling. This chapter describes the methods that were used to conduct this study. Children were not interviewed as part of this study. In addition, no identifying information about the children of participants was collected.

This study employed critical qualitative research methodology, a type of qualitative research characterized by its value orientation (concerned with social inequalities) and its epistemological approach (truth is not solely derived from sensory experience or individual experience but from communicative situations). The previous chapter provides a more detailed description of this approach.

The selection of participants and the collection and analysis of data are discussed in this chapter.

Participants

Patton (2002) states that cases can be individuals, groups, neighborhoods, programs, organizations, cultures, regions, or nation-states. For this study, the cases consisted of parents or caregivers from a sample of West Indian families living in the State of Florida who had children enrolled in public K-12 schools during the 2006-2007

school year. The sample was a purposeful sample. According to Frankel and Wallen (2000), purposive sampling is the process of using personal judgment to select a sample based on previous knowledge of a population and the specific purposes of the research. Researchers assume they can use their knowledge of a population to judge whether or not a particular sample will be representative of the phenomenon in which they are interested. The participants in this purposeful sample were expected to possess the information the researcher was seeking. The sample size for this study allowed the researcher to analyze both the cases and the issues under consideration in depth.

Sample Recruitment Strategies

The sample was recruited through the following sources: (1) West Indian community members in Tampa, Florida (2) two West Indian community associations located in Tampa, (3) and two Hindu temples in Tampa with large West Indian congregations. All three avenues for participant recruitment were pursued simultaneously.

West Indian Associations and Community Members

Members of the boards of each association and West Indian community members were asked to assist in identifying families to participate in the study. Members were briefed by the researcher on the purpose of the study and the characteristics of participants needed for the study. They were given a brief oral description of the study and a copy of the Brief Study Description (see Appendix A). The Brief Study Description Form was used to ensure that a standard recruitment procedure was followed and so that recruiters gave accurate information to participants. Members were also given a copy of the consent form that participants would be asked to complete. They

were asked to contact prospective families that fit the study criteria (i.e., West Indian origin, residing in the U.S., with children enrolled in K-12 public schools in the U.S. during the 2006-2007 school year, etc.). Members of the board and community members contacted potential participants. Using the Brief Study Description, they provided potential participants with overviews of the study and asked them if they would like more information to be sent to them. If so, board members and community members asked potential participants for their addresses and for permission to share this information with the researcher.

Screening of Potential Participants

After potential participants were identified, the researcher was notified and provided with contact information. The researcher then mailed potential participants a cover letter, a copy of the Demographic Questionnaire (see Appendix C), a consent form approved by the University of South Florida Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research (Board #2 for Social and Behavioral Sciences (USF IRB), and a postage paid, pre-addressed return envelope. The consent form indicated that there were two phases to the study, with the first being the interview and the second being a follow-up for the verification of the interview transcript and analysis (the consent form noted that this follow-up could take place in person or by telephone), the estimated duration of the interview and the follow-up meeting, noted that the interview would be recorded, and described the procedures to be used to maintain confidentiality. In case potential participants misplaced the study forms, two weeks after the initial mailing, another mailing was completed to all non-respondents that included a follow-up letter, the USF IRB consent form, and a postage paid, pre-addressed return

envelope. Some families were referred to the researcher and contacted her for the purpose of arranging a face-to-face meeting. In those cases, the researcher explained the purposes of the study and gave the parent(s)/guardians copies of: the cover letter, the Demographic Questionnaire, the USF IRB-approved consent form, and her contact information (address, telephone number, and email address). Potential participants were asked to return a signed consent form by mail if they wanted to participate in the study and to provide their mailing address to the researcher at that time so she could follow up with them. In case potential participants misplaced the study forms, two weeks after the face-to-face meeting, the researcher completed another mailing that included a follow-up postcard, the USF IRB consent form, and a postage paid, pre-addressed return envelope. Once potential participants returned consent forms and the Demographic Questionnaires to the researcher, she used information provided in the Demographic Questionnaire to identify participants who met the study criteria.

Religious Institutions

The leaders of two Hindu temples in the Tampa Bay area with large West Indian congregations were contacted and given a brief oral description of the study and a copy of the consent form. The researcher requested a few minutes to talk to the congregation about the study. The researcher also provided a flyer about the study (see Appendix E) to congregation members, made an announcement about the study and offered to talk to prospective participants after the service. Congregation members who approached the researcher were given a brief oral description of the study and copies of: the Demographic Questionnaire, the cover letter, the USF IRB-approved consent form, and the researcher's contact information (address, telephone number, and email address). The

congregation members were informed about the study criteria (e.g., minimum length of residence in the U.S.) and asked to return the signed consent form along with the Demographic Questionnaire by mail if they met the criteria and were willing to participate in the study.

Once consent had been obtained and responses to the Demographic Questionnaire were reviewed to determine if individuals met study criteria, the final sample for the study was selected. Originally, five families were to be drawn from each of three regions of the Caribbean: (1) Jamaica, (2) Eastern Caribbean, and (3) Trinidad & Tobago and Guyana. However, due to difficulty in locating participants from the Eastern Caribbean, the sample selection procedures were amended. . The final sample included 13 families, six from Jamaica, four from Trinidad and Tobago, and three from Guyana. All participants had resided in the U.S. for a minimum of two years prior to entry into the study, and held permanent resident status or were U.S. citizens. Only families whose children were enrolled in the Hillsborough County School District in west central Florida were interviewed were included in the participant sample.

Instrumentation

During and after recruitment, for the purposes of the study, three instruments were used. At the time they completed the informed consent form, participants were asked to complete a demographic questionnaire (see Appendix C) to assess whether they met study criteria (e.g., length of residence in the U.S., immigration status). Participants were also asked to complete a background information form (see Appendix D) that included questions soliciting demographic information such as income, highest education level, and household composition (single parent, two parent, etc.).

No appropriate instrument was identified following a review of the literature for obtaining information about the perceptions of schooling that West Indian parents hold. However, a limited number of studies have developed questions for interviewing West Indian parents or immigrant parents about their perceptions of schooling (e.g., Nehau, 1999). Based on the topics of interest and the questions used in prior studies, a semi-structured interview protocol was developed for use by the researcher in interviewing participating parents/guardians (see Appendix E for interview protocol). Carspecken (1996) recommends a semi-structured questionnaire as an appropriate approach to qualitative interviewing. Others refer to interviews with a semi-structured questionnaire as open-ended ethnographic interviews (Fontana & Frey, 2000). The semi-structured protocol allows for maximum flexibility on the part of the interviewer to pursue topics of interest. Carspecken (1999) recommends using topic domains, and lead off questions to organize the semi-structured protocol. He notes that interviewers should use concrete questions to identify abstractions and avoid asking abstract questions because they want to “hear about the implicit theories” (Carspecken, 1996, p. 156) constituting the actions of participants. He argues that “Often people act according to one implicit theory, and talk out theories that are very different” (p. 156). Carspecken recommends developing a few lead-off questions for each topic domain and noting what covert categories the researcher would like the subject to address during the interview “but that you do not want to ask explicitly about because that could lead the interview too much.” (Carspecken, 1996, p. 157).

Thus, the semi-structured protocol used in this study included lead-off questions, possible follow-up questions, and categories of interest. The protocol provided the

interviewer with a lead-off question to begin interviewing in each area and possible follow-up questions aimed at eliciting information in the areas of interest. It is important to note that the interview protocol allowed the interviewer the flexibility to probe interviewee responses and participants the freedom to expand on topics about which they wanted to elaborate. In addition, the protocol allowed the interviewer the flexibility to explore novel topics that interviewees introduced. Carspecken (1996) notes that during a qualitative interview “the researcher will spend most of her time responding to things said by her subjects rather than asking questions” (p., 155).

Data Collection Procedures

Once consent was obtained and it had been confirmed through review of the Demographic Questionnaire that participants met study criteria (e.g., length of residence in the U.S.), the researcher arranged an interview time with participants. The researcher also reminded participants that participation in the study required two meetings, one for the initial interview and one for the verification of the transcript. Interviews took place in the participants’ homes, workplaces, or in a public location that was convenient for the participants. Interviews lasted for approximately one and one-half hours and were audio recorded. The interviews were completed over a five month period in 2007. During the time period in which interviews were conducted, the researcher maintained a reflective journal in which she recorded perceptions that arose as a result of the interviews, thoughts on the information shared with the researcher during interviews, and any emerging themes identified through the research. Journal entries were made as soon as possible after each interview. Participants were assigned pseudonyms; only pseudonyms were used in journal entries

After the interview was completed, participants were asked to complete the Background Questionnaire (see Appendix D). Participants completed the questionnaire independently and the researcher offered to clarify any questions that were unclear.

Once transcription was completed, participants were mailed or given a copy of their transcripts so they could review these items before the follow-up meeting. Then, participants were contacted to schedule the follow-up meeting. Participants were told that this follow-up session could be completed by telephone, if that was their preference. Most participants opted to conduct this session by telephone. The follow-up meeting lasted for approximately 30 minutes.

Data Management

Each family was assigned a pseudonym. The researcher maintained a list of the family's names and pseudonyms in a locked file drawer in her home. A tape recorder with digital recordings of the interviews was also stored in this file drawer. The pseudonyms were also used in transcription of the interview data and in reporting the results of the study. Thus, the transcripts that the peer reviewer (see below) accessed contained only pseudonyms. Transcripts of interviews with families were stored on the researcher's computer; and the researcher's computer was password protected.

Data Analysis Procedures

Chism (1999) notes that:

The analysis of qualitative data involves several activities, including: becoming familiar with the data, selecting certain parts of the data as most relevant, sorting the data into categories, displaying the data for review, reading within and across categories for themes, and synthesizing the

information. (p. 1)

Data analysis was conducted during as well as after the conclusion of the data collection process. Huberman and Miles (1998) note that researchers should be explicit about their preferences and tell readers “how they construe the shape of the social world and how they mean to give us a credible account of it (p. 181).

Thus, the researcher maintained a reflective journal. This journal, along with transcriptions of the interviews assisted in identifying researcher biases to ensure that they did not unduly influence the data analysis stage. Examination of the researcher’s reflective journal during the data analysis stage revealed that often, when participants were discussing the backgrounds of some of the students in American public schools, class bias may have influenced their statements. Although the researcher did not closely examine these statements to verify whether this was in fact the case, the participants’ beliefs about this topic were not the focus of this study and thus, in the judgment of the researcher, the lack of follow-up in this area did not significantly impact the findings of this study.

Interviews were transcribed as soon as possible after they took place, resulting in 13 transcripts. First, transcripts were reread several times in order for the researcher to become familiar with the data. Then the transcripts were loaded into ATLAS.ti, a qualitative data analysis software package, designed to assist in the process of coding and analysis of datasets such as transcribed interview data (Muhr & Friese, 2004). ATLAS.ti is commonly used in qualitative research because it facilitates the analysis of large quantities of textual data. It is important to note that in this study ATLAS-ti was not

used to generate codes, but as a tool to facilitate the coding of large sections of text and to, in the later analysis stages, retrieve sections of text that corresponded to these codes.

Development of Codes

Once the thirteen transcripts were entered into ATLAS-ti, a deductive coding approach was used to analyze the transcripts. The researcher decided to use a deductive coding approach because it meshed well with the design of the study, that is, the study aimed to answer specific research questions. In addition, at the inception of the study, a semi-structured interview protocol, which consisted of question domains developed to answer the research questions, was constructed. Thus, a deductive coding approach was a good fit for the study. Using this approach, the interview protocol was used to develop the codes, with small changes made as needed (Huberman & Miles, 1998). For instance, when the researcher encountered text segments that did not correspond to the predetermined codes, those segments were assigned a code that more accurately reflected their content. Using this approach, codes were based on text segments of the transcript but also corresponded closely to domains of the interview protocol.

To develop a preliminary codebook, the researcher first randomly selected two transcripts to be used for codebook development. The researcher used ATLAS-ti to select sections of text and then assigned these sections codes that she believed captured the meaning of the text. In this way, a preliminary codelist was developed. The researcher then gave the same two transcripts and an interview protocol to a peer debriefer to code independently and to develop a preliminary code list. The researcher and the peer debriefer then met to compare the preliminary code lists they had developed. After reviewing the transcripts and the two code lists, the peer de-briefer and the

researcher merged the preliminary code lists they had created to create a working codebook. They then used this working codebook to code one randomly selected transcript together to ensure that they had the same understanding of the codes contained in the working codebook and would apply them in the same way to the interview data. Using this working codebook, the researcher and the peer debriefer then separated to code two randomly selected transcripts independently. They met again to make the final changes to the working codebook based on their coding of this transcript and thus produce the final codebook used for the study (see Appendix F for a copy of the final codebook). For the most part, codes developed corresponded closely to the categories of questions asked. For instance, one group of codes (“Types of parent involvement”) corresponded to “Parent role in the schooling process”, a domain on the interview protocol. Interrater reliability was calculated on these two transcripts. Interrater reliability was found to be 90%.

Analysis across cases was used to determine themes that emerged across cases. As described above, a deductive coding approach was used and codes corresponded closely to interview categories. Thus, research questions were answered by using the codes that corresponded to a particular research question and the corresponding text segments. For instance, to respond to Research Question 2, “What expectations do West Indian parents and caregivers bring to the American schooling process?”, ATLAS.ti was used to gather all text segments coded as “Expectations”.

Cases were analyzed for themes using a hermeneutic-reconstructive method which required the researcher to make implicit meanings (such as normative-evaluative claims) explicit (Carspecken, 1996, 2003). Using this approach, the researcher “takes the

insider's view of a cultural group and reconstructs tacit cultural themes and structures that members commonly employ to interpret the world [and] judge the world..." (Colón, Taylor, and Willis, 2000, para. 8). Later stages of data analysis also examined the data to see if systemic issues (e.g., socioeconomic status, recent arrival in the U.S.) shed any light on the data.

Credibility

In any form of research, issues of credibility are critical as these issues impact perceptions of the research. Carspecken (1996) points out that interviewing produces many subjective truth claims and that we are dependent on the honesty and accuracy of the self-reports of the participants. Qualitative researchers must also be concerned with minimizing any biases and seeing the experiences that participants relate just as they are and not attempt to alter them or to read more into them than what is really there (Patton, 2002). Thus, researchers should be concerned about not altering the reality of the data.

However, there are procedures described by Carspecken (1996) and others (Lincoln & Guba, 1998; Patton, 2002) that should be used to address these issues and strengthen the validity claims within interview data. These approaches are: non-leading interview questions, consistency checks, member checking, and peer debriefing.

Non-Leading Interview Questions

First, non-leading interview questions were used. Interviewing in non-leading ways decreased the possibility that participants would tell the researcher what they thought she wanted to hear. Second, as much as possible, participants were encouraged to use terms common in their own everyday language. This encouraged clarity and

discouraged participants from using terms simply because those were the terms the interviewer used.

In addition to the use of non-leading interview questions, three processes were included to validate the analysis of the data. These processes were: consistency checks, member checking and peer debriefing.

Consistency Checks

Consistency checks were conducted by reviewing the transcripts of individual interviews to check for any discrepancies within individual participants' responses. No inconsistencies were found.

Member Checking

Member checking is a process which provides participants in a study the opportunity to review the transcriptions of their interviews. In this study, the participants had the opportunity to determine if their responses to the interview questions were accurately represented in the data. Patton (2002) notes that researchers can learn a great deal about the accuracy, completeness, fairness, and perceived validity of their data by having their participants react to what is described and concluded. Thus, participants were provided a reasonable opportunity to comment on the study data. They were told before they agreed to the study that participation in the study would involve a follow-up meeting or telephone call to review the transcript of their interview. Participants were mailed or hand delivered a transcript of their interview. A follow-up meeting or telephone call was scheduled with participants to obtain their feedback on the accuracy of the transcript. Most participants opted to conduct the follow-up meeting by telephone. Eleven of the 13 participants (84%) took the opportunity to review the transcript. None

of the participants reported problems with the veracity of the transcripts. However, participants sometimes wanted to correct perceived grammatical errors in their statements. Often, they commented that they never realized how they sounded.

Peer Debriefing

A peer was used in the development of the codebook used in the study (as outlined above). In addition, a peer reviewed the researcher's notes, preliminary analysis, and conclusions drawn in order to ensure that the researcher was on the right path in preparing research findings. The peer debriefer in this study was a graduate student in the College of Education at the University of South Florida. She had experience in the collection and analysis of qualitative data. This peer debriefer assisted in ensuring the validity of codes and in ensuring that the study was not affected by researcher bias, preconceived notions, etc.

Chapter Four

Results

The results of this study are presented using a framework of themes that emerged from interviews with participating parents. Data were analyzed relative to Carspecken's critical theory.

Participant Demographic Characteristics

The participant sample was obtained using the purposeful sampling procedures and inclusion/exclusion criteria discussed in Chapter Three. The sample consisted of representatives (parents/caregivers) of 13 West Indian families from the Tampa Bay, Florida area. Data to be reported were obtained through an interview with a parent/caregiver from each of these families.

Description of Families

Information relative to the participating families is reported in Table 1. Of the 13 participating families, 7 (54%) were from Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago, and 6 (46%) were from Jamaica. Seven of the families (54%) reported an annual household income ranging from \$85, 000 to above \$95, 000. Three families (23%) reported an income of less than \$35, 000. The children of participating parents/caregivers ranged in age from 6 to 18 years, with a mean age of 12.8 years.

Table 1

Characteristics of Participant Families (N=13)

Characteristic	N	%
Country of Origin		
Guyana	3	23
Jamaica	6	46
Trinidad & Tobago	4	30
Annual Household Income		
\$15, 000 – 24, 999	1	7
\$25, 000 – 34, 999	2	15
\$65, 000 - \$74, 999	2	15
\$75, 000 - \$84, 999	1	7
\$85, 000 - \$95, 000	4	30
Above \$95, 000	3	23
No. of School-Aged Children in Household		
1-2	10	76
3-4	3	23
Grade Levels of Children In Household (n=22)		
K-2 nd grade	3	13
3 rd -5 th grade	3	13
6 th -8 th grade	5	22
9 th -11 th grade	9	40
12 th grade	2	9

Description of Interviewees

One parent from each of 11 families and two parents from each of 2 families were interviewed, for a total of 15 interviewees. Table 2 provides a summary of selected characteristics of the interviewees. The number of years they had lived in the U.S. ranged from 4 to 30 years, with a mean of 19.4 years. The number of years they lived in their native country before immigrating to the United States ranged from 12 to 51 years with a mean of 24.7 years. All but one of those responding reported having completed some level of college education: six (40%) indicated that their highest educational level was a bachelor's degree or higher. Eighty percent of the participants reported that their highest educational level was completed in the U.S.

Table 2

Characteristics of Interviewees (N=15)

Characteristic	N	%
Ethnicity		
Black	5	33
Indian	5	33
Mixed	3	20
Not Reported	2	13
Immigration Status		
Permanent Resident	3	20
U.S. Citizen	12	80
Number of Years Lived in U.S.		
1-7	2	13
8-14	1	6
15-21	5	33
22-28	5	33
29-35	2	13
Number of Years Lived in Country Of Origin		
8-14	2	13
15-21	7	53
22-28	2	20
29-35	1	0
36-42	0	0
43-49	2	13
50-56	1	6
Highest Education Level Attained		
High school	1	6
Some college	5	33
Associate's degree	1	6
Bachelor's degree	4	13
Master's degree	1	22
Professional degree (e.g., M.D.,L.L.B)	1	6

Participant Descriptions

Each of the 13 families who participated in this study is described below.

Pseudonyms are used to protect the families' identities.

Clive. Clive is a 38-year-old male, who speaks with a slight accent. He owns a small business and has lived in the U.S. for 20 years. Clive completed his elementary and secondary schooling in his native country. Clive noted that he considers his native country as his home. He reported some involvement with a local West Indian Association, but also noted that he is not a member of this or any other West Indian organization. Clive reported that he keeps track of events in his native country through online and print newspapers, as well as through talking to friends and family who have recently returned from there. He is the father of a son in high school.

Anita. Anita is a 35-year-old female who works in management at a large corporation and has lived in the U.S. for 17 years. Anita completed her elementary and secondary schooling in her native country. She speaks with a slight accent. Anita noted that she left her native country too long ago to consider it home, but that she does not consider the U.S. home either. Anita is not involved with any West Indian associations. She reported that she keeps track of happenings in her native country through online newspapers and talking to family members and friends who live there. She is the parent of three children, two in elementary school and one in middle school.

May. May is a 65-year-old female and has lived in the U.S. for 13 years. May completed her elementary and secondary schooling in her native country. She holds two jobs, one in the healthcare industry and the other in the service industry. She speaks with a strong accent. She noted that she considers her country of origin to be her home. She

is not involved with any West Indian associations. She reported that she keeps track of events in her native country by speaking to family and friends who live there and occasionally by reading print newspapers. May is the primary caregiver for her three grandchildren, two in high school and one in middle school.

Cecil. Cecil is a 44-year-old male who has lived in the U.S. for 28 years. He owns a consulting business and speaks with a slight accent. Cecil completed his elementary and secondary schooling in the Caribbean. Cecil noted that he considers the U.S. his home, but that his native country is still important to him. He is very involved with several West Indian associations in the Tampa Bay area. He reported that he keeps track of events in his native country because he travels there often for business. Cecil has two high school-aged sons.

Sunita and Rahul. Sunita is a 40-year-old female who has lived in the U.S. for 20 years. She is a full-time homemaker and speaks with a slight accent. Rahul is a 44-year-old male who has lived in the U.S. for 24 years. Both Sunita and Rahul completed their elementary and secondary schooling in the Caribbean. He works in the healthcare field and speaks with a slight accent. Rahul reported that he keeps track of events in his native country by reading newspapers online. Sunita reported that she does not keep current with events in her native country. Both Sunita and Rahul reported that they consider America home and that their native country does not play a large role in their lives. Rahul and Sunita are very involved in religious activities with people from their native country. Rahul and Sunita are the parents of two daughters, one in elementary school and one in middle school.

Lauren. Lauren is a 55-year old female who has lived in the U.S. for 6 years. She speaks with a strong accent and works in the service industry. Lauren completed her elementary and secondary schooling in her native country. Lauren reported that she is not involved with any West Indian associations. She noted that she keeps track of events in her native country by speaking to her family on a weekly basis. Lauren reports that she does not consider the U.S. home and considers her native country home. Lauren is the parent of a high school-aged daughter.

Evelyn. Evelyn is a 45-year old female who has lived in the U.S. for 4 years. Evelyn completed her elementary and secondary schooling in the Caribbean. Evelyn speaks with a strong accent and works in a clerical position. Evelyn noted that she considers the U.S. her home, but that her country of origin is still important to her. Evelyn is involved with a local West Indian association and has a daughter in high school. She reported that she keeps track of happenings in her country of origin by talking to family members and friends who live there.

Corinne. Corinne is a 39-year-old female who works in management at a large corporation. She completed her elementary and secondary schooling in her the Caribbean. Corinne has lived in the U.S. for 22 years and speaks with a slight accent. Corinne noted that she does not consider the U.S. her home and that for her, her native country will always be home. She is not involved with any West Indian associations. Corinne reported that she keeps track of events in her native country by talking to family. Corinne has two high school-aged daughters.

Michael. Michael is a 46-year-old male who works in customer services in a large corporation. He completed his elementary and secondary schooling in his native

country. Michael has lived in the U.S. for 22 years and speaks with a slight accent. Michael noted that he considers the U.S. his home, but that his country of origin is very important to him. He reported that he is slightly involved with a West Indian association in the Tampa Bay area. He keeps track of events in his country of origin by talking to family and friends. Michael has a son in middle school.

Brian and Nalini. Nalini is a 36-year-old female who has lived in the U.S. for 18 years and works in the healthcare industry. Both Brian and Nalini completed their elementary and secondary education in the Caribbean. She speaks with a slight accent. Brian is a 41-year-old male who has lived in the U.S. for 25 years and owns a small business. He speaks with a slight accent. Brian and Nalini reported that they keep track of events in their native country by reading newspapers online. Both Brian and Nalini reported that they consider America home, but that their native country is very important to them. Brian and Nalini are very involved in religious activities with people from their native country. Brian and Nalini are the parents of two sons in elementary school.

Shirley. Shirley is a 53-year-old female who has lived in the U.S. for 30 years and works in a clerical position. Shirley completed her elementary and secondary education in her native country. She speaks with a slight accent. Shirley noted that she considers the U.S. her home, but that her native country is still very important to her. She is not involved with any West Indian associations. She reported that she keeps track of events in her native country by talking to family members. Shirley has a son in high school.

Gregory. Gregory is a 41-year-old male who has lived in the U.S. for 29 years. He is retired. Gregory completed his elementary schooling in the Caribbean and his

secondary schooling in the U.S. Gregory speaks without an accent. Gregory noted that he considers the U.S. his home, but that his native country is still important to him. He is very involved with several West Indian associations in the Tampa area. He reported that he keeps track of events in his native country by reading newspapers online. Gregory has two daughters, one in elementary school and one in high school.

Winnifred. Winnifred is a 42-year-old female who has lived in the U.S. for 13 years and works at a large corporation. She completed her elementary and secondary schooling in the Caribbean. She speaks with a strong accent. Winnifred noted that she does not consider the U.S. her home; she still considers her native country her home. Winnifred reported that she is involved with a local West Indian association. Winnifred reported that she does not keep track of events in her native country. Winnifred has a high school-aged son.

Summary of Participants

Overall, most of the participants in the study were not members of local Caribbean associations, although many reported some kind of involvement, whether through attendance at social events or utilizing resources provided by these associations. Although most interviewees didn't report business or political connections with their home countries, they often maintained communication with family and/or friends in their native countries and monitored events in those countries closely. Most participants had not experienced the K-12 education system in the U.S.; however, they had completed some kind of post-secondary education in the U.S. Interviewees had children at varying grade levels; on average, their children were high school and middle-school aged.

Interview data obtained in this study were transcribed and analyzed relative to the five research questions presented below. Patterns and trends are discussed below; select verbatim comments are included to illustrate specific beliefs or experiences identified in the analyses of the interview data.

Question 1: What are the Beliefs/Values of West Indian Parents /Guardians about the Desired Outcomes of Education and their Views of Public schooling in the U.S.?

Data were analyzed to capture the beliefs of West Indian parents about the desired outcomes of education and their views of public schooling in the U.S.

Desired Outcomes of Education

Four themes emerged from participants' discussions of their beliefs about education with regards to desired outcomes of American education: a) preparation for college, b) preparation for work, c) preparation for life, and d) preparation beyond work and life. The endorsement rates of these themes are reported in Table 3. Preparation for college and preparation for work are the most endorsed themes with 53% of the participant sample citing one or more belief statements about education, in general, that fell into these categories. Overall, participants viewed education as a key to long term success. Specifically, they believed that their children's K-12 education would serve as a pathway to college, preparation for the world of work, and preparation for life. In addition, a small minority of parents believed that their children's education should offer preparation beyond life and work.

Table 3

Themes from Desired Outcomes

Themes	Endorsement Rate
Preparation for college	53%
Preparation for work	53%
Preparation for life	38%
Beyond work and life	15%

n = 13

Preparation for college. Seven parents/caregivers viewed gaining an education as preparation for college. May said she thought education was important for her grandchildren so they could, "...go to college and get to whatever they want." Anita noted that she and her husband frequently discussed the importance of school and getting a college degree with their older son. She said:

Oh, my God, we must talk to our fourteen year old everyday about...actually going to school and getting a college degree will be important if you want to move on.

Sunita and Rahul said that the foundation their children were receiving in school presently would be "...the major thing to guide them through college...because they have to have a solid background to get through studies."

Preparation for work. Six parents/caregivers appeared to view their children's K-12 education as essential for preparing them for the working world. Lauren stated that she told her daughter, "...get an education to get a proper job to be able to get all your stuff in your life." Nalini and Brian discussed education as key to getting a good job.

They said, “if you have an education you get better jobs, you get better pay, you earn more respect in society.” Michael also discussed education as key to career success. He said, “education pretty much...paves the way for your success...you’ll get your job.” Anita noted that “...education is what they need to get work.”

Preparation for life. Thirty-eight percent (n = 5) of the participants talked about their children’s education as preparation for life, whether that was to achieve a certain lifestyle or learning skills that could be applied to later life tasks like managing finances and interacting with others. Lauren discussed what she tells her daughter about the role of education in life. She said, “Well, I told her if you want to become somebody in this life you really need to get an education.”

Evelyn noted that education was the key to achieving the “American dream”. She said she tells her daughter that, “..the American dream does exist and there are lots of people who have achieved it. And the American dream is to be successful...to achieve... financially whatever you want to achieve [and] status.”

Brian and Nalini noted that education prepares you for more than a job, that it prepares you to:

...learn and to retain... [it] better prepares you for life and adulthood. You learn how to build a family, maintain a family, live as a family and provide for your kids. You know, sometimes you don’t really need mathematics to do that, but it helps you in your later life to manage your finances and things you need in your everyday life.

May said that she thought education was important even if her grandchildren did not go to college and pursue a professional career. She discussed the importance of common sense, which she noted can be obtained without schooling but said, "...but still although you have the common sense you have to have a little grain of intelligence... that comes with education, to make it in life." Clive noted that he hoped his son's high school experience would help him to, "...be able to fit in, to learn how to socially interact with other kids, as part of life, it's going to be part of his experience when he goes out in the world in the workplace."

Beyond work and life. Two of the 13 participants also talked about the role of education beyond preparing their children for work and life, that it gave them something that it was hard to codify. Michael said he views his son's education as important beyond mastering basic skills. He said he tells his son James not to limit himself to mastering academics.

In his words:

You need to broaden the horizon because ...you learn through books and it is so true. And so even back in the days when I was back home and we learnt about London Bridge, my goal as a child was to go to London and see the London Bridge because we sang about it, nursery rhymes...and James had the opportunity to go to London and we walked on the London Bridge and we said we know technically it's not there, because it was bought so we did the whole history...your horizon now is even broader.

Winnifred said,

If you want to have a good life or a better life, education is very, very important. ...education shouldn't be valued in terms of the money it's going to make. That's not what I want to communicate to you. That's the way American society tends to, I'm sorry, tends to think of it. But it doesn't mean that, it could mean that you do something that you're happy doing and there is some quality to life.

Summary of Desired Outcomes of Education

Overall, examination of parents' views of the outcomes of public education in the U.S. revealed several normative-evaluative validity claims (beliefs about what is right and wrong and what ought to be and not to be) that were explicitly articulated in parents' responses. Normative-evaluative claims are evident in parent's expressed instrumental beliefs about the desired outcomes of education. Parents explicitly expressed that they believed their children's education should be preparation for college, work, and life, with only a minority of parents endorsing the view that education plays a role beyond the preparation for life and work. Parents also expressed the belief that education was critical to their children's long term success. As Clive explained, "Well, I think getting a good education is one of the most important factors." Corinne noted that education was a value for West Indian families, "Yeah, I think...and I'm not saying it's not here in America necessarily, but I think focusing on education is definitely...that's one of the things I think we pass on." Anita concurred with this saying, "I'm a West Indian, and in the islands, if you had the opportunity to go to school, they tell you go to school and learn and become something."

Views of Public Schooling

Five themes emerged from the interviews in relation to views of public schooling in the U.S.: a) academics, b) teachers, c) student behavior, d) opportunities, and e) resources. The endorsement rates of these themes are reported in Table 4. As noted, academics, teachers, and opportunities are the most endorsed themes, with 100% of the participants citing at least one view about public schooling in the U.S that fell under each of these themes. In general, parents discussed the lack of rigor in the curriculum in American public schools, but also expressed positive views of teachers as being responsive to parent concerns and very willing to help students. However, a minority of parents had negative perceptions of teachers, discussing a lack of communication among other issues. More than half of the parents discussed what they considered to be the poor behavior of students in American public schools. Finally, almost one-third of the parents expressed positive views about the opportunities and resources provided by public education in the U.S., such as extracurricular activities available and facilities such as science labs.

Table 4

Themes from Views of Public Schooling in the U.S.

Themes	Endorsement Rate
Academics	100%
Teachers	100%
Opportunities	100%
Student behavior	53%
Resources	30%

n = 13

Academics. All parents interviewed discussed their view of academics in American public schools. Parents’ views regarding academics centered on the lack of rigor in the curriculum (e.g., level of work was higher in their home countries, not enough time is spent on certain skills or topics) and the lack of homework (e.g., that their children did not receive enough homework from school).

Clive chose to send his child to a private elementary school because he perceived public school as, “dumbing down your kid and just pushing him on to the next grade.”

However, Clive noted that he chose to send his son to public school for high school.

Corinne, while expressing her satisfaction with the level of the curriculum in her daughter’s magnet school, said of the curriculum in U.S. schools in general, “I think and I will say that the level of work in the Caribbean is so much higher than the level of work in this country.”

Sunita and Rahul’s daughter also attended a magnet school. Like Corinne, they expressed satisfaction with the academics. Rahul said, “I think the U.S. schooling is very

good, very good curriculum”. Sunita agreed saying, “...they do a very good job with the academics, strong academic subjects...” However, Rahul did express reservations about the accuracy of the curriculum in some respects, pointing out that information provided about diverse cultures was not always accurate. He said,

Well, the facts if you go back and review them, they’re not really the truth, they’re not. You know, even my 12-year old daughter can go through one particular textbook that we got from one school and she was able to point out things in that that were not correct.

Lauren noted that schooling in the U.S. is not as rigorous as in her native country:

The schooling back home...is very much like the British, we have the British way and it is more difficult than here...they keep the kids drilled in Trinidad, drilled. It’s like a non-stop pace, and then you have lessons after-school...

Anita noted that the curriculum in American schools did not focus enough on teaching skills until children attained fluency in them. She said, “...my daughter, she’s in 2nd grade right now and every week there’s a different topic in math... There’s not enough time for her to learn one thing, really well, really fluently, or really proficiently.”

Cecil discussed his concerns about his son’s lack of exposure to things he had been exposed to in his own education:

That concerns me because I’ve had the opportunity of living overseas and being educated differently than my kids...it concerns me sometimes when I ask them a question and at that age, 14 and

16, they might not be aware of it or they haven't been exposed to it because the education system over here is a little bit different...it concerns me sometimes as a parent...The level of education in United States, I don't think it's as broad as the Caribbean. I don't think it's as...high as the Caribbean.

In relation to homework, parents believed that American public schools did not assign enough homework and that this was problematic. Michael endorsed this view and expressed his opinion that homework reinforces concepts taught in school, "So, the homework reinforces, and that's what homework is for, it reinforces first that you learnt what you were taught and then it's going to bring everything together, it gels it together."

Clive also agreed that not enough homework was assigned and shared Michael's notion that homework reinforced concepts taught in school. In his words:

I mean I don't understand how they don't get homework on the weekends here. I mean when I was going to school you get homework during the week but on the weekends is where you'll have a lot of homework so when you go back to school on Monday you're not a blank slate because you spent several hours during the weekend repeating stuff that you were taught during the week by doing it, but kids here, most of them don't get homework on the weekends.

Corinne also mentioned the lack of homework and noted that she felt American parents seemed to prioritize extracurricular activities over homework, "...I remember, on 3 or 4 occasions I've had parents complain about homework, teachers are giving too

much homework. What is too much homework?...the kids are running all over the place in after-school activities.”

Teachers. All parents discussed teachers as an important part of public schooling in the U.S., 10 of the families (76%) viewed teachers as a positive part of public schooling, while three of the families (23%) viewed teachers in a somewhat negative light. Parents who discussed teachers in positive terms viewed them as being receptive to parents, being willing to work with parents and willing to discuss any issues their children might be having.

Clive viewed the teachers at his son’s school as open to parent concerns. He said:

...they’re very receptive when you go down there and you don’t get that defensiveness when you talk to the teachers, you know what I mean...so I think there is a culture there of...let’s do what is best... they encourage you to come down if there’s a problem.

Corinne viewed teachers as wanting to partner with parents. She commented:

I know teachers, I talk to teachers all the time... teachers want you to talk to them. They want to be appreciated. They want you to partner with them... I can’t say anything bad about the teachers.

These people want to help your kids, they do, they care.

Gregory described his daughters’ teachers as, “Very, very receptive. And they always try to work with me, explain, whatever. But they never blow me off.”

Winnifred viewed her son’s teachers as committed to their work. She commented:

I've met with every one of Alston's teachers, every one. And my impression...they are teachers who are serious about teaching, they want the best for their students and they work with me. So, the teachers I would say well of them.

Three of the 13 families (23%) discussed teachers in relatively negative terms. Participants' negative views of teachers appeared to center on their lack of communication with them and unwillingness to cooperate with parents.

For instance, Lauren seemed to perceive teachers as uncaring and uncommunicative to parents. She said:

...if the teacher talks to her [her daughter] in school or whatever, they did not inform me about anything. And it's like, I'm coming home every night, the child is sleeping, and I get up in the morning and I have to take her to school, nothing is said, nothing came to me, but then at the end of the school year when they send me [the report card] she got a D in this, an A in that, or a B in that or whatever... They just don't care, they don't care...

Based on his experience with his son, Michael also perceived teachers as uncommunicative. He explained:

I don't even know how they feel because as I said they've never initiated anything, outside of a parent-teacher night the first time when school reopens. After that it's a done deal... unless...there's a problem with your child, you never see them. They never call for a meeting, I guess they think there's no need

to, they're busy I guess with their schedule so that only allows such and such. They can't meet with you. So, there's no flexibility and a teacher taking a little time and saying, I'm going to call...they can't do it unless there's a problem.

While Lauren and Michael reported a lack of communication with their children's teachers, Anita described negative communications with her daughter Anya's teacher:

...Anya has a teacher who's constantly writing negative notes in the book, she's writing about Anya's reading and Anya's fluency and Anya didn't do this today, and Anya didn't do that...And we've written long long notes to each other in Anya's notebook. I wasn't even aware that Anya was supposed to do a reading test on the computer in school, and I got this note at the end of the marking period that Anya didn't do any tests. So first of all,... why didn't you point this out in the beginning of the term when I could have done something about it? You wrote it at the end of the term [and] now I don't have the opportunity to do anything about it.

Anita also discussed how she perceived the cause of this negative interaction. She said, "...that's an example I think where a teacher has selectively chosen not to bring the parent into the game at an earlier point because the child is a minority." It is important to note that aside from this negative interaction, Anita described teachers in otherwise positive terms, saying that, "And a lot of the teachers...have been very open and receptive to what you have to say, and they do try to work with you and help you with any problems..."

Opportunities. Despite the problems interviewees pointed out with the American public schools (e.g., lack of rigor in the curriculum) all the parents interviewed highly valued the opportunities afforded by the American public school system. Parents endorsed the idea that their children's education would afford them opportunities for career success, the ability to support themselves, and a better life than they themselves have.

Clive noted, "But we all can learn something. And the opportunity that this country affords us to be good at something is tremendous so, whatever you're good at, go for it with everything you have."

May said that the American educational system offered opportunities that were not offered to children in her country of origin. She said:

As I said already those kids back home some of them don't have the privilege to enter high school or to go to get certain things. But here you (*have*) no class [system], everybody is...the same, so long as you have the ability you can get what you want.

Evelyn praised the American system for the opportunities it provides to children who need extra help as compared to the school system back in her native country. She used the example of her daughter to illustrate her views about the opportunities available in the U.S. She said:

The best of the crop from 'A' levels are going to go into university which is free education [back] home. So, it's always the best of the crop. Now let's say that you're not really the best. Let's say that you're somebody who's plodding, like my second daughter; she's

a little bit dyslexic. We don't know about dyslexic [back] home. The [Caribbean] system caters for people who are bright, they cater for the children who are bright, or if they have the means of getting the extra tutoring that they need...And my second daughter had a dyslexia problem, she did not pass [the exams] for the best school [back home]. She went to a government school. And she has come up here [to the U.S.] and started community college. And I think...she is the perfect example of how this system [U.S. educational system] could work for you because she's slower...the system encourages you to keep going...

Cecil contrasted the opportunities offered by the U.S. public school system as compared to the Caribbean educational system:

You go back to the Caribbean and you see bright students with no opportunities. I mean, as I sit there with you today, I am confident those two boys [referring to his sons] will have scholarships and go on to college. I'm not sure if I could have said that if I was [back home].

Student behavior. Fifty-three percent of interviewees (n=7) discussed their views of the behavior of students in American public schools in relatively negative terms. Several interviewees regarded the behavior of students in public schools in the U.S. as problematic. Parents linked the poor behavior of these students to their home lives. Corinne discussed her view of the behavior of children in American public schools as follows:

....And I'm very sorry; these children have no behavior, no manners. And it comes from the home. So my child is sitting in the classroom trying to study and the teacher has to be talking to these kids and if the teacher dares to call home, what do they get? Some parent who wants to come down and yell and scream and sue the school system.

Lauren viewed the behavior of children in public schools negatively and described how she came to believe this based on what her daughter experienced in school. She said

For no reason a guy just came up to her [Lauren's daughter] and hit her in her chest. He was playing ...he was just one of those little bad boys, you know. And he hit her in her chest. I complained to the principal and complained and nothing was done. They just called the mother in. And I took my child to the doctor and you could see this big red and black and blue mark right there on her chest. And I think people in this country do not discipline their kids.

May articulated her belief that parents who could not control their own children should not expect a teacher who is responsible for many children at once to be able to control them. She commented:

I think they're trying, I think the school's trying. It's just, the children...their background, where they're really coming from. I don't think schools have anything to do with it. Because if you're a

parent and you have one child or two children and it's hard for you to control them, they do as they like, they come as they want to come, they go as they want to go. How can you expect a teacher to really, do everything, to teach them manners and teach them discipline? And at the same time they have 30 children and you have two and they are your children, and you can't say to them, don't go through the door, they don't stop, they still go through the door...parents need to do more.

Shirley discussed the negative behaviors of children in public schools and her belief regarding the origin of these behaviors. In her words:

...because there are a lot of kids in public school that don't have that home base, that value. They don't have parents to guide them. So, they go to school, they don't do any work. They skip school. There's no consequence, you know, so they just go wild. There are a lot of things that go on, there's drugs...

Clive also commented on the behavior of children in public schools and attributed it to their home environments. He said, "...enforcing discipline and behavior, it starts at home. That's why you have a lot of problems today because a lot of kids don't have enforcement at home. They're raising themselves."

Resources. Thirty percent of the families interviewed (n=4) expressed appreciation for the resources made available to their children by the public schools in the U.S. Corinne who had sent her children to private school for several years before

switching them to public schools, was amazed at the resources provided by her children's public magnet school. She said:

And when I went to the public school I was like, you're kidding me! These resources are available? I mean, you take a science lab in a public school and a science lab in a private school, it's night and day. Sara's language teacher in 7th grade has a Ph.D. Her geography teacher in 7th grade has a Master's from Yale.

She continued:

My daughter is in public school playing orchestra, getting one of the best music programs in a public school in America. She has languages available to her. She has trips to Greece available to her, this is a public school; I'm not paying for this...

May, in commenting on the differences between schools in her country of origin and schools in the U.S., discussed some of the resources available that are not available back home. She explained:

They [U.S. schools] have the bus to pick them up to take them to school. Back home dem [them] don't have the school bus. They had to ride with the public bus. [Here] if you can't afford lunch you can get lunch and breakfast...

Gregory commented on a camp to which his daughter's school sent her:

I have to commend her school because my daughter just went to a leadership camp, and what it is, it's about diversity, about gays,

lesbian, Muslim, Jews, black, white, fat, skinny, blind, and she went there for a week and it was all paid for. She loved it.

Anita expressed appreciation for resources available in her son's future school, "The high school down the street, has so many things that they can offer you. And I'm just wowed by the amount of things that they can offer you. Just the sporting activities are so great."

Racism and the value of education. Parents were also asked about how racism impacted their children's ability to make full use of the education they received, if it did at all, and how they discussed this issue with their children. Seventy-six percent of the parents interviewed (n=9) indicated that while racism was a problem, and one of which their children should be aware, education would help their children overcome it. Twenty-three percent of parents (n=3) indicated that they did not believe that racism was a problem for their children and that they did not discuss this issue with their children.

Corinne discussed her beliefs and those of her husband on the subject and how they communicate about racism to their children. In her words:

We do talk about education being the ticket and we put out the facts and figures, this is what a high school kid makes, this is what a college student makes. We let them know racism is out there but it's not going to stop them. We tell them there's always going to be something out there, it's going to be a challenge. I don't want them to go on that crutch of racism.

Michael said he tells his son that as a minority it's important that he becomes educated. He said:

...you're considered a minority so education has to be your forte. Being a minority sometimes being educated is going to, maybe put you over that little bump than if you're not educated. That is going to drop you to that level where you certainly don't want to be. So absolutely, the color is a major factor as well.

May pointed out that education opened doors to career paths. She commented:

So long as you have the ability, you work towards it, dem [them] can't tell you, you can't go work in the office if you have the education. They may not pay you the same, but dem [them] can't tell you say you can't work in the office because you have your papers.....

Asked about her grandchildren's ability to use their education to achieve future success, May said that racism could not prevent her grandchildren from achieving success.

It is there for them. They can't stop and say, oh me, inna [in] this white man country. This na [isn't] nobody country. You inna [in] de [the] country, you come here legal. School here and you go down to school and get what you're supposed to get...nobody can stop you from getting whatever you want. The only problem you have is if you're illegal and you have people who are here illegal and they get what they want...

Rahul said he felt it was important to tell his daughters not to forget history and to know what happens in society but not to dwell on it. He said:

Sometimes I do tell them about, you know I mention history, the slave trade, the imperial era. I mention to them because they should be aware of these things. That's history and you don't forget history. You don't dwell on it but at least you know what you're out there against.

Anita said she felt that in spite of education, racism still impacted her son's opportunities, particularly in the job market. She said:

Just by the fact that when you go for a job, you know people now are screening your names on your resume. You know if you're named, uh, Sanjaya, Malakar, you're probably not going to get that interview because they're probably looking for somebody named Anita Hess [Anita's name]... And America has a long rooted history into...the Caucasian American way of life and that people are coming here to take something away from them.

Despite her belief that racism impacted her son's opportunities, Anita expressed her view that education would open doors for him. She said that education is, "a stepping stone for the door to be opened. And once that door is opened it's your work, your attitude, it's how you treat people."

The responses of three of the families interviewed (23%) reflected a belief that racism was not an issue that impacted their children's ability to make use of their education. Winnifred said she tells her son,

...if you see it, it doesn't apply to you, you turn and walk the other way. I don't know any other way to do it. Because it's not

something I contend with. I may go on an appointment and somebody may raise a question and I'll say, well, that really doesn't apply to me. It is alien to me where I come from and I really don't want to learn about it. So, today's agenda is...

Evelyn did not view race as impacting her daughter's chances to get the full value of her education and felt it was her daughter's choices that would impact the value of her education. She said:

I just tell her that what I'm learning myself, because I'm new. So, I tell her that what I understand here is that they give you a lot of rope to do anything you want to do but you could also hang yourself. Because the minute you make one mistake that's it for you, you could be whoever, you could have so much money, the best house, whatever, you make one mistake and all that could be gone. So that you always have to understand that rope of trust.

In Lauren's case, it appeared that, because of her own experiences in the American workplace, she did not hold the belief that race impacted opportunities for career success in America. She said:

...we try not to talk about that too much. Because I don't have that problem. Because I do all types of hair, all types of hair. When people, especially the Caucasian people, see my operator's chair, they watch me all the time, and they say, 'Lauren, I don't know you could do um, ethnic hair.' And I say, of course, that's where I

came from, that's what I did all my life...we really don't have problems.

She also noted that racism was not a topic that was discussed in their family because of the great variety of ethnicities in her family and that of her husband's family. She said:

...my husband's father was White and his mother was a Spanish woman from Trinidad. So, a blond hair blue-eyed man with a brown woman. And my husband he doesn't talk about stuff like that. We try not to because we've got everything, all mixed up, some married Indian spouses, some married black. My elder daughter her husband is half and half, his father is black and his mother is white...

Summary of Views of Public Schooling

Overall, regarding the views of public education in the U.S., several subjective validity claims (claims based on a respondent's views of reality) were foregrounded (explicitly articulated). The subjectivity and foregrounding of parents' validity claims is apparent in their clearly expressed views that public education in the U.S. is not as academically rigorous as education in the Caribbean or as they would desire it to be. In addition, parents clearly articulated their belief that not enough homework was assigned by schools, sometimes noting that this was problematic because homework was an opportunity to reinforce skills and concepts taught in school. Most parents viewed teachers as a positive part of the public school process, while a few parents differed. Parents discussed teachers in positive terms, noting that they were partners in their children's education and responsive to their concerns. The small number of parents who

discussed teachers in negative terms viewed them as uncommunicative or engaging in negative communications with parents. Parents also discussed their views of the behavior of children in American public schools; parents perceived children as badly behaved, largely due to their family environment. Parents overwhelmingly viewed public education in the U.S. as offering their children opportunities for future success while some parents praised the resources that public schools offered. Finally, although parents discussed racism as an issue, the majority of parents did not believe it would significantly impact the value of their children's education and their ability to succeed.

Question 2: What Expectations do West Indian Parents and Caregivers have about the American Schooling Process?

Responses were analyzed and five themes (academics, behavior, moral values, teachers, and diversity of the curriculum) emerged that capture parents' expectations of schooling in the U.S. The endorsement rates of these themes are reported in Table 5. Expectations about academics were the most endorsed theme (92%). In general, parents discussed expectations in the areas of academics, morals and values, teachers, behavior, and diversity of the curriculum. Overall, parents expected that schooling should focus on academics, particularly basic skills (reading, writing, and arithmetic). In contrast, some parents clearly expressed the belief that they, and not the schools, were responsible for teaching morals and values (38%) and behavior (46%). Some participants expressed the view that the school should merely reinforce what was taught at home. In reference to teachers, parents (46%) expected teachers to care about student progress, assist students, and communicate with parents when there were any issues with student progress. In relation to diversity of the curriculum, some parents (38%) expressed the view that the

curriculum of U.S. public schools needs to be broadened to focus more on topics like different cultures.

Table 5

Themes from Expectations

Themes	Endorsement Rate
Academics	92%
Behavior	46%
Teachers	46%
Moral Values	38%
Diversity of the curriculum	38%

n = 13

Academics. When discussing expectations of schooling, parents' responses most often centered on academics. Relative to academics, twelve families (92%) endorsed the idea that schools should focus on academics. Most emphasized the need for schools to focus on the basics and to provide a solid background in academic subjects. They saw this as forming a foundation for life-long learning. Many wanted a focus on reading, writing, and arithmetic, the basic skills.

Corinne noted that she felt schools should focus on the basics, saying, "I want the schools to provide the children an education, giving them the reading, writing, arithmetic." In Shirley's words, "The academics, that's their responsibility." Asked what it was important for schools to provide his son, Clive said "academics, for him to learn to his fullest extent". As Sunita and Rahul explained, "A solid background in academics, that's the main thing. That's the major thing to guide them through college and through

life because they have to have a solid background to get through studies.” Anita noted that, “the basic skills are more important because you would need it long term.” She further explained:

I think they need to reduce the curriculum and focus more on the basics of each subject, things like the lifelong items you’re going to need, like working out percentage, division, addition, subtraction, you know, square rooting, basic math that you can apply to everything.”

Winnifred defined the basics as the canon and discussed her puzzlement about what was not being covered in the curriculum at her son’s school, “...it blows my mind that Alston at 14 had never done any Shakespeare. Not because I did Shakespeare, but I think there is so much to be learned”.

Nalini and Brian described their expectations that the basics be taught as well as an appreciation of the usefulness of these skills:

I also think that besides learning your basic math skills and you know science and all that ...really instilling into these kids that earning an education in your early life will prepare you for other things in your later life [is important].

Like Nalini and Brian, Gregory felt that the basics should be taught, but critical thinking should also be emphasized. He explained:

...how to think, thought processes, that’s really important in school...not even just the fundamentals like reading and writing and all that stuff, but, to think. Because you have to think how to

get from Point A to Point B, you still have to think about it. You know, how do you arrive at this answer, how do you do this, how do you do that. It's all thought.

While almost all the parents in the sample focused on academics in their discussion of their expectations of school, it is important to note that Evelyn differed from the rest of the sample. Although Evelyn did discuss the importance of academics and her expectation that schools provide a “wide exposure to everything that goes on in the world”, she also articulated an additional expectation of schools. In her words:

Well, most importantly I think a school should encourage a good sense of self because this is where a child spends 8 hours at least a day. And they should be happy in a learning environment. They should be motivated to learn.

Behavior. Behavior and discipline was another topic that parents discussed relative to expectations. Forty-six percent of parents (n =6) noted that they expected discipline and structure from the schools but seemed to believe that schools should play more of a supportive than a primary role in teaching behavior. When asked about the school's role in teaching behavior, Michael said, “I think the school has a greater responsibility in reinforcing all of that”.

Clive noted that, “enforcing discipline and behavior starts at home.” Asked about her expectations, Shirley noted that she expected discipline to start at home but be reinforced at school. She said, “And discipline. You know I'm not expecting the school to do it because that starts at home, I have to do that.”

Nalini and Brian also viewed the school's role in teaching behavior as a supportive one. They said, "It's probably not their job but they should help because the kids spend a lot of time in school with teachers and that's one of the things they should at least...put a lot of emphasis on..."

Anita appeared to endorse a more equal role for schools and families in the teaching of behavior. Asked about the school's role in teaching appropriate behavior, she stated:

That's both the school and the parents' [responsibility]. The school has a responsibility to teach kids how to act in an environment where there are rules and regulations and the parents have the responsibility to tell the kids when you're in that environment, you need to follow the rules.

Teachers. Another focus of parent expectations was teachers. Forty-six percent of families (n=6) interviewed discussed expectations of teachers. Parents seemed to expect teachers to care about student learning and to communicate with parents regarding any issues relating to student progress. According to Shirley, "I expect good teachers...teachers that will be interested in the students and help them in whatever way they need." Cecil stated that he expected, "Good, capable, informed teachers. Teachers who give, who care."

Lauren discussed her expectations in terms of communication from teachers:

I will expect that if a child is not paying attention in school that a teacher will write me a letter or get in touch with me somehow and

say this child is not functioning and you need to do something about it.

Michael also discussed the importance of teachers communicating with parents:

... So, if I'm a teacher and I'm teaching in a school and a child comes in and something might be off, then I can say, let me... maybe meet with the parents, one on one, you know, consultation there and doing things to say I care.

Gregory articulated his expectations of how teachers should treat struggling students:

They should provide extra help because when they teach their curriculum sometimes they're on a schedule and they're just breezing along and that's okay to a certain extent but then you get kids that get left behind. If a kid doesn't understand something they need to have time allocated to help those kids. I think that's extremely important.

Morals and values. As previously discussed, parents expected schools to focus on academics. Concurrent with the need for schools to focus on academics, thirty-eight percent of parents (n = 5) interviewed did not think that it was the responsibility of the schools to teach morals and values. Instead they saw this as the responsibility of the parents. Some parents thought that the school should endorse standards and codes taught at home. As Shirley explained, "Because the morals and to be a decent person, I think that should come from the home. When he goes to school he should already have that. Academics are what they are there to teach them." May agreed with this, saying that the teacher's job was to teach academics and that, "The teacher's duty is not to teach the

children manners; children must have manners going into school. Children must have principles, quality of life going into school.”

Parents seemed to perceive the school’s role as enforcing standards and codes taught at home. As Clive explained:

School is an enforcer of what is expected, whether they are going to conform is up to...what is accepted at home. School can enforce certain standards and codes, the uniform has to be a certain way, you’re not allowed to talk during class, raise your hand to ask a question...that kind of thing.

Corinne agreed with this notion, saying, “...I want them to provide an environment where what I’m doing at home is supported by the school system.”

Winnifred commented, “Morals, values, it falls on me, it’s my responsibility.”

Diversity of the curriculum. Thirty-eight percent of the parents interviewed (n=3) indicated that they felt public schools needed to increase the diversity of the curriculum relative to different parts of the world, different cultures, and different religions. Cecil commented on the lack of information about different cultures and other parts of the world, “Do they teach Geography here? I don’t see it in the high schools and the middle schools.”

Gregory commented that schools should teach about “...more diverse, cultural things, that’s what I want to see more of. I want to see them do more about educating the kids about different cultures and religions...that’s important.”

Two of the three Hindu families in the study commented that although schools were supposed to be free of religion, they often covered content, particularly near

holidays, that addressed Christian and Jewish holidays but not holidays associated with other religions. For example, Sunita and Rahul felt that all religions should be addressed in the curriculum, not just Judaism and Christianity. Sunita commented:

One of the things America prides itself on is the fact that they have so many cultures so many races here from other places. The people that my children associate themselves with are the adults of tomorrow. And if within a safe environment they are not taught to respect my daughter who's sitting in the next desk, then it's probably something that they will never be taught and they will always look at her as being different and having a different value system just because they don't understand. They've never had the exposure, they've never had the opportunity.

Anita also discussed the lack of attention to different cultures in school. In her words:

Things are just very bland, there's no culture in the schools...[back home] we have Carnival in schools, it's not a big deal for the students to play steel pan, it's a national instrument. But in America there's so much focus on it just being bland. You can't introduce any of those cultural things in schools. Kids don't have, they don't experience culture in school, whatsoever.

Summary of Expectations of the American Schooling Process

Overall, parent expectations centered on academics, morals and values, teachers, behavior, and diversity of the curriculum. Examination of the expectations parents

articulated reveals several explicit normative-evaluative validity claims. Relative to academics, participants explicitly expressed their belief that academics are the central mission of schooling and that, for the most part, academics should focus on the basics (reading, writing, math). In the area of morals and values and behavior, a minority of the participants clearly expressed their belief that they are responsible for imparting these to their children and not the schools. Similarly, in the area of behavior, some parents seem to hold the belief that schools should reinforce what has been taught at home. Almost one-half of the parents seemed to hold the belief that teachers should care about student learning, be responsible for monitoring student progress and assisting students, and communicate with parents about student progress. Finally, in the area of diversity of the curriculum, some parents endorsed the belief that the curriculum of U.S. schools needs to be broadened to take into account topics like different religions and different parts of the world, and different cultures.

Question 3: What are the Beliefs of West Indian Parents and Caregivers in the United States about the Roles they should play in their Children's Schooling Process?

To address this question, participants were asked to share their beliefs about the roles they should play in two specific aspects of their children's schooling: progress monitoring and school-based involvement (defined as Parent-Teacher Association membership, membership in any other school based organizations, volunteering in any school-based organizations volunteering in the classroom).

Participants' responses were analyzed and one theme, teaching behaviors for school success, emerged that captures parents' beliefs about the role they should play in their children's schooling. The endorsement rate of this theme was 61% (n = 8).

Overall, participants reported that it was important to monitor their children's progress in school and be involved in school-based activities. However, while participants noted that they engaged in progress monitoring behaviors, most reported that they did not engage in any form of school-based involvement. Regarding the teaching of behaviors for school success, participants reported that they taught their children behaviors (e.g., applying themselves) that they believed would help them succeed in school.

Progress monitoring. All parents reported that it was important to communicate with teachers about their children's progress and they played this role in their children's education. In discussing the relative importance of volunteering in schools versus checking up on his son's progress, Clive said:

Volunteering is supporting the school but that is second to you really keeping track of what's going on in school, what's going on with your kid while they're in school, where they are vs. where they should be and so on.

Asked about monitoring their children's progress in school, Nalini and Brian said:

Very important, you should always know what their progress is at all times. Every week they get their papers and we [ask] why did you get an S for Satisfactory, instead of an E for Excellent? And [we say] you know, you're going to have to do that again.

Asked about the importance of checking on her son's progress Winnifred stated, "It's paramount important. That's his job and I am his mother. And I'm going to be the parent until he's an adult."

Shirley shared her views of progress monitoring:

If your child is in school and you want to know how that child is doing, you have to call the teachers. You have to make that first move. I know they send home a progress report, and I know you get your report cards. But in the middle between that time, you as a parent, have to show some interest.

School-based involvement. The families interviewed unanimously said that school based involvement was important. At the same time, only three of the families interviewed (23%) reported engaging in some form of school-based involvement. Generally, participants attributed their lack of school-based parent involvement to time and distance constraints. Obstacles to parent involvement are discussed in detail in the reporting of the results for Research Question Five.

Anita and Michael are examples of two parents who regarded school-based forms of involvement as important. Anita explained, “I think it’s important because parents can watch what the teachers are doing and see if the school is falling behind and they can be a...parent advocate in what’s going on.” Like, Anita, Michael viewed school based involvement as important. He said, that it is, “Absolutely important...it’s going to give you a pride in self and a pride in parent to see how involved they are with your development in school or upbringing.” As previously noted, three of the families interviewed engaged in school based forms of involvement, Sunita and Gregory are two such examples.

Sunita discussed her school-based involvement and her view of its importance:

I think it’s very important, I know that when I go into the

classroom and Devika sees me she gets a sudden lift, which is nice. And I know that the teachers, they always need the help. And then if I have a concern or just something that I want a little bit of extra information I can usually get it when I make that trip in the school, I think that makes me have a closer relationship with the teacher.

Gregory, who was not a member of the PTAs at his daughters' schools, discussed the forms of school based involvement in which he engages:

I'm on the school advisory council. I've gone in and given speeches and lectured at her career day... and the Great American Teach In they call it at Justine's school. Brought my uniforms, put it on the kids, took pictures of them in uniform and stuff like that. So, that's my volunteering.

He went on to discuss his view of the importance of school-based forms of involvement:

Extremely, extremely [important]. Why? Because you want to have your finger on the pulse. You want to be there, you want to be a part of it. You want to see what your kids are being taught. You want to make sure that they're being taught. And also it inspires the kid too to see the parent there and getting involved.

Teaching behaviors for school success. Sixty-one percent of the parents interviewed (n=8) believed it was an important part of their role to teach their children behaviors that would help them succeed in school and engaged in teaching their children these behaviors. This included behaviors for doing well in school such as expending

their best effort, time management, and appropriate classroom behavior. For instance, Clive said he tells his son:

...don't shortchange yourself, if you can get an A, get the A, don't get the B, because you're lazy. Really work hard, there's no, no excuse to get a B when you can get an A, especially when I know you can do it.... Don't accept mediocrity.

Corinne said she actually focuses on helping her daughter develop the skills she needs for school success. Based on advice from a guidance counselor, Corinne was focused on helping her daughter develop skills important to school success, specifically time management. She stated, "So, I'm training her. I'm working with her on her time management and it's a challenge."

Among the parents who endorsed the idea that teaching behaviors for school success was an important part of their role, some focused on appropriate classroom behaviors. Lauren said she tells her daughter:

I try my best to put Irina in a good position to tell her to sit up front, pay attention, to always try to be in the teacher's good book, so that they will see you as somebody who is willing to learn. And that is what in my country we try to do.

Like Lauren, May focused on talking to her grandchildren about appropriate classroom behavior for school success. For example she tells them:

[If you have] your attitude straight, you'll surprise teacher. So whether [the] teacher will like you from Day 1 or not, doesn't matter. If you can go and prove yourself, say to yourself, I'm

going to show them I'm here to learn, your duty is here to teach me, and if I'm going to learn you have to mark my books, you have to give me the grades I deserve. So, dem [them] can say, boy I don't like him and I'm dying for him to get out of my class, but man he's good.

Summary of Beliefs about Roles in their Children's Schooling Process

In sum, examination of parent responses about the roles they believed it was important to play in their children's education revealed several explicitly articulated normative-evaluative and subjective validity claims. All parents expressed the view that it was important to communicate with schools regarding their children's progress and actively monitored their children's progress in school. In addition, all parents expressed the view that school-based forms of involvement were important, although most did not engage in this type of involvement. Obstacles to parent involvement are discussed in detail in the reporting of the results for Research Question Five. Finally, a majority of parents believed it was important to teach their children behaviors that would lead to school success (e.g., time management) and engaged in teaching them these behaviors.

Question 4: What is the Nature of the Involvement that West Indian Parents Report with regard to their Children's Schooling Process in the United States?

Analysis of responses revealed six themes that captured the nature of parents' non school-based involvement in their children's schooling process. These themes were: 1) homework assistance, 2) monitoring homework completion, 3) parent assigned academic work, 4) progress monitoring-interim methods, 5) progress monitoring-report cards/conferences, and 6) outside resources. The endorsement rates of these themes are

reported in Table 6. Homework assistance, progress monitoring-interim methods, and provision of outside resources were endorsed by approximately 75% of the participants.

In general, parents were very active in non-school based forms of involvement (e.g., homework assistance and progress monitoring using interim methods). Most reported that they often helped their children with homework completion. A few indicated that while they monitored homework completion, they did not assist their children in completing their homework. A minority of parents provided additional academic work for their children, either because they perceived the curriculum as lacking in coverage of some areas or because they believed their children needed additional assistance in an academic skill area. All parents interviewed reported that they monitored their children’s progress, whether by using report cards, emails to teachers, or the online system the district provided. Finally, parents often used outside resources such as tutors to support their children’s learning.

Table 6

Themes from Types of Parent Involvement in Schooling

Themes	Endorsement Rate
Homework assistance	76%
Monitoring homework completion	30%
Parent assigned academic work	46%
Progress monitoring-interim methods	76%
Progress monitoring- report cards/ conferences	23%
Provision of outside resources	76%

n = 13

Homework assistance. The majority of families interviewed (n=11) indicated that they supported their children's learning through assistance with homework completion and school projects. Clive described the assistance he gives his son:

Well, I pretty much help him with the math, you know when he has problems, like [when] he was doing Geometry. So we'll sit down on a Sunday evening and we'll work some problems out or I'll show him a different approach [based on] how I was taught, how to work the problem...

Brian and Nalini indicated that they both help with homework. Brian said, "Oh, we help them with homework."

Rahul said that assistance with homework is a common occurrence for him and Sunita. He said, "Homework. We help them with their homework. We always get on their cases with the homework." Sunita elaborated on this saying,

That's part of the reason why I'm a stay-at-home mom. By the time they come home in the evening, I've pretty much got time to be able to help them...we'll get to it at some point in the evening. And if it's something that I can't deal with, then Rahul's math ability is better so he'll help with it.

Anita noted that she and her husband invest a lot of time assisting their children with homework completion:

I've handled it on a week by week basis... just focusing on making sure that they accomplish the tasks and they have a thorough knowledge of what they're doing. Even when the teacher's

teaching them, spending one week on one topic, we come home in the evening and actually spend 2 hours every day going over the work, because the kids don't understand it.

Monitoring homework completion. A minority of the families (30%) indicated that they did not assist with homework completion, but that they did engage in monitoring the completion of homework. Even for these parents/guardians, they noted that they contributed some small measure of assistance, particularly with the completion of projects. Corinne, for instance, said she does not assist her daughters with homework as she was told when her daughter was in early elementary school by her daughter's teacher that she should not assist her. As a result, Corinne noted that,

“Since the woman told me not to, I do not help my kids with homework. I might provide guidance, like I do when my daughter has a project, we talk about it. I try to take it to the next level.

Lauren noted that she is unable to assist her daughter Irina with homework, saying, “Well, I cannot help her at all, I just cannot help her. I'm from the old school and this is the new school.” However, like Corinne, Lauren noted that she assisted her daughter with completing projects. She explained, “If she has a project and she wants me to draw something or help her make something I used to do that, especially in middle school and sometimes in high school... I did help her with that.” Asked about the monitoring of homework completion, Lauren said, “I just ask her if she did her homework.”

Evelyn was a parent who had recently immigrated to the United States. She noted several times during the interview that she had been told by her children and had learned

from experiences she had with a son in college that in America parents were not supposed to “hover”. She said:

For example, I would be what you would call a helicopter parent, all Caribbean parents are helicopter parents...we hover, we tend to be interested, we want to know. But here the system is you are not supposed to hover, you're not supposed to do those things unless you're asked, you know unless your children say, “Mom come along with me.”

Based on this understanding, Evelyn did not play as active a role in her daughter's schooling as did many of the other parents interviewed. Evelyn noted that she is asked to sign papers saying that her daughter completed her homework but because the system is such that you're not supposed to “hover”, she really doesn't know what her daughter is doing. She said:

You know, having learned from my other three children that I'm not supposed, to [hover] I tend to just ask her, are you doing your homework, or [tell her] get off the computer, or stop watching television. That's my role as a parent...And if she has a project that she has to complete on time I would encourage her to get it done, I would help her. I would help her cut out stuff, get the magazines that she needs.

Parent-assigned academic work. In addition to assisting and/or monitoring homework completion, some of the parents (46%) also provided their children additional academic work. The reasons for this appeared to be either addressing perceived

inadequacies in the school curriculum or addressing perceived inadequacies in a child's skills. In Anita's case, she believed that the writing instruction given to her high school-aged son, Nathaniel, was inadequate. She discussed her views and how she is addressing this perceived inadequacy:

...for high school I think there's not enough focus on writing, there are not enough writing assignments...So, we've worked with him a lot to teach him the basics of English, and... punctuation and capitalization...good sentence structure, how to write an essay...

Michael noted that he believes his son's reading needs to improve and discussed how he has approached this issue:

I just think that his reading is a problem so I wanted him to move it up a notch from where it was... I think you have to read everyday...[so] I've bought him several books. Everyday that he comes home I encourage him to do at least half an hour of reading because I think it's imperative.

May also noted that she was concerned about her granddaughter's reading and was also concerned about the fact that all her grandchildren did not read as much as they should. Asked if her concern for her granddaughter was based on a concern the teacher expressed, May responded, "No they never complained, because she gets such good grades in school. She made the Honor Roll, pure As." However, May noted she was still concerned and discussed the reasons for her concerns and what she had done to address the problem.

I think Nadia's weak point is reading. And sometimes I think she reads but she na [doesn't] understand. None of them read. If I'm at home on a weekend I don't see them reading and I think they should get interested, pick up the paper, read the sport news, the news. With Christopher, they had a special assignment from a teacher, they had to read 20 minutes a day, it's a subject, and when he went to that class, he had to expound on what he read. And I told them they all had to do it...all of them. I try to get them to read at least 20 minutes a day.

As noted previously (in the response to Research Question 3), parents unanimously endorsed the importance of monitoring their children's progress in school and engaged in these behaviors. However, parents differ in the ways they monitored their children's progress in school.

Progress monitoring- interim methods. Most parents (n=10) used report cards and conference nights to monitor their children's progress but also used "interim methods," that is methods that would give them feedback in between report cards and parent conferences. These methods consisted mostly of emailing teachers and using the online system their children's district has set up for parents to check on student progress. Cecil showed the researcher a page of his planner where he tracked his son's classes, teachers, and grades on each assignment. Asked where he got this information, he responded, "I get it, I call the teacher, I go and I talk to the teacher, I don't wait until there is a problem."

Asked how she monitors her children's progress in school, Anita noted that aside from using report cards and parent conferences, she uses homework. She stated, "When they get homework, if they're able to do it and how much help they need and where they need help. You know constantly just, supervision."

Shirley noted that she monitors her son's progress by emailing teachers. She explained, "I would call the teachers or email them. It's mostly email...how is [he] doing in this class? Is he keeping up with his homework? And then they would respond."

Michael discussed his use of the online system to monitor his son's progress:

[I check] via computer because everything is online. I'm checking the actual book ...the online system... that's geared for the assignments and if the assignments are completed. Because if they aren't then [the online system will] let you know that it hasn't been.

Winnifred also noted that she uses the district's online system to check her son's homework completion, "He will do his homework because I will check, Edline and Edline shows that the homework is not missing." She also talked about communicating with teachers about her son's progress. She said, "And I always will email his teachers to say, hey how are things going, what do you need me to do, you need me in any way? What are you doing now?"

Progress monitoring-report cards/conferences. A few parents (23%) indicated that they relied solely on report cards and parent conferences to track their children's progress in school. Asked how she monitors her daughter Irina's progress in school,

Lauren responded, “Well, she gets her progress report and that’s what I see, so that’s basically it.”

In keeping with her understanding of the role parents are supposed to play in their children’s schooling in the U.S., Evelyn described her method of progress monitoring. She said, “I ask to see report cards... And I’ve been to two of her Teachers Day, no what it is it? Parents Day, whatever day that you go in and talk to the teachers.”

Provision of outside resources. Most parents (76%) provided outside resources to support their children’s learning. This usually consisted of tutoring. Winnifred noted that her son receives tutoring on Saturdays:

Every Saturday morning he goes for private tutoring. I have a gentleman where if he runs into a little bit of a difficulty with math, I can call that gentleman and take him and he will give him private lessons.

Michael noted that for his son, math is an issue and, “...that’s why we ended up with Miss Nadine’s class [a Saturday morning tutorial program in math provided by the Caribbean Cultural Association], doing the math on a Saturday.” Evelyn also noted that she utilizes the “tutorial program” for her daughter.

Shirley noted that tutoring is a resource she uses for her son:

...if he needs help in anything and we cannot help him I make sure that I find a way and a resource for him. The computer is there and if that cannot [help], I find some tutor. If he needs tutoring, it’s there.

Unlike other families who used the Saturday tutorial program or private tutors, Anita utilized online resources:

We're signed up with Edhelper and Edhelper pretty much mirrors the school curriculum and the work they're doing. So if they get homework or they're doing a topic we can go on to Edhelper and print out that sheet and give them a little bit more exposure to it, because it's not enough in the school.

In contrast to the other parents whose use of outside resources focused on academics, Sunita and Rahul utilized outside resources to focus on non-academic areas in which they believed the curriculum in their daughter's school was lacking. Sunita said:

...like I said music I don't believe is covered well within the school curriculum so we involve them in music classes outside the school. Devika is learning to play the harmonium. And...Cerise we give her art classes outside of school because it's something she enjoys but it's not covered well within her curricula.

Summary of Involvement in the Schooling Process

In sum, analysis of the types of actual involvement parents reported reveal several subjective, objective, and normative-evaluative validity claims. Most parents reported that they engaged in assisting their children with homework completion. A minority indicated that while they monitored the completion of homework, they did not assist their children in completing their homework. A small group also reported that they assigned their children academic work in addition to what was assigned for school. Parents explicitly communicated that they did this because they did not believe that the school

curriculum adequately covered some important areas or because they believed that, regardless of teacher evaluation, their children were lacking in some skill area. All participants interviewed monitored their children's progress in school. For a minority of parents, this was limited to examining report cards and speaking to teachers on conference nights. However, for the majority of parents (n=10), this meant using interim methods such as communicating with teachers by email and using the district's online system. Finally, parents used outside resources to support their children's learning, most often in the form of tutoring.

Question 5: What Obstacles do West Indian Parents report with regard to their Efforts to become Involved in their Children's Schooling Process in the United States?

On the topic of obstacles to involvement in their children's schooling, five themes emerged from the interviews: 1) logistical barriers, 2) lack of familiarity, 3) attitudes towards cultural differences, 4) exclusion from-decision-making, and 5) approach. The endorsement rates of these themes are reported in Table 7. The most frequently endorsed themes were logistical barriers and lack of familiarity.

Overall, most parents identified logistical barriers (defined as lack of time, distance from school, work schedules) as an obstacle to engaging in school-based forms of involvement. A minority of parents noted that logistical barriers were an obstacle to engaging in activities like assisting with homework completion. A little over one-half of the parents interviewed cited lack of familiarity with the U.S. public school system as an obstacle to their involvement in their children's education. Most discussed "lack of familiarity" as an obstacle in relation to accessing resources in the school system. Most parents did not view attitudes toward cultural differences encountered in U.S. public

schools as an obstacle to their involvement. Although a few parents encountered negative attitudes towards cultural differences in the public schools, only one parent explicitly discussed this as an obstacle. A limited number of parents viewed their exclusion from decision-making (e.g., regarding course selection at the high school level) about their children’s education as an obstacle. Finally, implicit in the responses of two parents interviewed was an approach to schools that appears to have functioned as an obstacle to their involvement in their children’s schooling.

Table 7

Themes from Obstacles to Parent Involvement in Schooling

Themes	Endorsement Rate
Logistical barriers	100%
Lack of familiarity	53%
Attitudes towards cultural differences	15%
Exclusion from decision-making	15%
Approach	15%

n = 13

Logistical barriers. Almost all parents (92%) cited logistical barriers (defined as lack of time, distance from school, work schedules) as a barrier to being more actively involved in their children’s schooling. For most parents (76%), logistics was an obstacle only for engaging in school-based form of involvements such as participating in the PTA and volunteering in the classroom.

Asked if she was involved with the PTA associations at her daughters’ schools, Corinne said, “I don’t, I don’t. I do financial contributions and I’ve told teachers, “If you

need anything, call me, I do not have the time.” Asked about obstacles to her involvement in the PTA, she said, “Work schedules, work schedules, my husband and I work very demanding jobs.” Lauren also cited her work schedule as a barrier to school-based forms of involvement, saying, “I can’t, the time for me, the time factor for me is...because Monday alone is my day off, Sunday and Monday that is.” Like other parents, Winnifred cited lack of time as a barrier to engaging in school-based forms of involvement. She noted, “It’s a function of time. I don’t have the time. I’m a single income household and it rests on my shoulders. I’d have to give up something to do that.”

Sunita noted that, although she was a stay-at-home mother and had time, driving distance to one of her daughter’s schools was an obstacle, “Well, because it’s so far, you know, it would take half a day for me just to spend just half an hour in her school.”

Two parents reported logistics as an obstacle to them engaging in other forms of parent involvement, as well. For instance, asked about obstacles to being more involved in her daughter Irina’s education, Lauren discussed how her work schedule impacts her ability to be involved:

My work schedule is bad. Because my work starts from
12 ’o clock in the day till 8 ’o clock at night. I take her to school
and then prepare meals and then go to work. So, I’m kind of lost in
her life from 3 o clock when she gets here until 8 o’clock at night;
I don’t know what she’s doing.

May contrasted the role she played in the life of her first grandchild compared to the ones she is currently raising, noting that she has not had the time to be as involved as

she was with her first grandchild. She explained, “I used to go for her [Brianna’s] PTA because I didn’t have the shop but I didn’t have the time to get involved with these ones...”

May also discussed how her work schedule impacted her ability to monitor her grandchildren’s completion of academic work. She required her grandchildren to read 20 minutes daily because she felt it was important for them and she noted that her evening employment prevented her from monitoring compliance with this rule. She said, “I try to get them to read at least a 20 minutes a day but you know when you’re not there, it’s hard. You call on the phone and dem [them] tell you say dem [them] reading.”

Lack of familiarity. Approximately one-half the parents interviewed (n=7) cited lack of familiarity with the American school system as an obstacle to their involvement in their children’s education. Corinne discussed her lack of familiarity with a basic component of the American public school system, grade levels:

With the first child it definitely impacted us...the information was there. For example I had to learn with Sara, first of all, grades, I can’t even get this 1st grade, 2nd grade thing figured out. I still have to count. What year is she going to graduate if she’s in 11th grade? That is something that is only now part of my vocabulary.

Corinne also talked about how her and her husband’s lack of familiarity with the American school system caused them to miss out on opportunities for one of her daughters:

I had no clue about the American school system. My older daughter Sonia signed up for the IB [International Baccalaureate]

program and we didn't know all the things we had to go through...that teachers [needed to] do the recommendations. The school... they assumed that we had all this information that we knew, but we didn't...

She went on to note that their lack of knowledge negatively impacted Sonia's application to the IB program, "We didn't follow all the steps, we missed deadlines, we missed stuff; we didn't know anything." As a result of the missed deadlines and materials, Sonia did not gain entry into the IB program.

Anita discussed how her lack of familiarity with the American school system impacted her ability to prepare adequately for the academic parts of her son's school experience:

I don't know what to expect. Like at different stages, what's going to go on, or what's required of the students. And if I had been in the system, I would understand it better. You know, I would be prepared for high school right now and I'm not. Like I didn't know that Nathaniel' school had an IB program and what IB was, and if I was an American I would have known what that was.

Anita also discussed her lack of knowledge about the social parts of her son's high school experience:

I probably should know the value of a football game but I don't. And you know I haven't developed my son playing football, you know...the all-American sport. My son has never been to baseball game, or a football game, or a basketball game. Because we're not

socially in tune with that, maybe if we had, maybe we can be more accepting of it.

In the case of Winnifred, her lack of familiarity impacted her ability to be involved with her son's education, particularly in the area of decision-making. She articulated her view that this lack of familiarity partially stemmed from the fact that she sent her son to a private elementary school:

It does impact [me]. I don't know the system and I have tried to work through...and if I knew it I think I could be better. But I don't. And I didn't start out with public school from the get-go. So, I feel handicapped in some ways.

Asked if being an immigrant played a role in her lack of familiarity, Winnifred seemed hesitant to confirm this but agreed upon closer reflection:

I think what impedes me doesn't have to do with the fact that I'm an immigrant, that doesn't affect me. That contradicts what I said earlier, that I don't know the system. But let me not say that I don't know the system because I'm an immigrant. I don't know the system because (long pause) Well, I guess I don't know the system partly because I'm an immigrant...I'm learning the system as I go along.

More specifically, Winnifred believed that her lack of familiarity negatively impacted her ability to make the best choices for her son. She said that her lack of familiarity had probably resulted in her making a bad decision for her son as she bought a house in a

neighborhood that was rezoned, resulting in her son attending a school which she did not hold in high regard:

But I wish I knew the system to be able to help the teachers better, help him better, and choose better for him. Like if I knew that he was going to go to that school, I would never have bought that house. But I didn't know that ...they were going to rezone it that way.

In Cecil's case, when asked about challenges he faces in being involved in his son's education, Cecil noted that there were many things about the American school system that were unfamiliar and difficult for him to understand. For example, he discussed differences in grading:

The school system here is different, I'm used to forms and a totally different level. And...the grade system. When you get reports and the progress reports, how can you fluctuate from a D to an A? When you get a D back in the Caribbean, boy to get that thing back up to a B. (Laughs). If you got a D, there was no way you'd get an A [later]. You went down to a D for a reason and the chances of you getting back up to an A was near impossible. Here I've seen kids come from an F, a D back to an A. I'm like what in the world did you do, you know somebody? How is that possible? Or because of the curve, or some crap like that. Curve? We didn't have any curve.

Attitudes Towards Cultural Differences

Parents were asked if they encountered differential treatment in their interaction with schools because of attitudes regarding culture and whether this functioned as an obstacle to their involvement with their children's education. Thirty percent of parents (n=4) reported that they encountered negative attitudes to cultural differences in the schools. However, only two families reported that this constituted an obstacle to their involvement. Anita explicitly discussed attitudes relating to cultural differences as an obstacle to her involvement in her children's education. Asked what challenges she's experienced, she said:

Well, going back to that culture thing. I mean when you go to the school, you know, the teacher sees you and immediately they form an opinion of you. You don't have that fair shake of being a Caucasian, that they're going to take you seriously. You have to prove your point to them... I think they still have that attitude, you come to America and you need to speak English and understand America.

Anita noted that being a minority "...is definitely a barrier" and that "...you're treated differently, because you have to prove yourself, every time you go in there, what you're saying."

In contrast to Anita, Brian and Nalini expressed that they never felt they had been treated differently by school staff. They said, "Maybe some communities, you know, depends where you live in the United States probably. But where we live we've never experienced that." Although Brian and Nalini did not explicitly say that negative

attitudes to cultural differences were an obstacle to their involvement, their statements about the home-school relationship and an interaction they had with their son's teacher seem to suggest this.

Brian discussed his views (and Nalini concurred) that the school's attitude toward cultural differences was a barrier to a closer home-school relationship and that the relationship would be closer if teachers and schools were more sensitive to cultural differences:

...the teachers should be more involved and more aware of the different type of cultures and their religion and their backgrounds...and be mindful of those when they teach, for example, Christmas. Even though this country was founded on Christianity, today it's a time of diversity. They should, they should put as much emphasis on other religious occasions, like [they do] Christmas.

Nalini noted that when she had concerns about the teaching of information about Christmas and no other religious holidays she felt uncomfortable talking to the teacher about the issue and as a result decided not to approach her. She said, "I did, I did feel uncomfortable to approach them so that was one of the reasons why I pulled back." Asked why she had felt that it was best not to discuss her concerns with the teacher, she had difficulty articulating the source of her discomfort:

You know, I...what answer can I give for that, I just felt that like, I just felt very, I don't know how I'm going to do this, because what

if they say, because they do touch upon it, but I don't want them to, I don't know what I...

Lauren noted that she had encountered differential treatment in different places, including her daughter's schools. However, she did not view it as an obstacle to her involvement:

That has been an experience for me all the time, even on my job...I just don't bother with it.: Static, ...yes, because from the time you open your mouth they know you're not from here, you know and that's basically the major breakdown... you know it's like, you're from somewhere else...Oh, you just come to take piece of the American pie.

Sunita noted that she had encountered negative attitudes relating to cultural differences in the schools and that, in this respect, schools merely reflected what was present in the larger society. Sunita also articulated that she did not allow this to be an obstacle to her involvement in her children's schools:

It's something that's so ingrained...But you know that sometimes you will walk up to somebody and you feel like you wait a little longer than maybe a person who looked different, spoke differently, and it's something that's so ingrained in society. You know you go to a store and suddenly it takes 5 minutes longer [for them] to come and deal with you. So, it's something that is in society everywhere... I don't think it's particular to school, but I don't think the school deals with it any better than society does.

It's not an obstacle to me because I've dealt with it my whole life.

I don't expect any better...you work around it. You know you have to wait 2 minutes longer. You know that's what you have to do.

The rest of the parents interviewed noted that they had never encountered any negative attitudes towards cultural differences or that they had actually encountered positive attitudes. For instance, asked about encounters with differential treatment, Shirley said, "No, no. And I'm being an honest. No, it has never [happened]." Michael said, "No, and again I wouldn't even lie, no, no." Evelyn said that in her experience teachers and school staff "...have respect for the Caribbean culture..." and that she had "heard many teachers say that the West Indian students are very good students, that they are model students."

Exclusion from decision-making. Two families discussed the way decisions were made at school as an obstacle to their involvement in their child's education. They noted that school staff sometimes excluded parents from decisions in which they thought they should be involved. Winnifred discussed her dissatisfaction with an experience she had when her son Alston was in middle school. In essence, her son was allowed to choose, without her input, an academic track for his high school years and choose a less academic track than she wanted him to choose:

This is a big problem I've had with Alston being in public school.

Decisions that are not child appropriate are left to the children.

They say on one hand that they want parents involved but on the other hand they do things quite the opposite...I can remember when Alston was in middle school and he had to make his career

choice... when the time came for that choice, that choice was made completely without me....basically, he completed [a] form.

Based on this experience, when her son was in middle school, Winnifred attempted to become more involved in the decision-making process when he was in high school:

Having learnt my lesson that that's the way it goes, I know when it came down to high school, no it just cannot happen that way. So I called up the high school and requested an appointment with the counselor to select his courses. And she said no, she cannot meet with me, she has to meet with Alston...Essentially she told me that he will make his choices and then he will bring home the form for me to sign. And I said no, you're putting the buggy before the horse. It just cannot be. He is a child. He cannot make choices that are long term for career, he just cannot. I as his parent, I need to be involved. She says, well it is his choice. So I insisted, I said no, not with my child.

Cecil reported having a similar problem with regard to his son:

You know [as] a high school student, my son would come home and say, "Dad, we've figured out what we're doing next year." I said, "We, I didn't have the option. Who sat down with you and chose those courses?" "Oh, the counselor." I said, "No Drew, no. You bring it home, we sit down and we will look into what classes we'll be doing next year."

Cecil articulated that he felt such an experience was different from the way things were back home.

Approach. While the majority of the parents who participated in this study reported a positive relationship with their children's schools, two families described their relationship with their children's schools in overwhelmingly negative terms. Closer examination of their responses revealed a difference in how they approached the relationship with schools. For these two parents, their approach to their children's schools appeared to function as an obstacle for them. In comparison to the other families interviewed, these two families, Lauren and Michael, were the only two to describe their relationship with their children's schools in mostly negative terms. Analysis of their interview responses reveals implicit normative-evaluative claims about the responsibilities of parents in relation to schools, claims that differ from the other families interviewed. In comparison to the other parents interviewed, Michael and Lauren tended to place more responsibility on schools for communicating with them about their children's progress and building a closer relationship. For instance, the majority of parents interviewed believed it was their responsibility to constantly check on their children's progress, using methods like emails to teachers. In contrast, implicit in Lauren's responses was the belief that the school was responsible for contacting her if her child did badly:

I will expect that if a child is not paying attention in school that a teacher will write me a letter or get in touch with me somehow and say this child is not functioning and you need to do something about this or the child did not pass this test; she needs to go to

night school or evening classes or something, and make it mandatory. But they don't do that. It's just like, they do or they don't do, they fail or they don't fail, it doesn't matter.

This is again evident when Lauren said of her daughter's school, "...and I spoke to some of them, they seemed nice and I said, well, if there's a problem with Irina, you can give me a call and they never did." Implicit in Michael's responses was the belief that the school was responsible for contacting him when his son began to experience difficulty. He discussed his interactions with his son's school:

And I say that to say that James fell back in school, wasn't doing his work. [And] there's no one to say his homework wasn't done. They said there were methods, check on line but nobody to call to say, this is a concern, we need to address it [*italics added*]. They waited until we addressed it. And then it became a problem.

Michael went on to discuss his expectation regarding what the school should do with a child struggling academically:

So, if I'm a teacher and I'm teaching in a school and child comes in and something might be off, then I can say, let me pull you aside, see what's going on, maybe meet with the parents, one on one, you know, consultation there, and doing things to say I care.

The school has to provide that.

Asked about the home-school relationship, other families often noted that schools were doing enough and that it was the parents' responsibility to forge a closer

relationship. Cecil's and Shirley's comments about the home-school relationship reflect the views of most of the parents interviewed. Cecil said:

And the majority of the time it's the parents who don't reach out to the school...which teacher doesn't want to know about a student's parent? But they don't have time to pick up that phone and call you. It's up to you as a parent. So when you ask me if the relationship should be closer, yes it should, but you know what, parents need to make the move. They need to be a little more proactive.

Asked if there should be a closer home-school relationship, Shirley said:

Yeah, there should be. You know parents should communicate more with the teachers. I mean [with] Alex's school, the teachers, if you need them to, then they'll communicate with you. You as a parent have to make the first step, I think. And then the teachers will follow.

In contrast, when she was asked if there should be a closer home-school relationship and how it should be achieved, Lauren appeared to assign the school more responsibility in building this relationship:

Yes, of course, of course...The teacher should really and truly when they're marking the papers put a little footnote on each paper and when they go up to the school office, write a little note to the parent or send some comment to the parent that you need to pay attention to the child, this child is slipping or whatever.

Michael, although he discussed the logistical limitations schools faced in attempting to connect with parents, also appeared to assign the school more responsibility in building a closer home-school relationship:

...it would be a nice thing to say, this is John Doe from Smith Middle School, just checking in to say if you have any questions, just let me know, James had a wonderful week this week. Now that would be a wow-wow-wow. But mark you they might have 46 kids, they might be dealing with 50 classes, to make a call is not in their budget.

Michael also assigned the school more responsibility for engaging parents in school-based forms of involvement. He said, "But I don't think they try to get the parents involved in as much as we should. Fundraisers, back home, you're going to have a fundraiser, almost whenever necessary."

Summary of Obstacles to Parent Involvement in the Schooling Process

Overall, analysis of parents' responses about obstacles to involvement in their children's schooling revealed several implicit and explicit subjective and normative-evaluative validity claims. The majority of parents interviewed openly discussed logistical barriers (e.g., work schedules, distance from school) as an obstacle to engaging in school-based forms of involvement. However, very few parents cited logistical barriers as obstacles to engaging in activities like assisting with homework completion and homework monitoring. Approximately one-half of the parents interviewed cited lack of familiarity with the American school system as an obstacle to their involvement in their children's education. Most noted that because of this lack of familiarity they had

difficulty in accessing resources available in the school system. Attitudes towards cultural differences were explicitly discussed as an obstacle by only one parent. Most parents did not view this as an obstacle. Two parents explicitly discussed their exclusion from decision-making about their children's education as an obstacle. This appeared to be based on normative-evaluative claims about the roles of parents in the decision-making for children's academic careers, that is, that parents should play an active role in making decisions in their children's education.

Finally, the implicit normative-evaluative claims (that in the parent-school relationship the schools bore more responsibility than they did) in the responses of two families appeared to have shaped the way they approached their children's schools. In turn, this seems to have made it more difficult for them to have a positive relationship with their children's schools. Interestingly, while these two parents' expectations were probably normative (given the responsibility of schools for monitoring student's progress and notifying parents if there are issues), this approach does not seem to have served these two parents well.

Summary

In summary, parents were asked questions addressing five areas: 1) desired outcomes of public education and views of public schools in the U.S., 2) expectations of public schools, 3) their beliefs regarding parent involvement, specifically progress monitoring and school-based involvement, 4) the nature of their involvement in their children's schooling, and 5) obstacles to their involvement in their children's schooling. A semi-structured interview protocol that provided the researcher with flexibility to probe

interviewee responses allowed for a thorough examination of interviewee perceptions of these areas.

Parents' views of the outcomes of public education in the U.S. yielded several normative-evaluative validity claims that were explicitly articulated in the interviews. Parents expressed instrumental views about the desired outcomes of education, noting that they saw their children's current schooling as preparation for college, work, and life; a minority of parents endorsed the view that education plays a role beyond the preparation of life and work. Parents also strongly believed that education was important to their children's future.

Asked about their views of public education in the U.S., interviewees articulated several subjective validity claims. Participants frankly expressed their views that the quality of public education in the U.S. is not as academically rigorous as education in the Caribbean. On the other hand, most parents viewed teachers as a positive and important part of the public school process. Parents who discussed teachers in positive terms noted that they were committed to their children's education and responsive to parents' concerns. The small number of parents (n=2) who discussed teachers in negative terms noted that they felt teachers sometimes did not communicate with parents about unsatisfactory student progress. Parents also discussed their views of what they perceived to be many negative behaviors by students in American schools. They attributed these behavioral issues for the most part to the family environment. Parents overwhelmingly viewed public education in the U.S. positively, partly because of the resources available, offering their children opportunities that would lead to long term success. Finally, only when asked did parents discuss racism as an issue. Parent

responses revealed that the majority of them did not perceive racism as an issue that would significantly impact the value of their children's education and their ability to succeed.

In addition, to perceptions of schooling, participants were asked about their expectations of U.S. public schools. In general, parent expectations centered on academics, morals and values, teachers, behavior, and diversity of the curriculum. Parent responses revealed several explicit normative-evaluative validity claims. Participants explicitly expressed their belief that academics are the central concern of schooling and that, for the most part, academics should focus on the basics (reading, writing, and mathematics). In reference to morals and values and behavior, a minority of the participants expressed their belief that they are responsible for imparting these to their children and not the schools. These same parents believed that schools should merely reinforce what has been taught at home. On the topic of teachers, parents articulated their expectations, noting that teachers should be caring, responsible for monitoring student progress and assisting students, and communicate to parents about student progress. Finally, a small number of parents endorsed the belief that the curriculum of U.S. schools needs to be broadened to take into account topics like different religions and different parts of the world, and different cultures.

Parents were also asked about their beliefs about two types of parent involvement, progress monitoring and school-based forms of involvement. In this area, parents explicitly articulated normative-evaluative and subjective validity claims. All parents expressed the view that it was important to communicate with schools about and to actively monitor their children's progress in school. Also, all parents expressed the view

that school-based forms of involvement were important, although few of them engaged in such activities, largely because of logistical issues. Finally, a majority of parents expressed the belief that it was important to teach their children behaviors that would lead to school success (e.g., paying attention in class).

In addition to questions about their beliefs about parent involvement, participants were also asked about the types of non-school based involvement in which they engaged. Analysis the types of actual involvement participants reported reveal several subjective, objective, and normative-evaluative validity claims. Most parents reported assisting their children with homework completion, although some parents noted that they monitored homework completion but did not assist their children with it. A minority of parents also reported that they assigned their children academic work in addition to school-assigned work because of perceived gaps in the curriculum or weaknesses in their children's skills. All participants interviewed monitored their children's progress in school. Although a few parents did this only through the review of report cards and parent-teacher conference nights, most also used interim methods like communicating with teachers by email. Finally, most participants interviewed provided outside resources to support their children's learning, consisting most often of tutoring.

Finally, parents were asked about obstacles to their involvement in their children's schooling. Examination of participant responses revealed several implicit and explicit subjective and normative-evaluative validity claims. The majority of parents interviewed, identified logistical barriers (e.g., work schedules, distance from school) as an obstacle to engaging in school-based forms of involvement. However, very few parents cited logistical barriers as obstacles to engaging in activities like assisting with

homework completion and homework monitoring. Approximately one-half of the parents interviewed cited lack of familiarity with American schooling as an obstacle. Parents noted that their lack of familiarity impacted their ability to access resources available in the school system. Most parents did not view attitudes towards cultural differences as an obstacle to their involvement in their children's education. In fact, only one parent articulated that this was an obstacle. Two parents, because of their beliefs about the role they should play in their children's education, viewed their exclusion from decision-making about their children's education as an obstacle to involvement.

Finally, the implicit normative-evaluative claims (that in the parent-school relationship the schools is responsible for communicating with parents about lack of student progress) in the responses of two families appeared to have influenced their relationship with their children's schools negatively. In comparison to other families in the study, these two parents' beliefs seemed to have contributed to negative interactions with their children's schools.

Chapter Five

Discussion

A review of the literature on home-school relationships and parental involvement indicates that understanding the expectations and understandings that families have about schools and how they define and perceive their roles in their children's education is important to improving such relationships (e.g., SEDL, 2002). Moreover, the review of the literature revealed a paucity of this information relative to immigrant parents in general and to West Indian families in particular. Using interviews with 13 families, the present study examined West Indian parents' and caregivers' understandings of the American public schooling process, as well as their expectations for schooling and the roles they play in their children's education. Several themes emerged from interviews with families regarding these areas.

This chapter summarizes the results of the current study and examines the findings within the context of the salient literature. It must be noted that, due to the paucity of research relating to West Indian immigrants and the schooling process, the body of research with which the findings from this study could be compared was quite small. The chapter is organized according to the research questions addressed in the study. Following a discussion of noteworthy findings, their implications for school personnel are examined, limitations of the study are reviewed, and suggestions for future research are offered.

Desired Outcomes of Education

Analysis of participant responses about the desired outcomes of education indicated that they expected their children's schooling to prepare them for college, work, life, and preparation beyond work and life. Participants explicitly discussed their expectation that their children's public school education would provide them with a foundation that would help prepare them for college. In addition, they believed that their children's education was critical to obtaining future employment. They discussed education in terms of how it would help prepare their children for life, suggesting that it would help them with practical skills, such as managing finances. Overall, participants viewed their children's education as critical to their long term success, whether they pursued postsecondary education or not. These findings align with previous researchers' findings which indicated that Latino and West Indian parents view education in very pragmatic ways, that is, they view schooling principally in relation to its role in attaining specific higher education credentials, and long term success (Delgado-Gaitan, & Trueba, 1991; Nehau, 1999; Rhamie & Hallam, 2002). These findings also fit with Ogbu's (1983) theory that immigrant or voluntary minorities have an instrumental approach to schooling; that is, they view education primarily as offering skills and knowledge that lead to long term success in their new home country.

Views of Public Schooling in the U.S.

With regard to parental views of public schooling in the U.S., parents most often discussed academic standards and expectations, teachers, student behaviors, and their beliefs about the opportunities and resources American public schools offered their children. Overall, parents' comments reflected their belief that academic standards and

expectations in American public schools were not as rigorous as were academics in the Caribbean. In addition, some expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of homework assigned by schools, sometimes noting that it was a missed opportunity to reinforce skills covered during the school day. In contrast to concerns about the curriculum in American public schools, many parents discussed teachers in mostly positive terms, noting that they engaged in open communication regarding student progress and were generally very committed to the education of students. However, two parents did report mostly negative perceptions of teachers, commenting on their lack of availability and failure to communicate with parents when there were issues relating to student progress.

On the other hand, despite mostly positive perceptions of teachers, many parents spoke in overwhelmingly negative terms about student behavior. For example, they strongly believed that students in U.S. public schools engaged in high levels of disruptive behavior. Participants generally perceived teachers as doing the best they could to manage student behavior, and attributed student behavior problems to the home environment. Parents' most positive comments centered on the opportunities and resources provided by public schools, speaking in very admiring and appreciative terms about the opportunities afforded by the American public school system. For instance, some parents noted that the American public school system afforded the opportunity for every child to attain long term success, which was sometimes not available to every child (particularly those with learning difficulties or from poorer backgrounds) in participants' home countries.

The finding in this study that most parents (11 of the 13 families interviewed) reported satisfaction with levels of home-school communication, specifically teacher

communication regarding student progress, differs from prior research on West Indian parents in England where Crozier (2005) reported that a major source of dissatisfaction for parents with schools was the unwillingness of school personnel to communicate frankly with parents regarding students' academic and behavioral progress.. Similarly, in a study in England Windrass and Nunes (2003) found that school personnel did not communicate enough about students' academic progress or have mechanisms in place to do so. One possible reason for this difference in findings could relate to the different contexts within which the research was conducted (England vs. the U.S.). This finding also differed from research with low SES families in the U.S. from a variety of ethnic backgrounds(African American, White, and , Latino parents). (e.g., Hayes, 1992; Lawson, 2003; O'Connor, 2001) which found that a majority of these parents perceived schools as being uncommunicative and unresponsive to parent concerns and to hold negative views of their children; in addition, parents in these groups were found to be generally mistrustful of schools (Lawson, 2003; O'Connor, 2001). Perhaps the fact that the sample in the present study consisted of mostly middle-SES parents contributed to the difference in findings. In addition, it could be argued that another reason for positive perceptions of home-school communication is that the parents in this sample who perceived schools as communicative carried more than their fair share of the burden in the home-school relationship. Since the parents took on most of the responsibility for initiating and maintaining communication, leaving schools with the relatively minimal role of responding to parent concerns, it's unsurprising that they had positive perceptions of schools in the area of home-school communication.

Findings in this study about parents' positive views of the opportunities and resources offered by public schools such as equipment and free camps found in this study support other researchers' findings with West Indian families (Nehau, 1999). This finding is unsurprising as the parents in this study were products of the education system of their home countries and used it as their frame of reference. These are countries where the education systems do not have as many resources (e.g., a variety of extracurricular activities and extra assistance for struggling students) as do many American schools. In addition, the education systems in these countries sort children as young as eleven, thus giving only a small number of children the chance to study for admission to higher education. In fact, some participants openly discussed their appreciation of the fact that the American public education system afforded opportunities to a larger number of children and the chance for students with varying abilities to succeed. These findings also fit with the framework of Ogbu's (2003) cultural-ecological theory which argues that immigrants' frame of reference in evaluating educational opportunities and resources in the U.S. is "back home," while involuntary minorities often compare their schooling resources and opportunities to those of White Americans.

While parents discussed the opportunities and resources provided by public schools in positive terms, they also spoke very negatively about behavior issues in U.S. public schools. These findings align with those from research with Latino families in the U.S. and Asian families in Canada and the U.S. (Delgado-Gaitan, & Trueba, 1991; McNall, Dunnigan, & Mortimer, 1994; Zhang, Ollilla, & Harvey, 1998). These findings seem sensible when one considers that the education systems in the home countries of the

study participants stress strict obedience to authority and often use corporal punishment to enforce this obedience.

Racism and the Value of Education

Participants were also asked if racism impacted their children's ability to derive full benefit from their education, and if so, how. The majority of parents acknowledged racism as an issue in the U.S. and talked to their children about it; however, they viewed it as an issue that would be overcome by their children's attainment of high levels of education. A minority of the sample did not discuss racism as an issue with their children, mostly because they did not view it as an issue that would affect their children or, in the case of one family, because of their family composition (the family was composed of multiple ethnicities and the parents did not view this as a topic that was appropriate for discussion).

Findings in this study related to racism were similar to those of a study with East Asian parents (Schneider & Lee, 1990) which found that parents perceived racism as an issue for their children but viewed it as an obstacle that could be overcome with education. The present findings also fit with Ogbu's ideas (2003) about the views of voluntary minorities regarding racism, that is, that they do not see it as a major obstacle to their success in the new country. Ogbu (2003) noted that voluntary minorities, (in contrast to involuntary minorities) place great faith in school credentials as the route to achieving the "American Dream". Moreover, voluntary minorities do not have the same history of seeing community members obtain education that does not result in concomitant financial and social success as involuntary minorities did during the pre-Civil Rights movement in America.

Expectations about the American Schooling Process

Parents' expectations about the American schooling process centered on academics, behaviors, moral values, teachers, and diversity of the curriculum. In general, parents believed that the top priority of schooling should be academics. They believed that schools should focus most of their time on teaching academics, as opposed to investing time in an area such as behavior where they believed that schools should play only a supportive role, merely reinforcing what was taught at home. However, while they felt schools should play only a supportive role in the teaching of behavior, they clearly believed that schools should play no role in the teaching of moral values. Another focus of parent expectations related to teachers. Parents expected teachers to be committed to student learning and to communicate with parents regarding issues in student progress. Given the perspective of many of the parents that academics should be the primary focus of schools, it is not surprising that only a minority expressed the opinion that schools needed to diversify their curricula to teach more about other parts of the world, different ethnic groups, and different religions. The priority placed on academics by parents fits with other research (Roopnarine, in press) that also indicates that West Indian parents believe in a primary focus on academics within the schooling process.

Overall, in this sample, parents believed that academics should be the focus of schooling, expected teachers to care about student learning and to communicate regarding student progress, and, for the most part, seemed unconcerned about whether the school curriculum reflected their specific cultural experiences. These findings were consistent with previous research with West Indian families (e.g., Crozier, 2005; Windrass &

Nunes, 2003) in which parents expressed dissatisfaction with levels of home-school communication but did not identify diversity as a curriculum issue. This is in contrast to research with African American families relating to American schools which indicates that parent expectations focus on teachers who care about students and curriculum that reflects African American experiences (Ogbu, 2003; Thompson, 2003).

While the parents in this sample believed academics should be the central mission of schooling, research with some low SES African American and White parents indicates that these parents believe the school's responsibilities should go beyond a focus on academics (e.g., Lawson, 2003; O'Connor, 2001) and provide resources such as GED classes to support families. In a National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) study of parental expectations of the schooling process (Christenson, Hurley, & Sheridan, 1997) that used a sample of parents from different SES backgrounds, the authors also found that parents expected schools to do more than focus on academics. Parents in that study reported that they would like schools to offer activities that helped them understand school policies, knowledge to help them negotiate the schooling process, and to provide specific strategies on how to support their children's education. The fact that findings about expectations differ from other research (e.g., NASP, 1997) makes sense when one considers parent experiences in their countries of origin. As many parents in this study indicated, schools in their countries of origin lacked many of the resources available in U.S. public schools. However, schools in those countries still provided a rigorous academic education. Thus while parents were extremely appreciative of these resources when they were provided by U.S. public schools, they did not view them as essential to the schooling process or expect them to be provided

It is likely that participants' belief that academics should be the focus of schooling also illustrates that their expectations were shaped by their experiences in their country of origin. In education systems in the participants' countries of origin, academics are the central focus. In addition, as parents often noted when discussing behavior issues in U.S. schools, schools in their prior home countries were places where strict rules for behavior were the norm and deviations from this were punished, mostly with corporal punishment. Moreover, these educational systems (as parents themselves sometimes communicated) are not required to educate children with a variety of behavioral and emotional needs as U.S. public schools are. Thus, the parents' expectation that schools would focus only on academics and not behavior makes sense.

In addition to experiences in the country of origin, participants' position as immigrants to a new country where they hope for their children to succeed may also help to explain their belief that academics should be the central mission of schooling. Ogbu (2003) noted that voluntary minorities have a clear understanding of schools as "delegate agencies," that is institutions responsible for teaching children the "knowledge, skills, values, behaviors, and language they will need as adults to qualify for and be rewarded in the workforce" (p.47). Voluntary minorities also believe that the skills and knowledge their children will obtain in school are crucial to gaining the credentials needed to access the "American Dream". This instrumental view of schooling has been found in research on other immigrant parents (e.g., Ogbu, 2003; Schneider & Lee, 1990; Thompson, 2003). In addition, this view of schooling helps to explain why most parents interviewed did not find it important for curriculum to be diverse and address their own cultural experiences. It was not that parents did not find it important for their children to be familiar with their

cultural background; in fact many of them openly emphasized the importance of this and how they ensured that familiarity. However, since for parents interviewed the principal purpose of schooling was to impart the skills and knowledge needed to achieve success in American society, curricula on their cultural experiences was not considered essential.

Beliefs about Parental Roles in Children's Schooling

Parents were asked about the roles they should play in two specific aspects of their children's schooling, progress monitoring and school-based involvement (e.g., volunteering in the classroom, PTA membership). Parents overwhelmingly agreed that it was important to monitor their children's progress in school and saw this as central to their role as parents. Similarly, they also believed that it was important to be actively involved in their child's school, often noting that involvement was an opportunity to motivate their children. Interestingly, questioning in this area revealed that most parents also believed that teaching their children about behaviors important to school success (e.g., the importance of paying attention in class and time management) was an important part of their role. The findings in this area are inconsistent with some research findings with Latino immigrant parents (e.g., Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001; Delgado Gaitan & Trueba, 1991; Valdes, 1996) which found that those parents believed their primary role in their children's schooling was to provide for basic needs and to teach family norms, but that they did not believe it was important to initiate communication with their children's school or to engage in school-based forms of involvement. However, the present findings did fit with two other studies with small samples of Latino parents (Paloma McCaleb, 1994; Perez-Carreon, Drake & Calabrese-Barton, 2005) which found that those parents believed it was important to take an active role in their children's education,

particularly by monitoring progress and engaging in school-based forms of involvement, such as volunteering in classrooms. It's important to note that the latter findings come from two studies with very small samples. In addition, the difference in findings with Latino families may be partly explained by differences in samples such as educational background and acculturation level. Specifically, it's difficult to compare findings across studies because studies use samples from different parts of the Spanish speaking world and families, even though they may be classified as low SES in the United States, may have high levels of education in their countries of origin and thus be comfortable interacting with formal institutions such as schools.

Involvement in the Schooling Process

Although parents overwhelmingly articulated the belief that school-based forms of involvement were important, they were not very active in that regard. In contrast, they were very active in non school-based forms of involvement, such as assisting their children with homework completion, progress monitoring using report cards and conferences as well as emails and phone calls to teachers, providing outside resources to assist their children in school, and assigning academic work to remediate perceived skill deficits or gaps in the curriculum. Their non-involvement in school-based activities, despite their expressed belief that it is important to be involved in their children's education reflect a decision by these parents to, given the time available to them, invest that time based on those things that were most likely to have an impact. For example, participating in the PTA or volunteering in the classroom would likely have little impact a child's education, especially when compared to activities such as reviewing homework. In general, these findings align well with research on American parents, which shows that

the most common forms of parental involvement are monitoring homework completion, checking homework completion, and reviewing report cards (Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Patrikakou & Weissberg, 2000). On the other hand, in his ethnographic research with working class and middle class families in Shaker Heights, Ohio, Ogbu (2003) found that parents often did not supervise their children to ensure that homework was completed. Parents in his study cited lack of time because of employment obligations as the reason for their lack of supervision.

Like the African American families in Shaker Heights, research with Latino immigrants (e.g., Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001; Delgado Gaitan & Trueba, 1999; Hayes, 1992) has found that these parents do not assist students with homework or engage in additional academic activities to complement the school curriculum, often because of language barriers and lack of education on the part of the parents. However, a small body of ethnographic research with East Asian parents (e.g., McNall, Dunigan, & Mortimer, 1994; Schneider & Lee, 1990; Zhang, Ollila & Harvey, 1998) has found that these parents manage time outside of school to ensure enough time is spent on academics. In addition, Schneider & Lee (1990) found that the East Asian parents in their sample, monitored the completion of homework, assigned additional academic work, and often provided outside academic resources such as tutoring lessons for their children. The stress on home-based involvement, parent assigned academic work, and provision of outside academic resources aligns with the findings about the parent involvement activities of the participants in this study.

The present findings also fit with prior research regarding West Indian populations (e.g., Nehau, 199; Rhamie & Hallam, 2002; Roopnarine, in press) that shows

that these parents are involved with their children's education outside of school, including assisting with the completion of homework, engaging in educational activities at home, assigning additional academic work, and communicating regularly with schools regarding children's academic progress and behavior, and the provision of outside resources such as tutoring to assist children. Finally, these findings fit with Ogbu's description of some of the behavior of voluntary minority parents who he reports as providing supervision at home to ensure that academic work is completed (Ogbu & Simons, 1998).

Obstacles to Parent Involvement in the Schooling Process

Participating parents overwhelmingly cited logistical barriers (defined as lack of time, distance from school, and work schedules) to parent involvement in the schooling process. In addition, approximately one-half of these parents identified their lack of familiarity with the American school system as an obstacle. Many of the participants did not themselves participate in the K-12 education system in the U.S., which probably was a factor in their lack of familiarity with U.S. schools. Parents who cited lack of familiarity as an obstacle explained that this mostly impacted them by hindering their ability to access resources such as programs for their children. Two parents identified attitudes towards cultural differences as an obstacle to their involvement. Four other parents identified attitudes toward cultural differences as an issue, but did not see it as an obstacle to their involvement, noting that this was an issue they dealt with in society and that schools were not an exception. Negative attitudes towards cultural differences have also been reported by Latino parents (Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001; Hayes; 1992).

In addition to attitudes toward cultural differences, a minority of parents (two) found that exclusion from decision-making was an obstacle to their involvement in their children's education. The two parents who identified exclusion from decision-making as an obstacle came into conflict with their children's schools because of different normative beliefs they held about the role parents should play in academic planning for high school-aged students. Specifically, these parents strongly believed that they should play a key role in these decisions and this conflicted with the perspective of the student services staff at their children's schools.

Finally, analysis of interview data suggested that the way two parents approached their child's school probably functioned as an obstacle to their involvement. These parents assigned most of the responsibility for communicating about student progress and building a home-school relationship to the school. For instance, they believed it was the responsibility of the school to contact them when their child was having difficulty in school. It is important to note that if one examines the home-school literature, the beliefs of these two families are reasonable. Recommendations for best practices in home-school collaboration say that *schools* are responsible for encouraging family participation (e.g., Adams & Christenson, 2000; NASP, 2005). However, because of the failure of their children's schools to perform basic parts of such a role in the development of home-school relationships, these families experienced a more negative relationship with their children's schools. In contrast, the other families in the sample experienced positive home-school relationships because they assumed responsibility for much of what (based on what the home-school literature suggests) was supposed to be the school's role.

A connection between parents' beliefs about where responsibility lies in the home-school relationship and the quality of that relationship has also been found in research with Latino immigrant parents. Chrispeels and Rivero (2001) and Hayes (1992) found that parents' beliefs helped to shape the relationship they had with their children's schools. Specifically, parents who believed that the responsibility for communication rested with the schools and that they had little power over what happened at school, were less involved in their children's education and overall felt alienated from their children's schools.

Finally, the small body of research relating to the relationships between immigrants and schools makes it difficult to draw conclusions about obstacles to immigrant parent involvement. However, lack of familiarity with the American school system attended by their children, commonly mentioned by parents as an obstacle to involvement aligns with some previous research (Perez-Carreon, Drake, and Calabrese-Barton, 2005). These studies found that parents' lack of familiarity with the American school system prevented them from understanding processes such as entry into special education and how to effectively advocate for their children when there were issues with teachers, and lack of familiarity with content covered in the curriculum prevented them from assisting their children with homework completion.

Summary of Findings

Overall, participants in this sample reported positive perceptions of teachers and resources in American public schools. Their expectations of schooling centered mostly on academics. In addition, parents had positive expectations of the rewards that education would bring for their children. Parents reported that school-based involvement

was important, but reported very low levels of such involvement. On the other hand, they reported very high levels of home-based involvement in their children's education. Finally, parents reported logistical limitations (e.g., time, schedule conflicts) as major barriers to parent involvement. In addition, some parents reported attitudes towards cultural differences and exclusion from decision-making as obstacles to involvement. Finally, parents who had a more passive approach to the home-school relationship appeared to have more negative relationships with their children's schools. In sum, parents experiences with educational systems in their countries of origin and their perspective as immigrants in a destination country appeared to shape a great deal of their perceptions and expectations of schooling.

Implications of Results for School Personnel

Research shows that home-school collaboration and parental involvement play an important role in successful academic outcomes for students (e.g., Christenson, 1991; Halle, Kurtz-Costes, & Mahoney, 1997). In addition, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), that is significantly reshaping many areas of American education, requires schools to develop ways to involve parents in efforts to improve schools (NCLB, 2001). Thus it is incumbent on schools to improve home-school communication. Among school personnel, school psychologists are uniquely positioned to play a role in the process of improving linkages between home and school. This is evident in the NASP position statement on home-school collaboration which recommends that school psychologists work to identify effective strategies for home-school collaboration and notes that "successful home-school collaboration is dependent upon educators, families, and

community members working together to understand each other's perspectives....”
(NASP, 2005, p. 4).

Although a great deal of additional research is needed, this exploratory study may offer school personnel at least a preliminary, basic understanding how one immigrant group understands schooling, and their relationship with schools, particularly as there is considerable variance in how different cultural groups view schooling and their role in the schooling process. It is important for school personnel to understand that not all families understand their role in schools in the same way and to understand the contributions that these parents can and often do make to their children's education. For instance, in this study, while many parents engaged in very little school-based involvement, they played very active roles in their children's education through such methods as assisting with homework completion, monitoring homework completion, monitoring progress through online systems, and providing outside resources to assist their children academically. Furthermore, in designing parent involvement programs, it is important to understand why diverse groups of parents are not actively involved in the school building and target these issues. For instance, the results from this study indicate that even when language barriers are not present, as in the case of families from the English-speaking Caribbean, immigrant parents' lack of familiarity with the American school system can function as a significant obstacle to their involvement. This would suggest that it is critical for schools to offer parent education programs for parents new to the U.S.

In addition, the parents in this study who reported distant and negative relationships with their children's school had a passive approach to schooling. For

example, they believed the onus was on schools to update them on student progress. In contrast, parents who took on most of the responsibility for communicating with school personnel reported very successful relationships with schools. While it's important for schools to recognize and assume their responsibility in developing and maintaining home-school relationships, perhaps parent involvement programs that target parent role beliefs would empower parents to be more involved in their children's education. In fact, there is some evidence to support this. For instance, Hayes (1992) found that parent role beliefs can function as an obstacle to parental involvement and another study found that a parent involvement program that targeted parents' role beliefs was successful at increasing involvement (Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001)..

Almost half (six out of thirteen) of the parents reported encountering negative attitudes toward cultural differences in their children's schools. Two of them believed that those negative attitudes represented an obstacle to their involvement in schools. However, the other four parents dismissed it as an issue that they were used to encountering in daily life. Yet, if school personnel hope to build strong home-school partnerships, it's important that all families, regardless of cultural background, are treated with respect in schools (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

Though this was a small sample, some of the participants' experiences illustrate that some families, partly because of experiences with the education system in their country of origin, bring very different expectations and beliefs to the schooling process. For instance, two parents reported that they felt excluded from important decisions for their high school-aged children. One parent, in particular, encountered conflicts with student services personnel in this area. Examining the responses of these parents, it is

clear that they and the school had very different beliefs about the role of a parent in the schooling process. Thus, it is important for school personnel working with diverse families to be aware that they may not always have the same assumptions as do other families about their role in the schooling process.

Finally, it is important for school personnel to have a basic grasp of the understandings and expectations parents from diverse backgrounds have of schooling as this may impact parent support of certain best-practice interventions in schools. For instance, some schools, often through the use of programs such as Positive Behavior Support (PBS), are increasingly devoting resources to the management of student behavior. For such programs to be implemented successfully, they require support from all stakeholders within the school district. However, the results of this study indicated that these parents did not see behavior management as an important part of schools' missions. Thus, it might be important to understand parent beliefs about schooling in order to effectively target these beliefs and inform parents about the important relationship between behavior and academic climate and performance.

Limitations of the Current Study

Through the interview method, several research questions were asked of 13 West Indian families residing in the Tampa Bay, Florida area. Participants responded to questions regarding their views of public schools in the U.S., their expectations of the schooling process, the roles they play in their children's education, and obstacles to their involvement in their children's education. Several strategies were employed to increase the likelihood that valid findings and interpretations were advanced. However, not all threats to the validity of the research could be controlled. Thus, several limitations to the

present study must be considered when interpreting the results and making suggestions for future research and practice.

First, there is limited generalizability of the results due to the small sample size and the geographic limitations of the population sampled. In addition, because participation in the study was voluntary, the sample may not represent the full diversity of West Indian immigrants in the U.S., or even in Florida or the Tampa Bay area. In fact, an examination of the sample reveals that it consisted primarily of middle to high SES participants and that the participants did not represent all the islands of the Caribbean.

Another issue with qualitative research based on transcribed data is the accuracy of transcription. To address this issue, a procedure of member checking was used. Participants were provided a reasonable opportunity to comment on the study data by reviewing a transcript of their interview. A follow-up meeting or telephone call was scheduled with participants to verify the transcript. Eleven of 13 participants (84%) took the opportunity to review the transcript. None of the participants reported problems with the veracity of the transcripts.

Limitations also exist with regard to errors associated with bias and subjectivity on the part of the researcher in interpreting the interview data. Huberman & Miles (1998) pointed out that data analysis in qualitative research is often difficult because it is based on the subjective interpretation of the research. In this study, a reflective journal was utilized to record perceptions of the researcher that might bias data analysis. Examination of the researcher's reflective journal during the interview analysis stage revealed that during the interview process the researcher did not closely examine (through more extensive questioning) class biases the participants may have held about

the family background of some students in the public school system. However, since this was not directly relevant to the questions of interest in the study, the absence of follow-up on this issue is not thought to have significantly impacted the findings of the study.

Another method used to lessen the impact of researcher bias, and specifically to improve the reliability of the codes used in the study, a professional peer of the researcher was used to estimate inter-rater reliability. Briefly (see Chapter 3 for a more detailed description of this process), the researcher and another graduate student coded several interview transcripts independently to develop a codebook for the study. Inter-rater agreement was computed for this process, indicating that agreement between the researcher and the peer was approximately 90%.

Another limitation of the current study is specific to studies that rely solely on interview data, which is the subjectivity of the responses from the participants, particularly because of social desirability. In responding to interview questions, participants may have attempted to portray themselves in a favorable light rather than sharing authentic experiences. Consistency checks (reviewing the transcripts for inconsistencies within individual participants' responses) were used to assist in ascertaining the veracity of subjects' responses and revealed no inconsistencies in participants' responses. However, this process would not ensure that participants' expressions were not influenced by social desirability, but merely that they were consistent in the views and opinions expressed.

Suggestions for Future Research

The purpose of the current exploratory study was to examine the perceptions and expectations that West Indian parents hold regarding the schooling process in the U.S.

and the roles they play in their children's education. An additional purpose was to examine whether some theoretical ideas (e.g., Ogbu's work with voluntary minorities) and qualitative findings with other immigrant groups were consistent with the findings of this study of a sample of West Indian parents. It is hoped that the results of this study can be used to guide future research and practice and contribute to a better understanding of the needs of immigrant parents. This study was one of the few qualitative studies to investigate West Indian parents' perceptions of the schooling process and their role in their children's education. Although the findings of this study yield some interesting information for practitioners working in districts with populations of West Indian or other immigrant groups or those interested in designing home-school collaboration programs, it is necessary to replicate these findings with a more representative sample of West Indian parents before broad generalizations can be made about the perceptions of West Indian parents in the U.S.. Since this study was conducted with a small sample in the Tampa Bay area, it may not be representative of all West Indians in the Tampa Bay area, in Florida, or the wider U.S. Given its proximity to the Caribbean and its access to immigrants from that region, research of this nature is particularly important for the State of Florida. Replication of these findings with a larger sample of West Indians living in Florida, as well as elsewhere in the U.S. would help clarify and add to the findings of this study.

In spite of the limited generalizability, this study was successful in capturing the perceptions and beliefs of at least a small group of immigrant parents regarding U.S. public schools. Given the paucity of research on this topic, and the importance of understanding parent perspectives in order to improve home-school communication, it is

suggested that further research with this immigrant group and other immigrant groups be conducted.

Moreover, it would be beneficial for this research to use ethnographic approaches that combine parent and teacher interviews as well as observations at schools in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between immigrants and U.S. public schools. For districts with large immigrant populations experiencing a lack of home-school communication, this kind of research would be particularly helpful prior to designing home-school collaboration programs.

Finally, regarding Ogbu's (1984) cultural ecological theory that looks at community forces, there is a small body of research that has been conducted abroad to examine this theory. However, given how influential and widely cited the theory is, surprisingly little research has been conducted within the U.S. to test it. Thus it is strongly suggested that more qualitative and ethnographic research be conducted with variety of immigrant groups in the U.S. in order to examine this theory.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Study Description for Association Members/Community Members

A graduate student at the University of South Florida is conducting a study of West Indian parents' and guardians' perceptions of the public schooling process in the U.S. She's looking for West Indian families who have lived in the U.S. for at least 2 years, are permanent residents or U.S. citizens, and are willing to meet with her on two separate occasions for approximately 90 minutes each time. She's interested in talking with you about your perceptions of the American education system, your beliefs about education, and things you do to support your child's education.

USF GRADUATE STUDENT SEEKS WEST INDIAN FAMILIES FOR RESEARCH STUDY

- ✓ LIVED IN THE USA FOR AT LEAST 2 YEARS?
- ✓ CHILD IN PUBLIC SCHOOL (K-12TH GRADE)?
- ✓ WILLING TO COMMIT TO TWO MEETINGS?

IF YOU ANSWERED "YES" TO THESE THREE
QUESTIONS...

YOU CAN CONTRIBUTE GREATLY TO OUR
UNDERSTANDING OF THE EXPECTATIONS AND
EXPERIENCES WEST INDIAN PARENTS HAVE ABOUT
SCHOOLING FOR THEIR CHILDREN IN THE U.S.!

PLEASE CONTACT SUSAN FORDE FOR MORE
INFORMATION

646-734-8229

FORDE@COEDU.USF.EDU

Appendix C: Demographic Questionnaire

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

1. Country of Origin (*Circle one*)

- 1 Antigua
- 2 Barbados
- 3 Guyana
- 4 Jamaica
- 5 Trinidad
- 6 Other: _____

2. How many years have you lived in the U.S.? _____

3. What is your status in the U.S. (*Circle one*)

U.S. Citizen Permanent Resident Other

4. Number of children (ages 1 – 17) residing in your household who attend public school: (*Circle one*)

1 2 3 4 5 More than 5 (specify number) _____

5. Age and Grade of each child

Child 1

Age: _____ Grade in school: _____

Child 2

Age: _____ Grade in school: _____

Child 3

Age: _____ Grade in school: _____

Child 4

Age: _____ Grade in school: _____

Child 5

Age: _____ Grade in school: _____

NOTE: PLEASE USE BACK OF PAGE IF MORE THAN 5 CHILDREN

Appendix D: Background Information Form

Participant Number: _____(Provided by Researcher)

Last Name: _____ First Name: _____

Ethnicity (Circle one)

- 1 Afro-Caribbean
- 2 Chinese Caribbean
- 3 Doogla (Black/Indian)
- 4 European-Caribbean
- 5 Indo-Caribbean
- 6 Mixed _____
- 7 Other _____

Primary Occupation: _____ Secondary Occupation: _____

Annual Household Income before taxes: (Check one)

- Below \$15, 000 \$15, 000-\$24, 999 \$25, 000-\$34, 999
- \$35, 000-\$44, 999 \$45, 000-\$54, 999 \$55, 000-\$64, 999
- \$65, 000 -\$74, 999 \$75, 000-\$84, 999 \$85, 000-\$95, 000
- Above \$95, 000

Highest Education Level Completed: (Circle one)

Country Where Completed

- 1 No formal schooling _____
- 2 Elementary _____
- 3 Junior Secondary _____
- 4 High School _____
- 5 Post-secondary-non degree
(e.g., technical college) _____
- 6 Some college _____
- 7 Associate degree _____
- 8 Bachelor’s degree _____
- 9 Master’s degree _____
- 10 Professional degree (e.g., M.D.,L.L.B) _____
- 11 Doctoral degree (e.g., Ph.D., Ed.D.) _____

How long did you live in your country of origin before immigrating to reside permanently in the U.S.? _____

Marital status: (Circle one)

- 1 Never married
- 2 Married
- 3 Separated
- 4 Divorced
- 5 Widow/Widower

Appendix D: (Continued)

Number of adults (18 years or older) residing in your household: _____

Number of children (ages 1 – 17) residing in your household: *(Circle one)*

1 2 3 4 5 More than 5 (specify number) _____

Child 1 Biological Adopted Other

Age: _____ Birth date: _____

Grade in school: _____

Child 2 Biological Adopted Other

Age: _____ Birth date: _____

Grade in school: _____

Child 3 Biological Adopted Other

Age: _____ Birth date: _____

Grade in school: _____

Child 4 Biological Adopted Other

Age: _____ Birth date: _____

Grade in school: _____

Child 5 Biological Adopted Other

Age: _____ Birth date: _____

Grade in school: _____

Others:

Age: _____ Birth date: _____

Grade in school: _____

Age: _____ Birth date: _____

Grade in school: _____

Age: _____ Birth date: _____

Appendix D: (Continued)

Grade in school: _____

Age: _____

Birth date: _____

Grade in school: _____

Appendix E: Semi-structured Interview Protocol

Topic Domain 1: Background Information/Family Information

Leadoff Question: What kinds of ties or connections do you maintain with _____(country of origin)?

If not addressed in the initial response, the following questions will be asked:

1. How often do you visit _____? (*Typically what are the reasons for your visits?*). In a year, how much time do you spend in there?
2. Do you have family there? Children?
 - a. Where was each of your children born?
3. How much time, if any, does your child typically spend in _____. What's the purpose of his/her visit(s)? (*school breaks, holidays?*)
4. How do you keep track of events in _____(country of origin)(print newspaper, online papers, visiting speakers, etc.)?
5. How involved are you with the _____ community?
6. How involved are you in the political life of _____ Vote? Political fundraising?
 - a. The political life of the U.S.? Vote? Political fundraising?
7. Do you plan to continue to reside in the U.S. or do you desire to return to live in _____ at some time in the future?
8. Where do you plan to reside after retirement?
9. How would you describe your ethnic identity?
10. Do you feel like the U.S. is home?
11. What do you like about living in the U.S.?
12. Is there anything that you miss about _____?

Categories of Interest: family composition, acculturation, extent of ties maintained to country of origin, extent participant identifies with culture and country of origin and America and American culture.

Topic Domain 2: Perceptions of schooling/Understanding of schooling process

Leadoff Question: What do you think about K-12 public schooling in the U.S.? As an immigrant to the U.S., in what way(s) does schooling in the U.S. meet or not meet your expectations for your child's education?

If not addressed in the initial response, the following questions will be asked:

1. What do you think about what your child learned during the past school year (e.g., how does what was learned relate to their future?)
2. How do you compare schooling in the U.S. to schooling in _____?
 - a. What differences do you see between schools back home and public schools in the U.S.?

Appendix E: (Continued)

- b. What kinds of things would they teach in schools back home at the age your child is now?
3. What do you believe is important for schools to provide your child?
4. How successful are the schools your child is enrolled in at providing those things?
5. What kinds of things do you tell your child about school?
 - a. Education in general?
6. What do you want for your child's future?
7. In your experience how do kids coming from another culture who go to school in the U.S. fare? (*Advantages, Disadvantages*).
8. How familiar are you with policies in your child's school and school district?
9. How familiar are you with the expectations of your child's teacher(s)?
 - a. The curriculum?

Categories of Interest: purpose of education, how successful school is at fulfilling parent's view of purpose does education lead to social mobility? What is the value of education? Their understandings of what schools provide. If it's important why is it important? Does racism affect the importance of education (reduces the payoff education gives, makes it more important? Difference in elementary vs. secondary education and what they should provide, how they communicate/do they communicate messages about education to their children)

Topic Domain: Parent role in the schooling process

Leadoff question: I would like to focus now on your role as a parent in your child's schooling. However, if your experience differs or has differed in any way for one or more of your children, please let me know.

Tell me about some of the things you've done this past year to help your child in school.

If not addressed in the initial response, the following questions will be asked:

1. Homework seems to be a big issue with many parents these days. Do you see this with your child?
 - a. Do they usually seem to need help?
 - b. How do you handle that?
2. Has your child had any academic difficulties, e.g., problems with a particular subject?
 - a. If so, how did you deal with this?
3. Has your child had any behavior difficulties in school?
 - a. If so, how did you deal with this?
4. Are there any resources outside school that you utilize to help your child with school (*tutors, enriching activities, encyclopedias, provision of study*)

Appendix E: (Continued)

- space, computer access)?*
5. Talk about the kinds of experiences and activities in which you have engaged with your child outside of school.
 - a. Do you link these activities to school in any way?
 - b. Do you try to make these learning experiences in any way? Or do you see this time with your child more as a time for them to relax and have fun?
 6. From your perspective, what are some important things you believe it is your responsibility to teach your child? (e.g., *morals, respect for authority, appropriate behavior in classroom; how does he/she learn this--- others in the family and how do those others teach him/her?*)
 7. What do you see as the school's responsibility to teach your child?
 8. In what ways do you see school and home learning merging?

Categories of Interest: How do they see their role in their children's education? At school? A home? How do they support their children's learning, i.e. what materials do they provide, what activities do they engage in with their children.

Topic Domain: Home-School communication

*(*Note: Parents will be asked to talk about their experiences with their children overall and to note any differences in experiences between children.)*

Leadoff question: What type of interactions or involvement do you typically have with your child's school?

If not addressed in the initial response, the following questions will be asked:

1. To what extent are you involved with any particular type of school activities (e.g., *PTA, fundraising, volunteering in classroom, and any other school activities*)?
2. How important do you think it is for parents to be involved in these activities?
3. How do you think teachers and administrators regard parents' involvement in their child's school?
 - a. How do they express this feeling?
4. How easy or difficult has it been for you to communicate or interact with school officials/teachers? Are there particular factors that help or hinder you from communicating with teachers or school officials?
5. What type of issues do you typically talk about with your child's teachers or other school officials?
 - a. How receptive is/are your child's teacher(s) to your concerns?
 - b. How receptive is the administration of your child's school to your concerns?

Appendix E: (Continued)

- c. Are there any issues (e.g., academic, social, cultural) that you believe may be impacting your child's performance/behavior in school, but which you do not feel comfortable discussing with school officials/teachers. Why?
6. How do you communicate about home issues that might impact schooling?
 - a. How important is it to do so?
7. How do you check up on the progress of your child?
 - a. How important do you think it is to do so?
8. What understandings do you believe teachers and school staff have of you and your child's cultural background?
9. What have you communicated about your cultural background/values to teachers/school staff?
10. Do you feel there should be a closer relationship between home and school?
 - a. How so? How do you think this relationship could be achieved?
 - b. What role do you think the school and the parents should play in this process?

Categories of Interest: How parents communicate with schools, their relationship with schools, what kinds of activities they engage in to build and maintain relationships with schools, and what their beliefs are about the importance of certain home-school activities.

Topic Domain: Obstacles to involvement in schooling

*(*Note: Parents will be asked to talk about their experiences with their children overall and to note any differences in experiences between children.)*

Lead off question: What personal or other challenges, if any, have you experienced in your attempts to be involved in your child's schooling in the U.S.? (e.g., *work schedule, family commitments, scheduling of school meetings, activities, and events?*)

If not addressed in the initial response, the following questions will be asked:

1. To what extent does lack of familiarity with the American school system prevent you from being more involved in your child's schooling?
2. To what extent does lack of familiarity with content being covered in school impact your involvement?
3. Are there any challenges specific to being an immigrant in the U.S. that prevent you from becoming more involved in your child's schooling?
4. Any other challenges I haven't addressed?
5. What would assist you in becoming more involved in your child's schooling?

Appendix E: (Continued)

Categories of Interest: Barriers parents face in being part of their children's education. Barriers of work schedules, family commitments, cultural differences, lack of understanding of how American schools function, lack of education, racism, anti-immigrant bias, lack of desire to be involved in children's beliefs in importance of different types of parent involvement.

Appendix F: Codebook

1.0 Connections to home country

- 1.1 Own a home
- 1.2 Own a business
- 1.3 family
- 1.4 political connections
- 1.5 Good/ bad things about home country

2.0. Contact with home country

- 2.1 visits to home country
- 2.2 read newspapers/access information online
- 2.3 Using others as a source of information

3.0 Connections with Community (in U.S.) with region/country community

- 3.1 friends
- 3.2 Associations (includes programs the association organizes)
- 3.3 special events (festival, gala, sports, etc.)

4.0 Child's identity/child's connections with culture

5.0 Relationship to U.S.

- 5.1 Political (voting, party membership, etc.)
- 5.2 Future plans (residence, retirement)
- 5.3 Reference to U.S. as home, not home
- 5.4 Good/bad things about U.S.

6.0 Ethnic identity

7.0 Culture

- 7.1 References to WI, Carib, home country, fam cult (+, -, 0)
- 7.2 References to U.S. culture (fams, etc.) (+, -, 0)
- 7.3 References to religion

8.0 Perceptions of public schools

- 8.1 Teachers , administration (+, -, 0)
- 8.2 Curriculum (+, -, 0)
- 8.3 Behavior (+, -, 0)
- 8.4 Systemic (processes, policies, busing, magnet schools, spec programs) (+, -, 0)
- 8.5 Students, family background of students, parents, home life(+, -, 0)
- 8.6 Resources (+, -, 0)

9.0 References to private school

- 9.1 Reasons for choosing private
- 9.2 Reasons for leaving private

10.0 Differences between school systems

- 10.1 Teachers (+, -, 0)
- 10.2 Curriculum (+, -, 0)
- 10.3 Behavior, values, social, interpersonal, (+, -, 0)
- 10.4 Resources (+, -, 0)
- 10.5 Systemic (processes, policies, etc.) (+, -, 0)

Appendix F: (Continued)

11.0 Expectations of school (and does school meet exps.)

- 11.1 Academics
- 11.2 Behavior, social, interpersonal, values
- 11.3 Real world, workplace, preparation for life
- 11.4 Teachers

- 11.5 Systemic
- 11.6 Resources

12.0 Beliefs

- 12.1 Value of education
- 12.2 How to approach school and education, attitude
- 12.3 Race/ethnicity, class, immigrants Status, and education
- 12.4 Parent Involvement
- 12.5 Parent responsibility to teach
- 12.6 Communication with schools, home school relationship
- 12.7 What it's important to communicate to school re: culture
- 12.8 Beliefs about immigrants & schools

13.0 Communication with schools

- 13.1 Positive
- 13.2 Negative
- 13.3 How do you communicate w/ schools (email, letters, phone)

*Note regarding direction of differences: (-) means negative about U.S.
(+) means positive about US*

14.0 Parent Involvement

- 14.1 Formal channels (PTA, volunteering, open houses etc.)
- 14.2 Home (help w/ homework, extra work)
- 14.3 Knowledge about policies, curriculum
- 14.4 Progress monitoring
- 14.5 Communication with teachers, school staff (other than open houses) e.g., email, phone calls, visits
- 14.6 Outside resources to help w/ school (other than parent help)
- 14.7 Fundraising and other forms of involvement

15.0 Barriers to Parent Involvement

- 15.1 Logistical (work schedules, school schedule, transportation)
- 15.2 Teacher, staff factors
- 15.3 Systemic factors (policies, processes, lack of familiarity)
- 15.4 Cultural differences, bias
- 15.5 Communication issues

16.0 Facilitators of PI

- 16.1 Communication tools
- 16.2 Teacher, staff factors
- 16.3 Logistical (work schedules, school schedule, transportation)
- 16.4 Systemic factors (e.g., PTA)