The Underrepresentation of Marginalized Parents in Family-School-Community Networks: A Matter of Social Justice in Urban Public School Systems

Stacie Lynnette Fitzpatrick
THE UNDERREPRESENTATION OF MARGINALIZED PARENTS
IN FAMILY –SCHOOL –COMMUNITY NETWORKS:
A MATTER OF SOCIAL JUSTICE IN URBAN PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEMS

A Dissertation
Submitted to the School of Education

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Education

By
Stacie Fitzpatrick

August 2016
Copyright by

Stacie Fitzpatrick

2016
Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Doctor of Education (Ed.D.)

Presented by:

Stacie Lynnette Fitzpatrick
B.S., Elementary Education, Point Park College University
M.S., Educational Leadership, Carlow College

October 24, 2015

THE UNDERREPRESENTATION OF MARGINALIZED PARENTS
IN FAMILY –SCHOOL –COMMUNITY NETWORKS:
A MATTER OF SOCIAL JUSTICE IN URBAN PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEMS

Approved by:

________________________________________, Chair
Gretchen Givens Generett, Ph.D.
Associate Professor/Associate Dean, Department of Educational Foundations &
Leadership and Director, UCEA Center for Educational Leadership & Social Justice
Duquesne University

_______________________________________, Member
Rick R. McCown, Ph.D.
Professor, Department of Educational Foundations Leadership and
Director, Professional Doctorate in Educational Leadership Program
Duquesne University School of Education

_______________________________________, Member
Aaron Johnson
Adjunct Professor of Community College of Allegheny County
Principal of Steel Valley School District
Program Director
ABSTRACT

THE UNDERREPRESENTATION OF MARGINALIZED PARENTS IN FAMILY–SCHOOL–COMMUNITY NETWORKS: A MATTER OF SOCIAL JUSTICE IN URBAN PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEMS

By

Stacie Fitzpatrick

August 2016

Dissertation supervised by Gretchen Generett

The call for action described and supported in this dissertation in practice focuses on the complex issue of parental engagement. It looks closely at African American families and community members being marginalized by urban public school settings. This work provides a clear analysis of causal explanation for institutional barriers and perceptions that exist in schools. This dissertation in practice contains a road map and suggestions for urban educational leaders who intend to improve the conditions of engagement between families, communities and school officials by removing negative barriers and perceptions that exist. In sum, the work outlines a plan for how educational leaders and community stakeholders can collaboratively engage and improve parental engagement by clearly executing a design for action.
DEDICATION

This dissertation work is dedicated to my family and many friends. A special feeling of gratitude to my loving parents, Harold and Norma Allen whose words of encouragement has always pushed me to excel at all things humanly possible. My sister, Shanae who has supported me throughout my life. My mother and father in law who have been a support system for my family and myself throughout this process, I will always appreciate all that they have done. I also dedicate this work and give special thanks to my loving daughter and best friend Kmari Fitzpatrick and my Prince, Keino Fitzpatrick II, both of you are truly my heroes and inspiration to my life. Lastly I dedicate this work to my loving husband, Keino Fitzpatrick, who has been a constant support, strength, and encouragement during all of the challenges of life and school. I truly love you and thank you for your constant support, and unconditional love. I am truly thankful for having you and my lovely family in my life.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I dedicate this accomplishment to my wonderful professors, colleagues, students and families that I serve. Your guidance was immeasurable in the completion of this dissertation. Thank you to my late grandmother Iris Dennis, I love you and miss you very much. Finally, I would like to acknowledge all of my family members and close friends whose high expectations, structure, critical advice, and persistent encouragement meant everything to me. This educational journey and continuous work would not be essential without the energy received from such diverse passionate individuals with common goals to improve all educational arenas as a matter of social justice. I sincerely thank you all for your support and sacrifices.
### TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgement</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marginalization, Systemic Racism, White Privilege and Social Capital</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Involvement and Marginalized African American Stakeholders</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Necessary Journey</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization of Dissertation of Practice</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1: The Problem</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of Marginalized Families and Communities in Urban Public Schools</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems within the Urban Public School Systems</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems with Professional Development (Self-Efficacy)</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems with Individuals Perceptions and Barriers</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems with Identification and Communication</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Characteristics of the Generative Impacts……………………………………77

Chapter 5: Analysis and Generative Impacts

Introduction……………………………………………………………………85

Six Key Stages for Parental Engagement ........................................87

What Was Learned/Recommendations..............................................96

Conclusion………………………………………………………………….103

References……………………………………………………………………107

Appendix……………………………………………………………………..115
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Empowerment and Advocacy..............................................................78

Table 2 Beyond the Random Acts of PTA, Bake Sales and Fundraisers...........80

Table 3 PACE model-Putting it All Together..................................................82

Table 4 Understanding Covey’s Seven Habits, Core Leadership and Adaptive Leadership ........................................................................................................84

Table 5 Table Discussion..................................................................................93
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Parent Involvement at School by Race/Ethnicity........................................18

Figure 2 Parent Involvement Logic Model.................................................................23

Figure 3 Percent of Poor Children Living in Areas of Concentrated Poverty, by Race/
Ethnicity ..................................................................................................................27

Figure 4 Suspension and Expulsions by Race and Ethnicity.....................................31

Figure 5 Achievement Gap.........................................................................................36

Figure 6 Social Justice Framework for Family, School and Community Networks......49

Figure 7 Plan Do Study Act Model..............................................................................55

Figure 8 Problems of Practice Driver Diagram..........................................................57

Figure 9 Holistic Parent Engagement Frameworks.....................................................86

Figure 10 Action Plan for Strategic Planning Process.................................................101
INTRODUCTION

“There comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular, but he must take it because conscience tells him it is right.”

–Dr. Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Urban schools and communities have struggled, while at the same time school districts with high populations of African American families are not recognizing, preserving and valuing cultural differences. The lack of coordinated engagement and positive relationships across families, school professionals and the community has negative effects on parents and students. For the purposes of this work, engagement is “the level of cognitive involvement that a person invests in a process” (Kelley & Clausen-Grace, 2009, p. 313). The engagement crisis we face in urban public education is a direct correlation to the dysfunctional bureaucratic structures in our schools. The results often lead to the failure of urban schools to embrace parent, family and community collaboration networks. This work examines the history of this failure and its impact on education for African Americans attending urban schools.

Since 1960, the recurring theme of parent, family and community partnerships with schools has failed to create the conditions that support equal opportunities for African American families. Olivos (2006) argues that public schools have been unsuccessful in establishing relationship with the communities they serve. Nevertheless, educational leaders have not positioned themselves to be change agents nor oppositional voices against negative district systemic educational policies and practices that barricade parents, families and community contributions in urban public school environments. Hess (2013) in the book entitled Cage-Busting Leadership looks at educational reform and educational leadership and the need for leaders to confront and overcome roadblocks. He states, “Instructional leadership, strong
cultures, stakeholder buy-in, and professional practice are all good things. The mistake is to imagine that leaders can foster these things successfully or sustainably without addressing the obstacles posed by regulations, rules and routines” (p.xi). Educational routines and regulations that address collaboration, partnerships and team building engagement concepts are important to investigate to ensure equitable opportunities for all diverse stakeholders. Such processes are needed in order to enhance and enrich urban public school improvement plans. Educational researchers who focus on urban contexts are concerned that parents/families in urban schools and communities do not have a shared understanding of rigorous instructional curriculum practices, effective leadership and quality professional development. In addition, research makes it clear that African American parents in urban schools have minimal family and community collaborative opportunities in their districts.

This work will address three questions:

1. What are the collaboration practices that focus on family, school and community?
2. What are the negative impacts that white privilege and systemic racism have on African American parents/families?
3. How can schools increase parental involvement for African American parents and students that are marginalized in urban public schools?

**Marginalization, Systemic Racism, White Privilege and Social Capital**

According to Feagin and Barnett (2005), systemic racism involves the racialized exploitation and subordination of a marginalized group of people compared to white people. It encompasses the stereotyping, prejudices, and emotions of those privileged within the system, as well as the discriminatory practices, policies, and procedures within institutions that are engineered to produce the long-term domination of marginalized groups. At the heart of systemic
racism are discriminatory practices that deny marginalized groups of people dignity, opportunities, and privileges available to whites individually and collectively (ps. 1103-1104). White privilege is defined as a set of advantages that are believed to be enjoyed by white people beyond those commonly experienced by non-white people in the same social, political, and economic spaces (nation, community, workplace, school, income, etc.). Case (2007) defines white privilege as “unearned advantage and benefits, often invisible to the dominant group, afforded to whites within a system of instructional racial oppression” (p.231) Endres and Gould (2009) argue that “whiteness involves the use of strategic rhetoric that has an implicit investment in maintaining the status quo, specifically power and privilege in their current manifestation” (p.432). While this privilege is often invisible to those who benefit from it, those who do not benefit from it (Provenzo, 2009) see it all too clearly.

African American parents and students that are marginalized do not benefit from privileges of power within urban public school systems. Marginalization plays a critical role in parental disengagement.¹ Urban public schools lack of parental engagement practices are embedded within a white privilege mindset of excluding minority subgroups or undesirables by ignoring their needs, desires and expectations. African American families who are marginalized experience both white privilege and systemic racism when trying to engage with urban public school systems. Systemic racism occurs in urban public school systems when educators continuously communicate important school information through means that are only embraced and supported by the white dominant cliental in schools. African American parents in urban public school districts may not be able to attend various meetings because of the lack of resources such as time, technology, money and transportation. Overall, marginalized African

¹ Marginalization is defined as the process whereby something or someone is pushed to the edge of a group and accorded lesser importance. This is predominantly a social phenomenon by which a minority or sub-group is excluded, and their needs or desires ignored.
American parents with children in urban public school districts often have less social capital than their white counterparts. Social capital and social class influences how black and white parents negotiate their relationships with schools; however for blacks, race plays an important role independent of social class, in framing the terms of their relationship. Diamond & Gomez (2004) argues that social class and race intertwine to influence African American parent involvement. Understanding this problem and addressing different means to create improvement efforts when engaging African American parents has the potential to increase parental/family engagement across urban public school communities. Machen (2005) suggest that parental programs that are viewed as effective relate to parents culture, circumstances and socioeconomic backgrounds. Ultimately, this work proposes strategies that can lessen the impact of socially bias and racist systems in urban public education systems so that they can better support marginalized African American parents, students and communities who have been denied access and opportunities.

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act signed into law in 2002 by Congress and President George W. Bush is one of the many mandates of the last twenty-five years aimed at improving education, this law is the largest federal commitment ever made. The goal of NCLB is to close the achievement gap with all children reaching academic proficiency in reading and math. Rod Paige, United States Secretary of Education stated, “There is no more powerful advocate for children than a parent armed with information and options” (U.S. Department of Education, 2004, p.59). The No Child Left Behind law focuses on teacher accountability and provides parental options to close the achievement gap (Cartledge & Musti-Rao, 2004). Attention to improving parent and family involvement in schools is a key factor in the accountability requirements of No Child Left Behind Act because children are continuing to drop out of school. According to the USDE (2006), 4 out of every 100 high school students dropped
out of school between October 2002 and October 2003. While schools are still trying to figure out how to stop students from dropping out, dropouts are costing taxpayers billions of dollars each year. Dropouts are more likely to seek government assistance than students who earn a high school diploma. Adolescent females who drop out of school are more likely to become pregnant than students who do not drop out. Further, dropouts are more likely to go to prison than those students who earn a high school diploma; dropouts makeup 82% of the prison population (Ysseldyke, Algozzine, & Turlow, 1992). The idea of parent involvement is not a new concept. For decades, paradigms have shifted with regards to involvement, and in the 21st century, active parents are considered to be a vital component of education by teachers and administrators alike.

In the mid to late 1960s, policy-makers began to turn their attention to ways to improve academic achievement, and parent involvement became a topic of concern, especially among low-achieving African American students. As schools have pushed into the 21st century, the idea of a reciprocal relationship between school and home has been championed by researchers, educators, and parents alike (Knopf & Swick, 2007). Joyce Epstein (1990) has championed the importance of parent involvement, but she went beyond normal ideas and discussed the premise that involvement should go beyond school and home, inviting a partnership between homes, schools, and communities. Her research findings led her to draw four conclusions about parental involvement: student success should drive involvement, involvement should be present throughout the entirety of a child’s education, involvement is a process, not a single event, and parent involvement is not a substitute for quality education programs offered by schools.

Educators have struggled to definitively define the construct of parent involvement, the federal government has developed a definition as a part of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). This definition was included in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)
under the guidance of NCLB. In section 118(b) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) states that it requires the adoption of parent/family involvement policies that describe how to build a school and parent capacity for involvement. Parents represented on advisory boards must be significant decision makers (9101(32), EA; ESEA Information Update, 2003). In its 2004 publication, Parental Involvement: Action Guide for Parents and Communities, the federal government stated parental involvement is defined as a meaningful, two-way communication involving student academic learning and other school activities including assisting in children learning, being actively involved and serving as partners. With guidelines in place by the federal government, the focus has shifted to local school districts. Each district and school that receives Title I money is required to develop a written parent involvement policy. As these policies have been developed, schools have searched for ways to carry out the government’s wishes while building on already existing relationships within the school and the district. For this reason, school systems and individual schools have attempted to work closely with parents to develop strong involvement policies to help improve learning in the classroom.

 Several laws and policies have been put in place that specify that all parents must have various opportunities and deliberate participation in the decision-making process regarding how schools operate to educate their children regardless of their social, economic status and cultural differences. Researchers Barton and Coley insist that, “The improvement of education in American society needs to begin with a national commitment to improve the family as an educational institution (Barton & Coley, 1992, p. 158). However, problems still remain. While the government has a definition of parental involvement and educators have developed involvement policies, there often remains a disconnect between what educators and parents believe make up the actual practices which meet the criteria for effective parental involvement.
especially urban public schools with a high population of marginalized groups of people. Schools with culture differences and disconnects are not new, and researchers have used qualitative and quantitative studies to develop data and opinions from teachers and parents to study ways to bridge the existing gaps. Parent and community relationships amongst marginalized communities have been inconsistently measured across various studies and research, thus not capturing a full perspective and picture of these relationships (Kohl et al, 2000). Such research is a testament that, although NCLB mandates educational equality and access, the reality is African American families and community members that are marginalized whose children attend urban schools do not have the necessary educational and social resources compared to their white suburban counterparts.

**Parental Involvement and Marginalized African American Stakeholders**

African American stakeholders that are marginalized in urban public schools undoubtedly still lack educational control and the ability to shape the educational policy, practices, and philosophies for the benefit of urban learners. In order to improve urban public school systems for African American parents, educators need processes that support learning that teaches them how to combat inequitable situations embedded within white privilege and systemic racism. Teachers need processes that not only use federal and state policies as a foundation, but also offer alternative engagement components. New ways need to be created in order to understand the relationships existing between underserved families and urban public schools. Parental involvement is a key indicator of academic success, and it is essential for teachers and parents to have a similar understanding of what the term parental involvement truly means.

The implementation of family, school and community networks are designed to help parents advocate and gain advantages for human and social capital within their neighborhoods
and school systems. Collaborative designs that will challenge the systemic problems of the lack of engagement by marginalized parents, families and community members must by planned studied and applied in order to produce generative impacts to change the mindsets of all urban public school stakeholders. Creating collaborative networks is a critical process. When school officials are held accountable for collaborative practice then school systems can strive to produce better neighborhoods, increase student achievement and seek out better educational and economic opportunities. Developing a collaborative process for accountability in urban public school systems can occur by using a network improvement community process.

Network Improvement Communities (NIC) is like Design-Based Implementation Research (DBIR), they both are concerned with building capacity to change education systems. A Network Improvement Community is a distinct network that arranges human and technical resources, so the community is capable of getting better at getting better (Englebart, 2003). Network improvement communities are a social mechanism through which the collaborative designs and practical theories produced by design based implementation research can become live resources for the improvement of systems. DBIR focuses on perspectives of multiple stakeholders in a collaborative and iterative design process with the goal of developing theory related to learning and implementations and capacity for system change (Penuel, Fishman, Cheng, & Sabelli, 2011).

Penuel & Fishman (2012) argue DBIR is needed to address real issues and real problems of equity of access to quality learning opportunities. At a systems level (e.g., students, classrooms, teachers, principals, schools, departments, and districts) DBIR addresses what adaptations are needed across diverse settings. A DBIR agenda helps to design future policies and practices to work and have researchers and practitioners enact continuous improvement and
joint engagements within communities and districts. For design based improvement research -
type work to address practical problems sustainably and at scale, an organizing structure is
necessary which can put such resources to productive use (Penuel et al, 2011).

This dissertation in practice utilizes Anthony Bryk’s Network Improvement Community
Principles to address parental engagement. These principles guide the work toward a family,
school and community transformation model within an urban setting that will build better
partnerships, relationships, improve education, increase engagement, and community
development. For years, educators have tried to address parental engagement by moving beyond
the random acts of traditional Parent Teachers Associations (PTA’s). Educational reforms have
historically focused on instruction and not on how to engage with culturally diverse groups of
parents, families and community members.

Urban education in this country remains inequitable to the extent that the majority of
urban students receive instruction from teachers, school officials and educational leaders that
often lack experience, motivation, resources, and/or enthusiasm to engage students, parents,
families and the community in learning (Kozol, 1991). Darling-Hammond (2010) argues that the
United States lack of national standards for teacher preparation results in teachers entering the
field “dramatically different levels of knowledge and skill with those least prepared teaching the
most vulnerable children” (p.197). It is important for school officials and teachers to become
engaged in processes that include diverse perspectives and inclusive practices. Therefore,
comprehensive and integrated theories that support African American parents in urban public
school systems in their investigation of different approaches to engagement are possible.

Ultimately, the focus is to cultivate accountability measurements for improvements in
urban public school systems. Transformation approaches beyond the random acts of traditional
parent involvement should focus on sustainability, capacity building, professional development, cultural diversity and leadership that drive change to enlist engagement. The model approach in my work suggests that a strong school-parent-community partnership that supports shared responsibilities will improve student achievement and school climates. It is my goal throughout this work to continually explore and provide alternative approaches to family, school and community networks. Once implemented, I believe that this work will illustrate that family, school and community networks as grassroots community-based collective action models composed of focus group forums that involve transformation planning can change perceptions and empower marginalized families, increase youth advocacy, and collaboration in urban communities.

My process Parent and Community Engagement Model (PACE model) will be elaborated on in the Designs for Action section. The model is guided by theory and the personal narratives of marginalized African American parents and community members in urban schools. The model is designed to provide a platform for urban school stakeholders to build action plans developed through a democratic approach and a social justice lens. Fundamental to the PACE models’ foundation is the creation of a collaboration that supports and develops sustainable transformation and initiatives. The model is designed to better understand the following questions:

1. What can educational leaders learn from critical race theory that enhances their capacity to work with African American parents in urban school districts and to better serve the communities in which their schools inhabit?
2. How can educational leaders, teachers, parents, and community members’ work together to ensure that conversations occur in inclusive ways that allow the voices of diverse stakeholders in urban public school settings to impact school culture and practice?

3. Using network improvement science what is needed to support family, school and community stakeholders in the development of designs that can improve the overall school climate and student achievement of schools in marginalized areas?

4. How can engagement efforts create opportunities for solution-oriented professional development efforts to improve the conditions around urban public schools inside and outside of the school?

A Necessary Journey

My agenda is an educational analysis supported and guided by network improvement science that challenges the lack of engagement of African American parents, students and community stakeholders. Root causes are discussed and assessment strategies are identified. Stakeholders are defined as participants and groups of participants who occupy various settings including universities, K-12 schools, parents, community organizations and community members. No longer can educators operate in urban educational systems that support a top-down approach to leadership or that exist and operate in silos. Such approaches are not inclusive and only serve to support the opinions of individuals that have the largest social capital within the system. As an educational leader, I understand my purpose is to address unjust educational situations. Specifically, my role is to attend to the dismissal of coordinated parental engagement efforts that support marginalized African American parents and students from urban public schools.
The literature studied in this dissertation of practice challenges school officials’ at all levels to adjust and support family, community and school involvement opportunities, strategies, and implementation from a social justice lens. The literature suggests that educational leaders should be held accountable for realigning how they involve and engage students, parents, families and community members that have been marginalized in decision-making forums. If the overall goal of education is to increase student success, then it is incumbent upon educational leaders to implement processes for improvement that build upon community assets. To better understand community assets, educational leaders have to increase community engagement. Community engagement refers to the support, services and advocacy activities that community based individuals and organizations –including businesses, schools and faith based institutions – provide in order to improve student learning and promote family engagement. An important function of community engagement in this work is to consist of outreach and assume broader roles in and outside of urban public school systems. Community engagement will apply a collective vision, provide comprehensive supports, build social relationships and bring together resources to achieve collective goals for marginalized parents, families and students in urban public school settings.

Marginalized families and community stakeholders should have the background knowledge and training of how to address the inequitable conditions and question the systems accountability to uphold federal and state regulations set forth by civil rights laws and the no child left behind policies when it comes to providing fair and equal engagement practices across the board. Excellent educational programs for all students must be provided in urban public schools because they receive federal and state dollars to educate the students regardless of race, ethnicity or class.
Organization of Dissertation of Practice

This dissertation’s primary purpose is the investigation of practice and, the stewardship of the profession. This dissertation in practice is organized in five parts:

Chapter 1 – Review of Problem: The review of the problem is framed as positive engagement and collaborative learning processes for African American parents and their students. The chapter outlines three actions and impacts that promote positive interaction between families, communities and school officials. Barriers, beliefs and misperceptions to improvement held by educational stakeholders are examined. Chapter 1 also identifies various laws, policies and engagement models that have been tried to strengthen well-implemented programs for family, community and school stakeholders.

Chapter 2 – A Matter of Social Justice: Chapter 2 invites the parents, community and schools to engage in solution-oriented actions by looking through a social justice framework that will allow conversations to happen across diverse boundaries. This section will define social justice as it is situated within the work through social and theoretical frameworks such as deficit paradigm and discontinuity paradigm, social and cultural capital, and critical race theory. The social and theoretical frameworks listed within this chapter impacts the way that African American parents that are marginalized by urban public school systems are invited to engage as valuable partners. The framework provides a picture that helps the reader visualize the power struggles and challenges that occur for African American parents, families and communities in urban public school climates.

Chapter 3 – Standards of Practice: Chapter 3 renames and reframes different ways to improve engagement activities for families in urban public school environments. This chapter identifies different processes and experiences that can be used to improve collaboration efforts
between parents, families, schools, and communities. Chapter 3 also invites the community and
school to engage in solution-oriented actions that allow courageous conversations to happen
across diverse boundaries and stakeholders. This chapter explains that all school stakeholders
perceptions should be challenged and professional development opportunities are expected to
occur when building sustainable relationships. Evaluations are an important part of the
networked improvement process to improve family, community and school engagement
relationships is also discussed. Finally, Chapter 3 highlights student success as an important
part of the evaluation process. Ultimately, this chapter highlights that grassroots efforts are critical
in order to establish democratic leadership approaches that enlist and value all voices.

Chapter 4 – Designs for Action: Chapter 4 introduces the Parent and Community
Engagement Model (PACE) model. The PACE model is a design that includes collective
processes and collaboration between underserved families, communities, and schools. This
model describes advocacy, empowerment, and professional development opportunities that move
towards the improvement of social and academic conditions. This chapter includes a list of
generative impacts for the PACE model and an action plan that to leverage changes within any
educational system. The generative impacts describe family, community, and school models that
include workshops and activities that are transparent for all stakeholders. The workshops are
developed to help marginalized families, communities, and school official’s work together to
initiate improved partnerships. This work hopes to create generative impacts that could be
identified and measurable during the ongoing processes to address and analyze any social
impacts and educational improvements throughout the work.

Chapter 5 – Generative Impact and Analysis: Chapter 5 is an analysis of selected
materials and implemented workshops and activities used to increase and improve relationships,
collaboration and partnerships. The summary highlights the agenda moving forward and suggested recommendations.
CHAPTER 1
THE PROBLEM

What every black American knows, and whites should try to imagine, is how it feels to have unfavorable—and unfair—identity imposed on you every waking hour.

—Anonymous Author

Brief History of Marginalized Families and Communities in Urban Public Schools

According to Trotman (2001) parent involvement is designed to create partnerships that allow for greater collaboration between home and school for the expressed purpose of improved student outcomes. Parent involvement should enhance the capacity of the schools to understand what families’ value and to meet students’ needs. Wehlberg (1996) indicates that parent involvement programs require making opportunities available for parents while also providing knowledge and skills for parents so they can learn how to best support their child in school. Nevertheless, the inequity within urban school systems practices and leaders’ lack of knowledge about cultural and racial diversity prevent families from accessing educational opportunities. This problem creates negative impacts on the academic achievement of African American students within these districts and also limits the educational and economic attainment for the overall community in which the district serves. These inequities are “civil rights issues and questions about fundamental fairness” (Losen & Gillespie, 2012, p. 6).

Imagine entering a school district whose student population is 5000 and all of the schools are identified as Title 1 schools. The district’s fictitious name is “The Urban School District.” Various social ills associated with poverty are huge problems for The Urban School District. Only 15 of the 501 school districts in Pennsylvania have a higher poverty population (cited by Pennsylvania Department of Education, Office of Child Development and Early Learning). Over 65% of the students in this district receive free and reduced lunches. Two-thirds of the students
come from single-parent households. Over 19% of the adults residing in the district do not have a high school diploma or its equivalency. The minority population is 49%, and 25% of these students receive special education services. The student population of the school is 64% African American, 30% Caucasian and 6% multi-race or other. Only 3% of the personnel in the whole district are minorities, in this case, African American. Unfortunately, research findings indicate that poorer school districts and minority children get the least qualified, least knowledgeable teachers (Darling-Hammond, 1999). The educational environment on the inside of the school contains teachers that are not highly qualified. The school building is dirty and falling apart. The building contains broken computers, not enough textbooks for the children, and advanced programs are obsolete. “Recent research illustrates that money makes a difference in the quality of education, especially as it is used to pay for more expert teachers, whose levels of preparation and skills prove to be the single most important determinant of student achievement” (Darling-Hammond, 1996, p.6). Urban public school environments are the evident expression of racism and separatism because of its geographically segregated arrangement and because it prevents some learners from participating in mainstream opportunities (Kozol, 2005). The disadvantages that may accrue to African American parents without a voice and whose culture or lifestyle differs from that of the dominant culture within urban districts take a number of forms. For example, parents who do not visit the school to address educational challenges and barriers are less likely to gain social capital or educational justice for their children. Also, parents who are not present at the school may be viewed as uncaring by school officials, an attitude that may have adverse ramifications for their children. (Grenfell & James, 1998). (See Figure 1)
Rushing (2001) notes that the American schooling system “is not a neutral institution, but one that functions in the context of political, cultural and social inequalities and plays a role in maintaining and legitimating those inequalities” (p. 32). According to Kozol (1991) the result is an educational system that lacks resource equity, thus perpetuating the achievement gap and other race-and class-based social inequalities in American society. Feagin (2006) notes that the educational system is functioning in harmony with all other systems and institutions in American society, benefitting students who are members of privileged social groups at the expense of less privileged students. As noted previously, families from these marginalized communities and
underperforming schools often do not have the opportunities to pick the school, teacher, curriculum or environment that they attend to receive their education because of the lack of social capital. For decades, efforts to improve academic experiences and outcomes for economically disadvantaged and marginalized groups of people have been a challenge for school leaders and policy makers (Valencia, 1999, Duncan-Andrade, 2005).

The No Child Left behind Act (2001) has made promises to fix and change inadequate schools in order to serve all children but instead it has caused controversy with urban public schools that are not equipped with adequate resources. Legislations in NCLB are designed to be big proponents of schools working hard to meet students educational needs,… “but all too often schools seem to be islands separate from the families they serve and the communities in which they live” (Dodd & Konzal, 2002, p.232). Cultural differences, systemic barriers, and bias perceptions between teachers and marginalized families are creating destructive wedges against bridging gaps such as the achievement gap, high school dropout rates, special education demographics, and poverty data are all real indication of cultural, institutional biases within urban public school systems.

Unfortunately, educators still treat African American parents and families as sideline fans rather than team players. Collaborative family engagement agendas with a social justice perspective are necessary to create a shared responsibility that occurs across multiple settings where children learn. In addition, systemic transformation of family engagement plans delivers diverse, innovative strategies for educational reform. Family engagement plans have the potential to reveal generative impacts to address a new way of thinking as it relates to the practices and policies that leverage community and school improvement efforts for African
American marginalized parents and stakeholders. For the purpose of this work, generative impacts may be collaborations, partnerships, professional development trainings and advocacy work for African American parents to gain a better understanding on how to engage and navigate around urban public school systems.

The impetus to engross in this dialog is not enough. The problem has to be analyzed and studied from various perspectives such as the systems history, professional development, perceptions, barriers, communication and leadership that surround engagement. We have to address and understand where we have been in order to look ahead and design processes for continuous learning about the problem that generates deliverables for improvements. The next part of this work will analyze several involvement challenges within the system.

**Problems within the Urban Public School Systems**

Families in urban public schools and communities continue to experience racial, ethical and educational disparities that are affecting their lives and demoralizing the community. They are urging school systems to work beyond the span of traditional K-12 schooling. Family, school and community engagement for African Americans is a national challenge studied and talked about by various educators. Family, school, and community partnerships have fallen short of its efforts to collaborate. History has proven engagement strategies for the family, school and community involvement falls on death ears and only benefits a narrow selected privileged audience of parents. “The difficulty with education as a profession is that its clientele comes with a wide variety of issues and circumstances that make it difficult to define the service provided” (Perry, 2010, p.10). Shared priorities for African American families that are in urban public

---

2 A generative impact is defined as having the power or function of generating, origination, producing, or reproducing. Generative impacts may create a context to stimulate complex systems on innovations and interactions amongst individuals (“generative,” n.d.).
school settings are not always supported, and active participation is most times ignored in urban environments. African American families that are marginalized in urban public schools are restricted to small pockets of participation. As Joachim (2013) contends in her influential book, *Beyond the Bake Sale*, parents in many occasions are only called upon to join the PTA, conduct bakes sales or contribute financially to school wide fundraisers for field trips if they are accepted by the dominant social class of individuals within the school structure. Schools often judge the effectiveness of their involvement by the degree of fundraising activities that occur, the percentage of attendance at parent/teacher conference, and the number of families/parents coming to the schools open house event. These dismal methods of parent involvement can create conflicting demands on parents. Ironically, African American parents past negative experiences with the educational setting, usually caused by cultural differences and their own feelings of competency is why many African American parents do not engage with traditional parent engagement activities such as PTA’s, bake sales or fundraisers.

In the face of the difficult battle over reauthorization of “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB) and the assaults on urban public education, we have forgotten about important artifacts within the lives of African American students that may lead to problem behaviors and those associated with negative outcomes such as school failure, poverty, juvenile delinquency, vocational instability and poor social relationship. (“Building resiliency within schools,” n.d.). In addition, school–based models primarily attempt to develop social bridges between teachers and parents before assessing the level of social cohesion among parents and community stakeholders. Without social cohesion, social action is improbable (Forsyth, Adams, & Hoy, 2011). Many district models operate by one size fits all model and therefore they do not align their parent involvement opportunities with the needs of the parents, family and community stakeholders that
they serve. Muscott (2002) states that reaching out to and connecting with families of different cultural backgrounds “requires that educators develop an understanding of cultural differences, demonstrate respect for the differing values and behaviors of diverse families and become aware of the unique communication styles of various cultural groups that are represented in their programs” (pp. 66-69).

Educators working with culturally diverse families “need to move beyond stereotypes that may be grounded in their own limited frame of reference” while they “move beyond cultural knowledge and develop an understanding of how each individual family expresses its culture”. (cited in Educating Our Children Together p.12: NYSED). Educators must understand that families of urban public school and communities that they serve are their clients and that they will only survive in the 21st century if they learn to take a leadership approach and market their products to all diverse groups. Harvard Family Research Project observed that families, school and community partnerships will develop through a complementary learning-a systemic approach that intentionally integrates school and nonschool supports to promote educational and life success (Lopez & Caspe, 2014). Complementary learning builds on a long history of theory and research about the many contextual influences on children’s development and the understanding that neither schools nor families nor communities alone can ensure educational achievement. The Parent Involvement Model illustrated in Figure 2 shows how complementary learning is built when meetings contain school and nonschool supports.
### Assumptions
- Parents of children in urban schools are not willing to work with the school district.
- Parents of children in urban schools know how to work with schools and teachers. Parents in urban schools understand the literature that is sent home. Parents in urban schools do not care.

### External Factors
- Cultural awareness, transportation issues, parents educational levels, parental language barriers, policies, clearances, personal narratives and negative school experiences.

---

### Figure 2  Parent Involvement: Logic Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inputs</th>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Outcomes-Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resources</strong></td>
<td><strong>Activities</strong></td>
<td><strong>Participation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Parent Training &amp; Work-shops</td>
<td>Build awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National and Local Programs (PTA, PTO, Title 1, Head start, etc.)</td>
<td>Partner &amp; Facilitate Parent Forums</td>
<td>Change attitudes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>Provide Counseling</td>
<td>Enhance Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School District &amp; Administrators</td>
<td>Recruit and train parent leaders</td>
<td>Increase Aspiration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Provide technical assistance</td>
<td>Increase Short &amp; long term Goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universities</td>
<td>Develop and disseminate materials to parents</td>
<td>Engage &amp;empower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-profits &amp; for profit</td>
<td>Build relationship with schools</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National &amp; Local organizations</td>
<td>Develop coalitions of local parent involvement programs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith Based</td>
<td>Build relationships with schools</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government local, State &amp; Federal</td>
<td>Develop materials to parents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collect Data</td>
<td>Build relationship with schools</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyze &amp; Interpret</td>
<td>Develop coalitions of local parent involvement programs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluations</td>
<td>Build relationships with potential local or national long term funders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop Reports</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum Development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Sustainability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Assumptions**
- Parents of children in urban schools are not willing to work with the school district.
- Parents of children in urban schools know how to work with schools and teachers. Parents in urban schools understand the literature that is sent home. Parents in urban schools do not care.

**External Factors**
- Cultural awareness, transportation issues, parents educational levels, parental language barriers, policies, clearances, personal narratives and negative school experiences.
Problems with Professional Development (Self-Efficacy)

Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1995) state: children whose families are involved in education develop a positive sense of self-efficacy for success with their academics. Self-efficacy also has a relationship with teachers and principals regarding family and community involvement. Efficacy “manifested by confidence in one’s teaching and instructional program implies a sense of professionalism and security in the teaching role. The confidence would logically enhance teacher efforts to discuss their teaching program and goals with parents”.

(Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler & Brissie, 1987, p. 429) Professional learning, as opposed to just teaching, must become a school’s top priority, as schools redefine themselves as communities, professional work places, learning organizations, and democratic communities (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2001; Conley, 1997). The greatest amount of family and community involvement occurs when teachers, with positive attitudes regarding involvement, maintain open communication and collaborate with them; when administrators and teachers initiate and welcome family and community involvement, it can be successful (Griffith, 1998).

Bandura’s (1977) social cognitive theory of self-efficacy argues that people create self-perceptions of capability. Peoples beliefs about their capabilities determine their successes. Strong efficacy usually results in prior experience (Pajares & Shunk, 2001). The practices of teachers, administrators and various school agents are influenced by various beliefs. Thus, to improve family and community relationships all school officials should make a conscious effort to promote active, sustainable involvement and all educational stakeholders should promote efficacy. Educational efficacy can be developed successfully by professional development opportunities that incorporate various strategies to get marginalized African American families and community members involved. Professional development opportunities must be provided for
all stakeholders around student, parent, and family and community engagement at the university level during teaching preparatory classes and at the districts for family involvement training. In schools with well-developed professional development plans, high quality leadership is evident. These leaders provide teachers with opportunities to collaborate with their peers reflect on their teaching and participate in decision making about creating and meeting goals. In these schools, the importance of human and social capital is understood (Leana & Pil, 2006). Leadership, infrastructure, resources, and the ability of professionals to access outside training and technical assistance are essential characteristics of effective professional learning (Jaquith, Mindich, Chung Wei, & Darling-Hammond, 2010). Training opportunities that occur will be set up to professionally examine staff member’s perceptions and barriers that they are struggling to address as a problem. In the book Sacred Trust (2011), Darling-Hammonds states a profession first characteristic is “that they have mastered a common knowledge base, and they know how to use that on behalf of the clients they serve; a level of commitment to the practice of the profession with the welfare of clients at the forefront; and finally accepting responsibility for defining and enforcing standards of practice” (p.60-61). Perry states that teaching standards have changed within the profession. Perry (2010) concludes, “Teacher certification had historically been under the control of individual communities until the rapid growth of state education department during the early 20th century. This expansion prompted a discussion over what represented teacher education and eventually led to the development of an accrediting body to standardize training programs”, (p.41). Even though there is an accrediting body to standardize training programs for teacher certification, the profession has failed to include how to engage parents from diverse backgrounds and cultures that are not within the norm such as African Americans. The perceptions and barriers that attribute to an individual’s cultural beliefs
negatively influence how to engage with others. White middle class perceptions and barriers become a problem in urban public school settings with a large number of African American students, parents and community members.

**Problems with Individuals Perception and Barriers**

In the year 2000, one out of every three Americans was of African American, Hispanic, Asian American, or Native American heritage (Bureau of the Census, 1997). Contemporary families can be described as “traditional, blended, extended, multigenerational, migrant, minority, single-parent, divorced, dual-worker, and refugee” (Funkhouser & Gonzales, 1997). Additionally, children being raised by grandparents are a growing population and many children live with extended family members or foster parents. In 2001, 27% of children in the U.S. were living in single-parent homes, and 40% of children living with their mothers had not seen their fathers during the past year (National Fatherhood Initiative, 2001). Mothers living in poverty face complex challenges when involved in their children’s education compared to middle-class mothers. Mothers in poverty normally lack important resources such as education, emotional support, active relationship with the school and a sense of entitlement in schools. Poverty stricken mothers may not find flexibility with their schedules and money. Having no flexibility with time is extremely cumbersome and psychologically disheartening for mothers (Bloom, 2001). When they fail to live up to the expectations of schools for family involvement, mothers living in poverty often feel that the school views them as part of the problem instead of being part of solutions. Mothers, who live in poverty, indicate when interacting with schools, they often feel “less valued” by teachers treating them as if they lack knowledge of their children. They internalize being “disappeared”, ignored and disregarded during conversations about their children. They become “infantilized” by teachers relating to them as if they are students.
Parents, especially those who are African-American single mothers, feel intimidated by the team meeting approach, professional status of school staff scrutinizing their parenting and feel marginalized by their roles in these interactions (Bloom, 2001).

**Figure 3** The graph below illustrates the high number of African Americans living in areas of concentrated poverty

![Graph illustrating the high number of African Americans living in areas of concentrated poverty](image)


Rothenberg (1996) supports the notion that changes in the American family have complicated issues, because schools do not know how to involve marginalized families that are so vastly diverse. To reframe the concept of family involvement, we have to look deeper into policies and practices. There is a need to look deeper into want effects family engagement, how to foster it and how to evaluate it. Family involvement initiatives must become part of a larger
complementary learning strategy because families are more diverse than ever before, spanning cultures, languages, levels of education, and socioeconomic and demographic differences.

Variability in family, school and community involvement opportunities are created by various individuals’ perceptions and barriers. For this reason, it is important to increase family and community involvement especially for those urban public schools serving low socio-economic African American parents and students. The problem is that schools that have a high population of African American students, in many cases have the lowest family and community participation by the African American parents. Many factors contribute to differences in the way socio-economic status relate to urban public schools and there barriers and perceptions of involvement. According to Ladson-Billings (2001), “the clash between school culture and home culture becomes evident in judgments and labels that teachers place on students. Labels such as special education students, at-risk students and emotionally disturb students become common with non-mainstream speech and styles of discourse within teacher’s use of instructional practices and classroom management strategies that are at odds with community norms.”(p. 167)

Until urban educational stakeholders address the conditions that give rise to discontinuities between African American parents and students that are marginalized in the American schooling process, urban school systems abilities to leverage collective transformation processes will be a problem for years to come. Previously in this chapter (Figure 1) gives a glance of parent involvement by race/ethnicity. The graph provides a picture that there is an urgency to be more sensitive to cultural diverse families and community views, and schools need to understand the negative barriers that they sometimes create and adopt to ensure more racially balanced parent involvement. In addition, the National Center for Education Statistics (1998) shows quite a difference in perceived parent involvement barriers by poverty concentration and minority
enrollment. Schools with large amounts of marginalized parents and students listed the following as parent involvement barriers:

- lack of education to help with schoolwork
- cultural, socioeconomic differences, language barriers
- negative attitudes about the school
- Negative staff attitudes
- safety concerns during after school hours,
- negative experiences with school
- school personnel’s negative or condescending attitude
- lack of transportation and childcare
- lack of community resources (National PTA, 1997)

Educational researchers and practitioners must engage in conversations with marginalized parents, families and community members to try to understand the complexity of negative barriers and perceptions in order to improve parental and community engagement practices and policies.

**Problems with Identification and Communication**

Research states that another important part of the problem for family, school and community engagement is its vast definitions of involvement and how involvement is communicated verbally and non-verbally. School official’s perceptions are if students are not misbehaving, there is no need for families to be involved. Family involvement should not only be for behavioral management. Involvement should be a two-way communication that enhances the success for all students academically regardless of good or bad behaviors. Considering that schools, family and community stakeholders may have different definitions about what
involvement entails, it is not unusual that they have different goals relating to involvement (Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield & Quiroz, 2001).

With this problem in mind, various school officials should find ways to address communication barriers with African American parents that are marginalized by urban public school systems as a high leverage issue. Parent involvement strategies for school officials are often shadowed by negative behaviors. Too often when contact between school officials and African American parents are made, the concern is focused on inappropriate behavior. In a study conducted by Finders and Lewis (1994), parents reported that they only heard from the school when there was a problem with their children, and no solutions were offered. This practice alone serves as red flags to African American parents in urban public school settings, alerting them to possible injustice or unfairness; therefore they facilitate or exacerbating feelings of distrust. The unfairness and the feelings of distrust are displayed in inequitable discipline practices. The “Dear Colleague” letter Education and Title VI (1991) addresses the right of all students to education under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Which protects people from discrimination based on race, color, or national orgin in programs or activities that receive Federal financial assistance form the U.S. Department of Education. The injustice in the discipline practice occurs when lack of communication happens between the teacher and parent. The breakdown in communication does not allow for any preventive steps to occur to build a positive relationship with the parent and the child, especially for African American parents. Some teachers are not equipped to deal with African American students because of their defiency of other cultural experiences, knowledge and professional development. Inadequate discipline practices within urban public schools can be situated within a critical race theory lens.
Figure 4 Suspension and Expulsions by Race and Ethnicity

Note: Detail may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Totals: Enrollment is 49 million students, in school suspension is 3.5 million students, single-out-of-school suspension is 1.9 million students, multiple out of school suspension is 1.55 million students, and expulsion is 130,000 students. Data reported in this figure represent 99% if responding schools.


The notion of analyzing critical race theory sheds light on how both the macro- and microenvironments of schooling are permeated with distrust and negative cultural values,
allowing the manifestations of racist beliefs to take on both institutional and individual forms (Villenas & Dehyle, 1999). Discipline practices is one role were critical race theory can be manifested. Professional development opportunities examining discipline practices and addressing culture disconnects between families and educators through a critical race theory lens should be constructed and implemented in urban public schools. If school officials are to realize an authentic, democratic, mutually expedient, reciprocal partnership with families who have been marginalized; then courageous conversations that are framed through a social justice racial lens need to be confronted and addressed. Delpit (1998) states, “we must learn to be vulnerable enough to allow our world to turn upside down in order to allow the realities of other to edge themselves into our consciousness” (p.297) According to Singleton & Linton (2006) courageous conversations are examples on how to open dialogue based on race and cultural beliefs. Courageous conversations defined as conversations that opens dialogue and are set to be cultural strengthening from the inside out. They are a skill set that prevents conflict and builds collaboration among colleagues. Courageous conversation between collaborative partnerships will help address the quality of underserved African American families and students’ education because the open dialog should build truths.

African American families and community members in urban public school systems are key players when considering the educational narratives and conversations of under representative students and parents. Including them in the discourse is vital to understanding the condition in which underrepresented students and parents find themselves within U.S. schools holistically. Only with this broadened scope can solution-oriented thinking be derived. Delgado and Stefancic (2001) states:
Many victims of racial discrimination suffer in silence or blame themselves for their predicament. Personal narratives give voice and reveal that others have similar experiences. Stories can name a type of discrimination once named; it can be combated. If the race is not real or objective but constructed, racism and prejudice should be capable of deconstruction (p.43).

African American students, parents and family members that are marginalized often suffer in silence. They do not get the opportunity to offer critical insight into racism between the teacher-student relationships. African American parents of urban public schools that exercise their rights and become advocates for their children give their children a sense of purpose and student achievement. This type of vigilant involvement gives students a sense of self-esteem and self-efficacy to succeed. Families have to be persistent and empower themselves and their children to understand the strains that are associated with being underrepresented and underserved in a predominantly white bureaucratic urban public school district. African American families must hold educators accountable for the educational malpractice enacted against them and become engaged in advocacy opportunities to analyze the racially charged systems in which their students attend. (Reynolds, 2009)

**Problems with Leadership Style**

Family, school and community involvement activities have often unfortunately operated from a traditional leadership approach and not a servant leadership approach. Traditional leadership that is found in most of today’s urban public schools involves the accumulation and exercise of power by one at the top of the pyramid. By comparison, servant leaders share power and have a mindset that educators alone cannot help children intellectually, personally, socially and morally-develop all the knowledge, attitudes and skills they need to be productive citizens.
and caring people as adults” (Dodd & Konzal, 2002, p.27). This work deconstructs what has been identified as traditional leadership methods by highlighting how such methods are not effective for students and parents within an urban context. Ultimately, generative processes using a servant leadership approach creates educational access and opportunities for African American students, parents and families. Servant leadership models as a framework supports the inclusion of narratives that tell stories about the collaboration of family, school and community networks as one equal unit of power. It is this equal unit of power that has the potential to shift how we understand parental involvement and eventually, increases our capacity as urban school leaders to more effectively support the academic achievement of our most vulnerable students. Given the academic outcomes of African American students, paradigms must be created which allow strong engagement opportunities to give account of their experiences in schools. Educators should understand the importance of counter storytelling and narratives. The use of narrative and storytelling offers what Linda Tillman (2002) refers to as "culturally sensitive research approaches" for people of color? Tillman describes these approaches as "interpretive paradigms that offer greater possibilities for the use of alternative frameworks, co-constructions of multiple realities and experiences, and knowledge that can lead to improved educational opportunities for African Americans" (p.5). Allowing the perspectives of African American families to be given and analyzed furthers the understanding of parent-school relationships and the multiple variables that serve to facilitate or impede them. (Edwards et al, 1999; Fields-Smith, 2005; Noguera, 2001; Yan, 2000).

In order to improve parent-school relationships district leaders must develop system-wide policies and practices that support all families to enhance their children’s experiences in schools.
District leaders should create culture partnerships and high standards for community and family friendly partnerships to improve the current conditions of schools.

When African American families experiences become a part of a school improvement process, district and school staff can name and act on the specific ways in which the district involves family and community members. Collaborative networks of family, school and community school improvement should include:

a. the process of districts hiring teachers or well-trained paraprofessionals to fill parent coordinator positions

b. superintendents and deputies holding principals accountable for strong and measurable outreach to families and community members

c. administration leaders sharing examples of effective family involvement practices with school staff districts offering professional development in many settings leadership academies, and cluster meetings, districts including parents in ongoing student assessments— for example, by developing parent and community surveys that will provide information concerning involvement (Henderson, 2007).

Urban school districts that are serious about addressing their school improving processes in order to close the achievement gap, will also have to be serious about closing the gap between educational leaders cultural differences that create variabilities between establishing welcoming partnerships with underserved families. According to the Harvard Civil Rights Project, NCLB has not yet made significant progress toward closing the achievement gap³. Teachers, parents, administrators, office holders, community members, students, family members, and local organizations must work together to close the achievement gap.

With strong leadership, constant and open communication, and a passion for partnership, the mission to address possibilities to improve and reframe educational conditions in urban public schools and maybe start to close the achievement gap can be attainable.
Problems within Media Stereotypes

The motion picture *Won’t Back Down*, shows two women from opposite sides of the social and economic track, but they have one thing in common: a mission to fix their community's broken school and ensure a bright future for their children (Johnson & Barnz, 2012). *Won’t Back Down* (Johnson & Barnz, 2012) is a film that captures two women who refuse to let any obstacles stand in their way as they battle a bureaucracy that is hopelessly mirrored in traditional thinking, and they seek to re-energize a faculty that has lost its passion for teaching. In addition, there is the educational injustice depicted on African American males in the documentaries of *American Promise* a film 13 years in the making. *American Promise* (Brewster & Stephenson, 2013) provides a rare look into the lives of two middle class Black families as they navigate the difficulties of parenting and educating their sons with the goal to empower boys, the parents and educators eventually bridged together to help close the black male achievement gap. *Beyond the Bricks* (Washington & Koen, 2009) is another film that supports parent advocacy and collaboration. *Beyond the Bricks, American Promise, Won’t Back Down* are fictitious and non-fictitious examples of media and international community engagement initiative to encourage and promote community-based solutions to increase positive educational and social outcomes in various educational settings.

Over the last half century, American families have changed dramatically with increasing numbers of single-parent households, more varied family structures, increasing numbers of working mothers, less father involvement more children living in poverty and a rising number of homeless families (Moore, Chalf, Scarpa & Vandivere, 2002), Whitaker and Fiore (2001) maintain that parents are parents- that today’s parent are not significantly different from parent of
50 years ago. “Parents still want what is best for their children regardless of their backgrounds” (Christopher, 1996, p.5)

Social inequalities such as poverty and negative stereotypes that define minorities just perpetuated constant bleak outcomes. Culture encompasses everything around us; it is a part of every environment. Often we forget that children and youth bring their very own culture from home into a school, and, as a result, they may struggle with trying to make it all fit. Successful learning depends greatly on everyone’s ability to accept, listen, and embrace cultural diversity so that we can celebrate our unique strengths and contributions to our school community, one that is composed of families (parents and guardians), children and youth, educators, and administrators. (as cited in Education our Children Together, 2003) Just imagine what can happen if we give ourselves the opportunity to learn from the contributions that our many historical cultures and social theories bring to the table. Higginbotham (2001) states,

Around this nation, many people of color are taking seats at the table. Yet you do not just walk in and take a seat at the table. It is a long path to the table. And you are aware of all the steps from the kitchen to the dining room, and of that careful walk on the carpet. You have to attend to your step, so you do not trip, and then gently pull out the chair and sit down. And you need to know the appropriate way to use the array of forks, spoons, and knives. Which is your bread plate and in what direction do you pass the food? As you eat the meal, these considerations make for hard work (p.239). Parental guidance continues to be a critical and decisive factor in the education of children, and there are perceptions of urban public schools as breeding grounds for inequitable educational conditions, assumptions, perceptions and social theories. Students in urban public schools are falling behind their white counter-parts. The convictions that drive from our culture shape the way we believe, exist, operate, and relate with each other and with
those outside of our culture. Our prospect and cultural belief systems reflect our values, perceptions and viewpoints and at the same time can seal our psyche to accepting other ways of thinking and doing. Generett & Hicks (2004) also state “people of color as well as those socialized into a White identity must find a way to bring not only their best hopes, but be willing to navigate the complicated history each of us brings to the table-our silent and voiced expectations, fears, embarrassments, guilt, joys and dreams” (pg 689). The need for educational leaders, families, parents, community grassroots organizations and policy makers to address the inequities and negative systemic barriers within urban public school systems is crucial in order to get different groups of people to think of different ways marginalized parents and families can become actively engaged in urban public school settings.
CHAPTER 2

UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL THEORIES AND FRAMEWORKS AS A MATTER OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

Chapter 2 defines and discusses social theoretical frameworks that underserved parents experience as challenges for engagement within urban public school settings as a matter of social justice.

Social Justice Lenses

The No Child Left Behind Policy states that family, school, and community engagement is sought to address the issues of parents participating more regularly in schools as documented with a critical assessment of the need to empower parents in support of overall student performance (U.S. Department of Education, 1994). It is a challenge for educational institutions to develop collaborations with parental, family and community engagement activities while considering the demographical, social and educational needs of the community in which they serve in a matter of social justice. Social justice is equated with the notion of equality or equal opportunity in society. Dr. Matthew Robinson from Appalachian State University explains the term of social justice:

Social justice is defined as "…..promoting a just society by challenging injustice and valuing diversity." It exists when "all people share a common humanity and, therefore, have a right to equitable treatment, support for their human rights, and a fair allocation of community resources."4 In conditions of social justice, people are "not to be discriminated against, nor their welfare and well-being constrained or prejudiced on the basis of gender, sexuality, religion, political affiliations, age,

---

race, belief, disability, location, social class, socio-economic circumstances, or other characteristic of background or group membership." (Toowomba Catholic Education, 2006)⁵

Although equality is undeniably part of social justice, the meaning of social justice is much broader (Scherlen & Robinson, 2008). Further, "equal opportunity" and similar phrases such as "personal responsibility" have been used to diminish the perspective for realizing social justice by justifying enormous inequalities in modern society (Berry, 2005). The most recent theories of scholarly statements about social justice illustrate the complex nature of the concept.

Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, after the publication of Pedagogy of the Oppressed in 1971, became closely associated with teaching for social justice. Freire (1970) expounds the belief that teaching is a political act that is never neutral. Over the course of dozens of books, Freire proposed that educators focus on creating equity and changing systems of oppression within marginalized public schools and communities. Therefore, to support Freire’s definition the main goal of engaging in social justice through educational parent and student engagement is to fight oppression by giving all groups the opportunity to receive resources more equally. While fighting oppression is important, it is crucial that everyone is not treated the same, or to respond as if those differences are only individualistic. As soon as that happens, we run the risk of losing sight of “institutional inequities and historical power imbalances” (ps. 134-154).

Esposito and Swain (2009) studied urban teachers that promote social justice in their teaching by using culturally relevant pedagogy. Esposito and Swain found that these teachers that engage in social justice through their teaching had to ensure that their students thrive not only academically, but also socially, which could create a burden on educators. By promoting

social justice pedagogy, students can increase a sociopolitical consciousness, have a sense of urgency, and help students develop a positive social and cultural identity. (ps. 38-48) Merely trying to become equal is not enough, learning means you are willing to accept and recognize other people’s differences and backgrounds. The lack of not being open to recognizing different cultural backgrounds and learning curves creates negative perceptions for underserved African American parents in urban public school systems and their children.

Deficit Paradigm and Discontinuity Paradigm: Anyon (1997) writes that often teachers who work in urban environments often reinforce deficit thinking to their students by having low expectations, give low-level assignments, and speak in ways that are demeaning and demoralizing. Feagin (2006) reminded us that deficit practices are indicative of a racist frame that promotes inferiority and maintains white supremacy. Ford (1996) added that a byproduct of the deficit paradigm in education is “blaming the victim” for underperformance. Indeed, this paradigm views educational failure as a direct result of pathologies within marginalized families, communities, and cultures (Fordham, 1996; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Webster (2004) states the pessimistic views held by educators and policy makers regarding parents in urban public schools are largely informed by the rhetoric, romanticism, and cultural views surrounding their notions of parental involvement. These constructed politicized viewpoints often categorize minority and low-income parents as uninvolved (p. 117). The lack of understanding the cultural viewpoints of underserved parents often blocks school officials’ understandings of the complexities that are often plagued by underserved parents such as violence, single parent households, drug abuse and poverty. Therefore, deficit paradigm thinking becomes problematic in developing family, school and community involvement networks when school agents and students come from different cultures and economic backgrounds. Deficit-thinking paradigm places the blame on families,
communities and cultures. The discontinuity paradigm places the primary responsibility, not necessarily blame, for success and failure on members of the schooling system (i.e., teachers, counselors, and administrators). This type of failure supports that school officials are not socially adequately trained in cultural responsive thinking in order to improve engagement situations between the school and underserved families. Bourdieu's theory is suggesting that different social groups differ in terms of educational habitus and cultural capital. (Lareau, 2001) Race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and parental educational attainment were proxies for social status. The next section will support that different levels of parent involvement may reflect differences in parents’ habits for educational involvement, while different effects of parent involvement may reflect differences in levels of cultural capital and educational resources within the school committee.

Social and Cultural Capital: Carbonaro (1998) defines social capital as the sum of the collective interactions and relationships that can potentially provide a social benefit to a person or group of people. It refers to connections within and among social networks, as well as connections among individuals. It has been demonstrated by many students that the amount of parent engagement in education in and out of school is highly correlated with the amount of social capital those parents have in a community (Calpan, Choy & Whitmore, 1992; Kahne & Baily, 1999). McNeal of the University of Connecticut (1999) equated family involvement with increased social capital.

Education-related social capital possessed by parents is obtained through their involvement and/or knowledge of how school functions to promote achievement. Social capital also involves social relationships or networks that provide parents/families with access to resources. These resources include advanced coursework, highly qualified teachers, money,
various professional development trainings, state of the art technology and facilities. One might argue that if families living in urban communities are able to increase their social capital, then inequality will decrease. Furthermore, they will have greater access to educational opportunities and resources by being more integrated within larger educational institutions. Students and family from lower socio-economic contexts are often blamed because of their unvalued social capital. Cultural capital is the advantage gained by middle-class, educated European American parents from knowing, preferring, and experiencing a lifestyle congruent with the culture that is dominant in most American schools (Grenfell & James, 1998). Families that possess social and cultural capital are comfortable engaging educators in discussions surrounding how their children are instructed while underserved parents with children that attend urban public schools may be less apt to do so in a formal sense. When parents have the opportunities to share insights on how their students learn and are willing to talk with school personnel in a trusting atmosphere engagement and involvement will increase. The different variability of family, school, and community engagement currently in urban public school settings leads to inequitable structures of power.

It is imperative that marginalized parents, families and community members need to understand that involvement and knowledge are social capital avenues to hold teachers and principals accountable in order to educate all students and the families that they serve. State and federal legislations address that it is principals and teachers jobs to respond to all families who are asking questions, raising concerns and voicing their frustration regardless of their comfort levels. The procedures within the legislations state that parents must become engaged and school officials must find ways to make all parents feel welcomed and valued within the education systems but the credentialing requirements of states for teachers and administrators
require very little when it comes to how racial/ethnic/cultural oppression in the United States negatively impacts education outcomes. John Browne (2013) states that teachers and administrators must be supported in developing the capacity to identify and change instances of institutionalized racism, sexism and classism (p. 84). School officials must be culturally courageous leaders that are willing to have conversation in order to break away from communication and social capital barriers. When social and cultural capital is evident within marginalized communities within urban public school environments, culturally and linguistically diverse students can excel in academic endeavors. When culture, language, heritage, and experiences are valued and used to facilitate learning and development, and when urban students and families are provided access to high-quality culturally competent instructional leaders, programs, and resources students learn and communities flourish (Gay, 2000; Nieto, 1999). In addition to having access to high quality culturally competent instructional leaders and resources, one of the most talked about but passively addressed barriers, is the limited understanding of cultural pedagogy practices. Cultural responsiveness requires cultural content knowledge. Sheets and Gay (1996) commented:

Teachers need to understand the cultural heritages of different ethnic groups, how they sanction behavior and celebrate accomplishments, and their rules of decorum, deference, and etiquette. They need to understand the value orientations, standards of achievements, social taboos, relational patterns, communication styles, motivational systems, and learning styles of different ethnic groups. These should then be employed in managing the behavior of students, as well as teaching them (p.92).
For the purpose of this next section, we will look at families and communities negative experiences with cultural behavioral differences through a social justice lens by using a critical race theory approach to acknowledge the strengths, abilities and skills that marginalized groups of people acquire from their homes and communities in order to combat the struggle against social justice (Yosso, 2005).

**Critical Race Theory:** When social and cultural capital is evident within urban communities and schools culturally and linguistically diverse students can excel in academic endeavors. When culture, language, heritage, and experiences are valued and used to facilitate learning and development, and when urban students and families are provided access to high quality culturally competent instructional leaders, programs, and resources students learn and communities flourish (cf. Gay, 2000; Nieto, 1999). One of the most talked about but passively addressed barriers, is the limited understanding of cultural pedagogy practices. Research states that African American parents relate their experiences with school officials with cultural differences. Therefore, researchers often analyze the negative experiences in schools with a critical race framework. For the purpose of this claim, we will look at families and communities negative experiences with cultural behavioral differences through a social justice lens by using Critical Race Theory.

Critical Race Theory (CRT), which initially emerged from the field of critical legal studies (Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, & Crenshaw, 1993; Delgado, 1995), is the normalcy and permanence of racism (Bell, 1992). Critical race theorists assert that racism is and has been an integral feature of U.S. life, law, and culture, and any attempt to address and eradicate racial inequities must be grounded in the socio-historical legacy of racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000).
It is through this lens of racism and all its implications that CRT challenges racial oppression and subjugation in legal, institutional, and educational domains. Central to this analysis is the notion of Whiteness as property which was described in the beginning of the introduction to this work as one of the fundamental problems of parent engagement in urban public school settings. CRT, like white privilege, investigates the position and privilege that comes with being White in the U.S., and seeks to challenge ideas such as meritocracy, fairness, and objectivity in a society that has a legacy of racial discrimination and exclusion (Crenshaw et al., 1995). CRT used within the field of education is an evolving methodological, conceptual, and theoretical construct that attempts to examine and disrupt race and racism found in the schooling system (Solórzano, 1998). For the purpose of this problem of practice, CRT supports how various marginalized parents and communities in urban public school environments feel that some teacher’s bias backgrounds of culture diversity, race and racism are negatively influencing their involvement in schools and their children’s educational outcomes. Using CRT as a theoretical framework for examining the experiences of marginalized families in urban public schools is imperative because race has been, and remains largely under-theorized in education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

A theoretical framework centered squarely on the salience of race, racism, sexism and power, and the education of racially diverse students in this country warrants families, parents, students, researchers, and educators to have a necessary conversation (Howard & Reynolds, 2008) and give voice to the unheard. Educators often assume that families in urban public school systems have cultural values and norms that do not support or complement the culture of education (Delpit, 1995; Edwards et al., 1999; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Noguera, 2001; Yan, 2000). Thus, many educators, along with policy-makers accept the idea that marginalized
families in urban public school settings are more of a deficit to their children’s educational development than an asset. The deficit thinking mindsets of school officials along with the negative instructional strategies that are associated with critical race theory and absence of strong cultural and social capital resources are detrimental to collaborative engagement strategies that are centered around providing opportunities for underserved parents to be involved in urban school reform. African American families and students should be looked upon for their positive contributions to educations and not blamed for their failures. Researchers such as (Dudley–Marling, 2007; Garcia & Guerra, 2004; Skrla & Scheurich, 2001) noted that African American families and students are approached from a deficit perspective. Deficit model thinking does not help African American families and students to reach their full educational opportunities. Race plays an important role for the educational opportunities that are afforded to African American families and students. Critical race and deficit model thinking provides a framework for understanding barriers, assumptions, and failures for parent and family engagement within urban public schools. In addition (Garcia & Guerra, 2004) states deficit thinking is highly prevalent in teacher and school belief systems. Ketrovics & Nussel (1994) and Persell (1997) (as cited in Solorzano, 1997) explains:

This deficit models gets applied in the classroom, and to students of color, by teachers who are professionally trained in college, and specially in a teach education curriculum that reflects an individualistic, and cultural deficit explanation of low minority education attainment (p.13)

CRT and combatting deficit model thinking are theoretical ways of addressing the lack of African American educational opportunities. By using a critical race theory framework researchers take an academic discipline focused upon the application of critical theory to analyze
society and culture, white supremacy, laws and power (Yosso, 2005). Combined they challenge the dominant ideologies of colorblindness in order to foster commitments a better understanding of social justice by knowledge gained from urban families and community member’s personal narratives and experiences. As a conceptual framework, CRT provides the analytical power to explain the persistence of racism in educational policies and practices, as well as the rationales used for and against confronting unjust practices in urban public schools (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

**Figure 6 Social Justice Framework for Family, School and Community Networks**

In addition to the social theoretical frameworks outlined, it is important to consider designs for learning and actions that will provide generative impacts of change for parents,
students and communities in urban public schools. The next chapter will describe a model that incorporates various standards of practice based upon the challenges presented.
CHAPTER 3
DESIGN FOR LEARNING

The Learning Processes

The purpose of the learning processes is to use a Network Improvement Community to determine why there is a lack of engagement for African American parents, families and students that are marginalized in urban public school settings. The Network Improvement Community framework will hopefully help stakeholders learn and enact change that supports the advancement of authentic parent, family and community engagement within urban public schools. The following will describe the key objectives of forming sustainable diverse learning processes and collaborative networks for parents, students, schools and community stakeholders.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parents, Students, Community Stakeholders learning processes</th>
<th>Schools learning processes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• advocate and empower</td>
<td>• have a safe and welcoming school climate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• develop a shared vision or mission</td>
<td>• have transparent policies and practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• become informed about teaching and learning</td>
<td>• have diverse population of professionals, role models and mentors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• have an opportunity to engage in activities, meetings, and planning forums</td>
<td>• increase communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• gain an insight into how diverse groups of people learn as individuals and together</td>
<td>• revamp the organization and school composition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• promote academic values and goals</td>
<td>• have courageous conversations about barriers such as race and perceptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• have meaningful connections inside and outside of schools</td>
<td>• have an opportunity to work with culturally diverse population of people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• use resources inside and outside of school</td>
<td>• provide positive role models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• have a sense of belongings to the school culture</td>
<td>• build on the important links already established between home and school;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• highly qualified effective supporting teachers</td>
<td>• see improved student, parent and community engagement and confidence when communicating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• be more willing to be involved and motivated to be engaged in learning opportunities inside and outside of school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• have mental, physical and emotional needs recognized and addressed inside and outside of school

• gain further professional development based on theories, practices, research, and conflict resolution strategies that are based on the stakeholders and learning process

• have effective culturally relevant curriculum and pedagogy

• restructure roles and responsibilities of district leaders, teachers unions, school boards, administrators for planning and implementing educational school improvement practices

• have mutual respect, trust and effective two-way communication

Bryk A. S., Gomez, L. M., Grunow A. (2010) state “If all actors, throughout the system, began to conceive their jobs as transforming an Industrial Age compliance structure into a profession of competent, skilled and continuously learning practitioners, collectively we might finally be able to move our education systems into the twenty-first century by building (NIC) network improvement communities” (p. 64).

**Networked Improvement Communities**

Networked Improvement Communities (NICs) are frameworks that all educational stakeholders can use to leverage change in schools. A networked improvement community is a “distinct network that arranges human and technical resources so that the community is capable of “getting better at getting better,” (Bryk, Gomez & Gunrow, 2010, p.6; Englebart, 2003). In addition, Maureen Hallinan text *Frontiers in Sociology of Education (2011)* describes a Network Improvement Community by various researchers and the Carnegie Foundation concerning mathematics preparation and community college enrollment as the following:
Bryk et al. supports the growth of a networked improvement community aimed at doubling the proportion of community college students who, within one year of community college enrollment, are prepared mathematically to succeed in further academic or occupational pursuits. Carnegie’s first effort launch a Carnegie Statway Network. The network redesigned traditional developmental mathematics by creating a one-year pathway to and through statistics that integrated necessary mathematics learning along the way. Statway is Carnegie’s first effort with a small number of structured pathways to success. Taken together, this assembled expertise provides the initiating social form for NIC, which are called a Collaboratory. Bryk and Gomez (2008) stated any intervention that is human and social resource intensive, as is the case for most educational improvement efforts, requires organizational and institutional structuring to build capacity. (pgs. 134-135)

The next section will dissect the issue of building capacity through network improvement efforts to increase African American parent/family and community engagement. A Network Improvement Community framework will be used during this practice to learn and get better at engaging marginalized groups of people about the problem and create change. According to Bryk, Gomez, and Grunow (2010), “Networks enable individuals from many different contexts to participate according to their interests and expertise while sustaining collective attention on progress toward common goals” (p. 5) Therefore, networks to discuss the lack of engagement of African American parents and families in urban public school settings can be developed to improve the situation. Anthony Bryk (2014) offers six core principles for Networked Improvement Communities: make the work problem specific, variation in performance is the core problem to address, see the system that produces the current outcomes, we cannot improve
at scale what we cannot measure, anchor practice improvement in disciplined inquiry, and accelerate improvements through networked communities. The design for learning to address the engagement of African American parents and community members will use the six core principles and the expertise from school, the academy, and community (SAC) partnerships through network improvement communities. The network improvement community discussion will be based on an inquiry driven model of improvement such as the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle.

**The Plan Do Study Act**

The Plan-Do-Study- Act (PDSA) cycle (Langley, Moen, Nolan, Norma, & Provost, 2009) will be used as a process of inquiry to address the lack of parental and community engagement. This cycle will provide a focus; build relationships and communication opportunities between families, school and community stakeholders. During the PDSA cycle suggested methods to identify and engage the school and community while focusing on the ideology, resources, programs and tools presented by the stakeholders in the group. In addition, by using the PDSA cycle avenues will open to have critical discussion around data, culture, pedagogy, social capital, and resource-sharing opportunities related to engagement programs and policies. Critical discussions will help confirm why it is important to focus on engagement efforts that develop opportunities regarding educational equity in urban public schools. The use of the PDSA cycle offers a shared network approach for diverse stakeholders to come together using three guided questions. (See Figure 7)
The first stage in this cycle is the planning stage. In this first stage, questions are developed to try to understand the problem and how the problem affects the system. This stage is where everyone should have a shared understanding to the challenges of the problem embedded within the system. The improvement model will provide a focus that creates a common goal of how to develop a platform for educational stakeholders to come to gather and address the engagement problem within urban public schools using common language and terminology. The PDSA cycle will create common language to address the identified needs of parents, schools and communities. Clear relationships and communication that increase engagement between
families, school and community members will support a theory of collective impact that
develops the pursuit for educational equity, and social justice. The PDSA cycle provides for a
democratic planning approach and allows the value to be placed within the knowledge that
diverse school, community, and parents brings to the table. All stakeholders take on an active
participatory role. Within this stage comes the challenge of the direction on how the problem
will be addressed. Bryk et al (2010) suggest a driver diagram as one of the means of executing
within the planning phase. Langley et al (2009) defines a driver diagram as, “A tool to help
organize our theories and ideas in an improvement effort” (p. 429). The driver diagram illustrates
a direction that is going to be used to address the problem and provide improvements. The driver
diagram used as a guide provides a shared understanding of the problem and how each parent,
school and/ or community focus groups could have shared ownership to create improvement.
(See Figure 8)
The driver diagrams purpose is to not allow for a single personalized direction. It provides a collective plan for a collaborative approach for improvement within the overall system. This diagram allows stakeholders to observe the overall logic as they aim toward a process that yields action. The aim statement within this problem of practice is to increase engagement efforts for marginalized African American parents/families that are underrepresented in family, school and community networks in urban public schools.
Through the development of the **plan** stakeholders are able to empower themselves and their groups and have a shared focus that sets up the next phase of the cycle, which is the do. During the **do** cycle, multiple measures and data are collected to analyze. Next the **study** phase is initiated. During the study phase, the problem is examined to determine if changes that are occurring are sustainable improvements. For example questions such as: Did we increase parental engagement for the year and how do we know are parental engagement efforts are going to continue? Are there other followers and action plans being developed out of the process? During this phase data and other decisions are being made to continue the work. After the study phase the fourth and final phase of the improvement cycle is an **act**. During the **act phase** the cycle is tested, and based on the failures that are experienced from the plan, do, study, act cycles new developments should occur that are learning opportunities to adjust and make improvements.

**Reflections and Personal Narratives of the Problem**

My experience with African American parents and children in an urban school district has helped me understand that often school officials believe that they have the answers and are more capable of leading the discussion. Ultimately, they minimize African American parents, families and students personal narratives. Narratives and counter storytelling is a methodological tool with a history in communities of color that use oral interpretation to convey stories and struggles often not validated by the dominant culture. Counter storytelling and the inclusion of narratives as a mode of inquiry offer a methodology grounded in the detailed particulars of the social realities and lived experiences of radicalized peoples (Matsuda et al., 1993). Delgado (1999) refers to counter storytelling as a method of telling the stories of individuals whose experiences have not been told, and a tool for analyzing and challenging the stories of those in
power and whose story is naturally included in the dominant discourse. Given the academic outcomes of African American students, paradigms must be created which allows strong engagement opportunities to give accounts of their experiences in schools. For example, the following narratives describe situations that have occurred in urban public school settings between parents and teachers:

**Cicely:** is a 34-year-old working African American mother. She is single and has two girls. She once went to the school to inquire about her oldest girl getting into the Science and Mathematical program. She had heard several other white parents talking about the class and the program and wanted to see if her child could be moved into the program. As a parent, she is constantly on top of her daughter’s educational track. This mother did all of the research in order to make sure her daughter met all of the qualifications. She then called the principal to ask if her daughter can get into the program. The principal responded that the program was not accepting any more students at this time. Therefore, she cannot enter the program. As a mother that has not had any problems within the school took the principals responds as face value, until she heard a week later when she attended a PTA meeting and one of the other parents that were white stated that her daughter just got into the Science and Mathematical program. Cicely found out not only did the student get in but also she did not have all of the program qualifications.

Many times African American parents experience different forms of racism when advocating for their children therefore they avoid involvement in schools to avoid problems (Howard & Reynolds, 2008). Teachers are often white women whose own educational and life experiences are considerably different from the students in urban schools, and teacher’s educational trainings may not include developing skills that prepare them for racial and cultural diversity (Wiggins, Follo, & Eberly, 2007).
**Danita:** is a minority single parent at an urban school district that lives in poverty. When she attends meetings at her son’s school she sometimes feels intimidated. None of the staff members look like her. The educational staff is dressed in suits and sitting around a huge conference table. In her opinion, when she sits down the staff members at the table begin to intimidate her by speaking down to her and making faces during her response. They are consistent with telling her how bad her son is and how she should be a better parent.

Oftentimes, African American parents exhibit less parent involvement in urban school districts because of differences in financial resources, educational knowledge, and experiences with and confidence in the educational system (Grenfell & James, 1998). Cultural capital for urban families should exist in three forms: personal dispositions, attitudes, and knowledge gained from experience.

**David:** is a working class African American parent. He is frustrated by the language and tone used by teachers during a conference. They asked many personal questions. Where do you work? Are you and the mother married? Do you live with your son? Why are you not able to make more meetings if you feel that your child’s education is important? David wants to be more involved, but because of his work schedule he cannot make most of the meetings. He works at a low skilled paying job that does not offer sick days or compensation time in order to attend the meetings at the school regularly. David feels that the questions he was asked were racist and that the school is an institution that he cannot trust. He believes that the school officials are very judgmental and have a lack of respect for African American fathers and their children. David also feels that the events at the school are mainly geared to middle-class white parents and that they are often isolated from making decisions concerning school improvement meetings.
Racial discrimination affects the engagement of African American students, parents, families and schools. When discrimination is evident relationships, trust and self-esteem are affected in a negative manner. Therefore, African American parents must ensure engagement efforts powerful enough to build resilience and a voice to speak up, advocate and create a presence for oneself. Increase parental and community engagement must create a message that develops self-worth, self-esteem and self-insurance. The manner in which African American families and communities engage and teach their children about oneself goals, aspirations and how to navigate against blocked opportunities will open more doors and create unity, positive academic outcomes and overall efficacy. African American families, especially youth often face social positions in which their educational careers and aspirations are compromised because of lack of parental engagement, poverty, family stressors, teacher discouragement, inadequate community resources and increase negative neighborhood pressures. Therefore, placing urban families and community partners at the table using networked improvement communities, as an opportunity to learn and improve the conditions of engagement to change the current educational process of involvement is a national urgency. The partnership is one in which urban parents, especially those of color are often powerless, silenced, and disregarded (Lewis & Foreman, 2002). The convictions that derive from the culture shapes the way we believe, exist, operate, and relate with each other and with those outside of the culture. The different variability’s of family, parent, and community engagement in schools currently leads to inequitable structures of power within the educational system understanding that race and cultural bias have an impact on urban families from all socio-economic levels, and this affects parent involvement with schools (McAdoo, 2006).
In summary, unfortunately, teachers can be skeptical of parents who are not involved in children’s schooling and therefore their social capital is devalued (Doucet, 2008). The role of African American parents and community members in decision making regarding involvement and engagement strategies have been inconsistent, not sustainable and nonexistent. Delpit (1988) suggests that appropriate education for poor children and children of color can only be devised in consultation with adults who share their culture. Black parents, teachers of color and members of poor communities must be allowed to participate fully in the discussion of what kind of instruction is in their children’s best interest” (p.296). All educational stakeholders have to turn ourselves inside out, giving up our own sense of who we are, and being willing to see ourselves in the unflattering light of another’s angry gaze” (Delpit, 1995, p. 46). The next section acknowledges how an equity transformation relates to family, school and community engagement networks.

**Equity Transformation - Family, School and Community Engagement**

Historically underserved families and students of color have been groups of people alienated despite reform parenting funding and legislations (Lipman, 1998). Economic, political, educational, and cultural influences perpetuate policy decisions favoring the privileged classes (Artiz & Murphy, 2000). Often teachers of underachieving urban public schools do not feel they should be held accountable for failing scores, building trusting relationships and culturally diverse partnerships. Therefore, equity transformations cannot be successful without accountability measures that counteract with personal or organizational cultural bias that permeate the hallways and classrooms of urban public schools. Equity transformations and political power to change how and when underrepresented/ marginalized groups of people get involved with schools really rest with the parents, families and community members. Families
and community stakeholders with underutilized collective voices have made it easy for schools to frequently overlook families and community members as a resource for educational change. Unfortunately, structures are not created or maintained to increase family and community involvement for marginalized groups of people, especially for African Americans, because of the lack of consistency from the makers of parent involvement policies or the constituents that they serve. An underlying implication to the challenges faced to increase family and community involvement networks are to build and develop trusting relationships between the school, student, parents and community members and openly address issues around race, racism and classism that has systemic negative impacts on urban public schools. More specifically, when parents emphasize their self-worth and express racial equality they may be able to combat the negative effects of institutional racism and stereotype threats (Steele, 1997). Steele maintained that overcoming stereotype threat is key to achieving integration of our society that goes beyond statistics and “allows people to flourish in an integrated setting” (Steele & Aronson, 1995).

**Racism / Critical Race Theory - Family, School and Community Engagement**

Family, parental and community engagement negative historical analysis framed by critical race theory examines a concern with race and ethnicity by centering the discussion of inequality within the context of race and racism (Sleeter & Delgado-Bernal, 2003). Critical race theory in relation to family, parental and community involvement serves as a conceptual framework to challenge and dismantle prevailing notions of fairness, meritocracy, colorblindness, and neutrality in the education of racial minorities (Parker, Deyhle, & Villenas, 1999). Ladson-Billings states that CRT, though the use of storytelling and narratives can develop” deeply contextualized understandings” (Ladson-Billings, 2003 p.11) Race and cultural politics revolve as our diverse perspective and priorities to the dominant group based on power
and power relations between people. (Jordan & Weedon, 1995) Therefore, racism describes the combination of individual prejudice and individual discrimination, on the one hand, and institutional polices and practice, on the other, that result in the unjustified negative treatment and subordination of members of a racial or ethnic group. By convention the term racism has been reserved to describe the mistreatment of members of racial and ethnic group that have experienced a history of discrimination, prejudice, and racism (p. 595) According to Julian Weissglass (2001) Racism is the systematic mistreatment of certain groups of people often refer to as people of color on the basis of skin color and other physical characteristics. This mistreatment carried out by societal institutions, or by people conditioned by the society to act, consciously or unconsciously, in harmful ways toward people of color. The difference is that in this country, people of color face systemic and ongoing personal and institutionalized biases every day. (p. 49) Institutional and cultural racism is alive and well in the United States. Helms (1990) suggest Whites can overcome a history of ignorance and superiority by abandoning individual, cultural and institutional racism. The next section will deliberatively look at the impact of cultural diversity and family, school and community engagement networks.

**Culture Diversity - Family, School and Community Engagement**

The lack of knowledge of cultural diversity has had major negative impacts on schools, which has caused tension between students, parents and community members from non-dominant social economic classes of people. Negative race relations, race, institutional racism and cultural perspectives have continuous shaped our urban public school systems and the people invited to the table to enact changes. Cultural democracy is a form of social justice, and improving it requires changing attitudes / behaviors and school organization norms that demonstrate a lack of respect for the cultural heritage, norms, beliefs, and customs of certain
groups. Ramirez and Castaneda define cultural democracy as “a philosophical precept which recognizes that the way a person communicates, relates to others, sells support and recognition from his environment… and things as learn … it is a product of the value system of his home and community” (1974, p. 23). Ramirez and Castaneda also refer to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which states that “educational environments or policies that do not recognize the individual’s right to remain identified with culture and language of his cultural group are culturally undemocratic” (p. 23). Therefore, family and community members as culturally courageous leaders can change personal and institutional racially charged bias. Socioeconomic status and perceived racial group affiliations help determine family, community and student cultural and social capital in a school community as well as the amount of power, authority, and control they have in the large society (Noguera & Wing, 2006). Parent and community stakeholders must have a role as cultural courageous leaders and cultural brokers within urban public school district environments. Cultural brokers are usually minority members that are a part of the culture used to bridge the gap between resources, the school, family and the community. When parents and community stakeholders respectively take on the role of a cultural broker, they instill and have the power to advocate for cultural democracy. Cultural democracy will include opportunities for school staff, parents and caregivers to be meaningfully involved in a partnership with the school to maximize educational goals. Cultural democracy should help facilitate equitable educational opportunities for all people regardless of their culture and social economic status. The next section takes a look at poverty and silenced voices.

**Poverty “Silenced Voices” - Family, School and Community Engagement**

A disproportionate amount of minorities, especially Blacks live in economically disadvantaged single parent households, and have parents with low levels of education and
employment status (Castro et al., 2004). This negative aspect of poverty often hinders parents’ ability to be involved in their children’s schooling. For instance, parents with lower education levels may feel less competent to engage with professionals in the school context (Johnson, 2010; Manz, Fantuzzo, & Power, 2004). Lisa Delpit (1995) has labeled this phenomenon the silenced dialogue: in it teachers and parents of color tend to get quiet in the presence of more verbal White educators.

In her essay, “The Silenced Dialogue: Power and Pedagogy of Education Other People’s Children,” Delpit suggests that racial experience are deprecated or invalidated by White educators. She goes on to write; White educators do not perceive themselves to have power over the non-White speakers. However, either by virtue of their position, their numbers, or their access to that particular code of power of calling upon reserve to validate ones position, the White educators had the authority to establish what was to be considered “truth” regardless of the opinions of the people of color, and the educators and parents of color were well aware of that fact (p.26). Delpit also states “the White educators believe that their colleagues of color did in the end, agree with their logic. After all, they stopped disagreeing, didn’t they? “(p.23).

The silence implicit agreements of the educators and parents of color. Furthermore, single parents may not have the time to be actively involved in their child’s school (Manz et al., 2004). In light of these unfortunate circumstances, previous research suggests that Black parents from economically disadvantaged contexts may focus on dimensions of parental involvement that do not depend heavily on school contact (Dauber & Epstein, 1993). Ladson-Billings (2006) references Michael Harrington’s phrase culture of poverty “is used to describe what teachers see as pathology of poor students and hide behind poverty as an excuse for why they cannot be successful with some students” (p.104). Darling –Hammond (1998) states “educational
systems are where students routinely receive dramatically different learning opportunities based on their social status” (p. 29).

The lack of culturally diverse collaboration networks within urban public school systems needs to be addressed in order to inform others of systemic problems such as race, culture, poverty, equity and white privilege. Weiss glass (2001) calls schools in which there are active anti-racist efforts under way “healing communities.” In this environment, a wide range of anti-racism work will be going on. Educators will be identifying how their unaware bias affects their student, challenging any attitudes of low expectations, working with families to help them support their children’s learning, and identifying how racism is institutionalized in policies and practice. They will be questions concerning their curricula and pedagogy and all stakeholders will be working to make them more engaging to students of different cultures. (p. 50).

This Chapter focuses on a strategy to build a network improvement community that has a common aim that develops a common language and disciplinary actions that focuses on continuous improvement within urban public school systems. Practical theories around race, culture and poverty are analyzed across networks of school person, student teacher, community members and practitioners. The next section investigates families, student and community engagement with urban schools by looking at race, cultural, poverty and white privilege issues that are contributing to the failure of diverse collaboration and engagement efforts in our urban public school systems. Urban public education systems are failing to engage marginalized parent’s students and community members at an alarming rate. The problems of engagement with diverse groups of people are negatively affecting urban public schools dropout rates, student achievement, special education and suspension rates. The PACE model is designed for marginalize and underserve who are clients of urban public schools an opportunity to actively
participate in and collaborate with urban public schools in a way that creates accountability across the board. Seeking out improvement cycles for this high leverage problem will improve academic and economic attainment. The first step to address the complexity of the problem is to identify a process with a network improvement community framework aimed at changing the system social and cultural mechanisms in order to address the root causes of the lack of engagement and collaboration. The aim is to increase 10% to 35% of the number of marginalized student, parents and community stakeholder actively engaged in urban public schools.
CHAPTER 4

DESIGN FOR ACTION

“Although most schools embrace the concepts of partnership and parent involvement, few have translated their beliefs into plans or their plans into action.”

- Joyce Epstein, Johns Hopkins University (1991)

Chapter 4 defines family, school and community networks as a means to improve engagement policies and practices for African American parents, students and community members. Various ways of addressing barriers are examined by looking at different ways that design for learnings can systemically operate in order to create networks of improvement for African American parents, families and communities to engage and collaborate.

Appreciation for the Process

The new era of coming up with creative 21st century ways to involve and engage African American parents in urban school districts is at the forefront of policy changes. In the new era barriers and challenges become opportunities and effort and resilience make for success. Teachers and administrators need family support to help monitor and advocate for student success. With courageous conversations and safe spaces, families become copilots and co-authors of their children’s everyday lives in and outside of school (Singleton & Linton, 2006).

An important element of reframing the process is to understand shared responsibility. Shared responsibility represents a shift from an attitude of blame. Instead, families, community members and district personnel will complement each other as new accessories. The National Network for Family Resiliency (1995) states there are common elements for a successful parent involvement program. They focus on accountability, community based, comprehensive, and the empowering complexity to address root causes. When common elements and key factors are present, family
engagement based upon shared responsibilities is not a problem and becomes a positive addition to school systems. In addition, Weiss, Lopez & Rosenberg (2010) in the paper titled *Beyond the Random Acts*, highlight five critical elements to systematically elevate the parent involvement field. The first element is developing a community of practice: Programs that have a shared responsibility increase parental involvement that requires a coordinated and collaborative community of practice. Community of practice is a central setting for constituents to come together for nationally focused conversations about professional research and practice. A community of practice that brings together the varied constituents while at the same time serving as an active location for advocacy and policy efforts are warranted. The second element is formatting a movement: It is important that the movement not to be built from the top down, but rather from a grassroots effort that involves families, communities, and schools. Unlike many other education movements, such as the effort to abolish segregated schools and classrooms, the family involvement field must become a movement with self-sustained demand and force. The third critical element is funding and investing in infrastructure: There is a need for stronger funding and infrastructure for family involvement at the school and district levels. Funding is needed to build capacity. This can include creating positions for family liaisons and coordinators who can act as mediators between schools and families. It can also include investments in professional development and partnerships with universities to provide stronger training for teachers, principals, and superintendents. The fourth is conducting research and evaluation and disseminating knowledge: Research and evaluation are critical to our understanding of best practices for parental engagement. The need for more research explores *why* family involvement is necessary and *how* to make better use of family involvement in supporting children’s learning.
The final critical element is creating new vision: It is important that stakeholders are creatively rethinking family involvement. Only through new and broader thinking, can real change occur.

Bermudez & Marquez, (1996) supports that parental/family involvement if interconnected with various shared responsibilities by all stakeholders shows increased academic and language achievement; improved behavior, positive attitudes toward school and parent-child relationships; help for parents to develop their own self-confidence and expertise; improvement in home-school relations; and increase students’ cognitive growth.

The National Network of Partnership Schools is a program that helps with parent, family and community engagement. This program has approximately 400 member schools across the nation. The National Network of Partnership Schools developed a comprehensive school reform model and implemented a three-year study. Action teams were formed in pilot schools and addressed major school improvement goals that involved all teachers, administrators, staff, parents and a representative from the community. Studies were done on student achievement on state tests in the pilot school, comparison schools, and the school district that was a part of the study. Results showed students’ test scores improved in math, reading and writing at the pilot and suspensions dropped compared to the more affluent neighborhoods listed in the study (Epstein, 2003). Henderson & Berla (1994) note that schools and communities profit from parental involvement by improved teacher morale, higher ratings of teachers by parents, more support from families, higher student achievement, and better reputations in the community. The teamwork involved with strong parental involvement programs creates partnerships focused on the goal of academic success for all students. According to Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies (2007) parent-school partnerships are important because: a) partnerships between home and school have an impact on student achievement; b) partnerships help build and sustain public
support for schools; c) families and community can help schools overcome the challenges schools face; d) teachers can benefit from parent involvement and community partners that provide the student with teachers in the home and community that give the necessary support and resource to achieve academic achievement goals and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) provides partnership opportunities that can help schools meet the requirement of the law. Therefore, the process of developing partnerships through network improvement communities will be supported throughout the work of the next sections.

**Addressing the Problem Moving Forward**

Even with the ever-changing quality of the No Child Left Behind Act, historically parental engagement has been stuck within local urban public school district’s boundaries and outdated knowledge. All parents are capable of learning through engagement in epistemic practices. Multiple models of engagement strategies can support the turn towards an investigation of practice and the stewardship of the profession focused on learning opportunities called for in the Carnegie Project. This design examines how parents, communities and teachers can support African American parental engagement through practice-focused, culturally relevant strategies. Despite the social, political, and institutional constraints facing students, parents, schools and teachers today, innovative and practice-focused parental and community engagement strategies can happen in and outside of schools. It is with great urgency to use engagement strategies that create a drive for equity that focuses on creating productive and innovative engagement environments for African American parents that are marginalized by urban public schools. All parents, especially those from non-dominant cultures and communities, should be able to have access to opportunities to pursue equal educational attainment for their children. With this call for a paradigm shift in parental engagement in education towards
learning through practice and stewardship, researchers and practitioners have been investigating parental involvement practices through a social justice lens. Within the current practice and design, the challenge is: (a) to understand what successful parental and community engagement practices looks like in urban public schools and how the practices impacts students and (b) to understand how to support teachers as they engage marginalized parents, students and community stakeholders. We want all educational stakeholders to learn about work by researchers and practitioners using network improvement community principles. One way to do this is to create model that enacts Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) cycles that leverage network improvement community design principles from sociological and behavioral learning theories. The design supports network improvement communities grounded in real problems and issues, therefore all invested educational stakeholders are in positions to make meaningful contributions to improving the conditions of engagement in urban public school districts and their community through their work. The ways in which the practices of parental engagement interventions are addressed through the design are dependent upon the problem of study and the ability to capture personal relevant positive and negative experiences. The design supports the argument that there must be diversity amongst the stakeholders actively collaborating on the work with distinct yet complementary sets of expertise. Through the use of the suggested Parent and Community Engagement Model (PACE), cultures that position parents, students, and school personnel equally interconnected as developing experts with a focus on building upon prior relevant experiences, narratives, interests and identities can contribute to sound investigations surrounding the lack of parental engagement. Engaging stakeholders in authentic forms of investigation through their participation in the model holds great potential for giving the stakeholders opportunities to choose how engagement practices within urban public school
systems will factor into their current and future lives. By using this suggested model, schools can become a powerful engagement entity for all parents and community stakeholders by increasing social and behavioral theoretical knowledge based on how to share responsibilities and build capacity in school organization in order to focus on cultivating powerful parental and community engagement strategies.

The Organization of the Parent and Community Engagement model

The Parent and Community Engagement model (PACE) was designed to bring family, school and communities together for the advancement of engagement, involvement, advocacy, empowerment and achievement. PACE occurred throughout the years of 2012-2015. Critical race theory, personal narratives, storytelling, and social and human capital issues influence the PACE design. The designs were developed by using four major impacts based on the PDSA cycle such as (plan), inquiry (study), collaboration (do), and actions (act) through disciplines of educational excellence, community development and social change. The PACE model supports collaborations of units working together to produce better outcomes for parents, families and communities in urban public school settings. The PACE model was intentionally designed to enlist diverse stakeholder that are normally ignored and not heard. Moving forward the design hopes to create generative impacts to increase educational outcomes for student achievement, support parent and community advocacy in urban environments, and provide positive networks that engage African American youth, parents, families and community stakeholders.

The first step in this model is to design and develop an aim statement. In this process, I began to think about what was needed to begin a direction of action. I created a forum in which urban parents, families, school and community members could work together as a unit. As the educational leader, it was important for me to support the creation of a model that was shared
and owned by the group. The design establishes and expands on a range of supports and services that will focus on creating a quality extended social & educational forum for action.

Family, school and community driven network models achieve its full potential when devalued voices become important stakeholders, more specifically, the building of new ideas and the discoverers of new interests and opportunities to improve student outcomes are exposed. The PACE model process will ask and answer the questions of engagement by understanding the following:

1. **Characteristics (Plan)**
   - What is parental and community engagement?
   - What are some of the current perspectives on parental and engagement?
   - What can one learn from parental and community engagement roles and models?

2. **Leadership Strategy (Study)**
   - How can the stakeholders identify and analyze visions, needs, problems and conceptualized approaches.
   - How does one's personal narrative relate to the development of leaderships in schools and out of schools?

3. **Collective Collaborations (Do)**
   - a. How do one’s experiences connecting characteristics to relationships and partnerships?
   - b. What engagement opportunities exist in the community and school?
   - c. What engagement opportunities exist beyond the community?

4. **Acts and Impacts (Acts)**
   - a. What actions can be taken in order to make changes?
b. What actions can we take to educate parents and community stakeholders?

c. What actions can we take to create awareness and develop prevention strategies?

The second step is an introduction to a holistic process to assist communities and schools in meeting the educational, social and emotional needs of urban youth, and their families. This holistic approach is to motivate a direction that strives for educational excellence, community growth and social change.

Utilizing the PACE model as a formal process of implementation yields leadership development consisting of three areas of impact: Family Leadership, School Leadership and Community Leadership. The interactive process (focus groups) will center on the change of both internal and external relationships regulated by transformative action of leading and validating diverse group of people’s interest and needs. The focus groups should create direction on why it is so important to be involved and gain followers because of the power in numbers. The focus groups should help organize for new transformational school reform focused on parental engagement strategies and community organizing. The PACE model encourages and recognizes the importance of leadership development while advancing the entire processes effectiveness to build a holistic school community wide-workable system.

The third step develops a team philosophy for parents advocating change. The P.A.C (Parent Advocating for Change) Teams are to address the educational and social need for students, families, and communities with an innate desire for parents to become the central component of a collective vision and voice. Parents will build partnerships with school and community members as shared advocates in the implementation of urban public school reforms. This process helps to combat the different variabilities of parents advocating for change in schools, in addition to the inequitable structures of power that exist within the urban public
Transformation of the larger school community is driven by the group’s passion and interactions beyond the classroom, school building with its accountable being among student, parent and teacher.

The final step will utilize an evaluation approach that will allow information to be shared as the things unfold for the purpose of critical analysis, redirection, strengthening field practices, and observation and the specific role of the family-school and community partnership. The evaluation will be based on a family, school and community civic development index developed to recognize skill development leadership at the school and community level.

Through this work, I have found it valuable and necessary to establish coalitions of parents, people and partnerships within urban public schools and communities. The objectives should support the will to take action against the dysfunctional bureaucratic structures affecting equitable practices as a form of social justice. The urgency must build an extensive network of students, parents, families, businesses and organizations for the wider school community by engaging local, state, and federal stakeholders as independent public voices for united action. Cooper & Christie (2005) states parental input and involvement along with researchers and educator’s expertise can help districts implement equitable urban educational reform.

**Characteristics of the Generative Impacts**

**Building Knowledge-Advocacy and Empowerment:** According to Lareau (2001) social capital is needed to improve and ensure that all students and families have equitable access to great schools, viable opportunities within their neighborhoods and corporate investment. Lareau (2001) acknowledges that Bourdieu's concept of social capital involves social relationships or networks that provide parents with access to resources. Bourdieu views social capital as a means to gain socially desirable ends (Lareau, 2001). One source of inequality in
access to relationships and resources of interest to Bourdieu is the fit between an individual's culture and the culture of the larger society or the institutions in that society. It is very important to establish accessible roles for schools involving parents, families and concerned citizens for clarified participation. One shift should be the development of a theme that welcomes those who carry and share the responsibility for child development, education and social well-being. It shall not only reflect the parent’s mission of promoting the achievement, but shall establish a framework for recognizing the value of meaningful participation that involves advocacy work.

Parent advocacy will focus on the needs of students first. Research informs and indicates that multifaceted approaches to increasing parent involvement in schools are more likely to succeed than single-component programs. A menu of public opportunity should be provided to engage parents, teachers and community members i.e., workshops, trainings, fun events, parent, surveys, home visits, community meetings, focus groups, interviews, school reports and flexible time offering. As parents share power it should be clear that the outcomes have measured growth. Through the PACE model progressive parents are empowered to advocate and become change agents for their children. I am reminded daily in conversations with families, school staff and community members of what is missing from the parental and community engagement process. The model described in my problem of practice focuses on two engagement key components, empowerment and advocacy:

**Table 1 Two Engagement Key Components - Empowerment and Advocacy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Empowerment</th>
<th>Advocacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Build collective influence that supports the urban public schools decision making process and create transformative change for students in their school and community.</td>
<td>• Implement an effective prevention and interventions that changes social relationships so that they are healthy for students, parents, teachers and school staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Form actions teams that will work</td>
<td>• Develop the social skills model that</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
together in pursuit of standing up for the educational rights for children attending Urban Public Schools.

- Develop school and community-wide activist campaigns that focus on student achievement, school culture and climate, community voices and policies and procedures.
- Ownership of the process and transparent will support children, parents, teachers and school staff, as it relates to the Parent Engagement Policy
  - Partnership programs that have parental development training opportunities as part of the school improvement process
  - Dismiss barriers to students, parents, teachers and school staff willing to intervene and reinforce the objective of the teacher and parent relationships.

Empowering and engaging families to advocate for change in education, engages students and activates a built-in support system that works to help both students and teachers do a better job (Littky, 2004). Parents are essential school clients and partners of educators (Danielson, 2002). Bridging the educational areas of a child’s life gives them the support and stability they need to be successful learners. To help our students achieve, we must bring together all of the adults who have an enduring influence on their academic success (Carter, 2004). Dr. Rudy Crew (2007) in the book called, *In Only Connect* writes “If you can get a critical mass of engaged, thoughtful, and knowledgeable parents to participate on a consistent basis, that school will be successful.” He argues that schools should not only welcome but also foster the development of what he coins “Demand Parents.” As opposed to “Supply Parents”— passive recipients of education—Demand Parents “demand things from their schools because they understand that they are indeed owed something, and it is their responsibility to get it for their children.”(p.155). Not only do “Demand Parents” hold their schools accountable, but they also share in the responsibility of helping their children learn. Having a strong foundation with parents who are directly accountable to their families, schools and communities creates opportunities to nurture and develop leaders. In turn, this builds parental strength and participatory power. The issues facing urban schools go beyond the school walls necessity that we work in a context of strategic
attacks that are in solidarity with a social justice agenda. School-wide components centered on training, awareness, monitoring, and assessment with students, parents, teachers and school staff should be implemented as well as classroom components focusing on parents reinforcing school-wide rules and building social and emotional skills with students. Below is a list of sources that can move families, schools and communities beyond the random acts of the PTA, Bake Sales and fundraisers.

Table 2 A List of Involvement Beyond Random Acts of PTA, Bake Sales and Fundraisers

| PSTC – Parent Student and Teacher Council | This council places the voice of students at the forefront of decision making with parental and teacher support |
| PSCC – Parent School Community Committee | This committee places concerned citizens at the table as informed school tax payers |
| PIN – Parent Impact Networks | These are teams that may rally and or campaign around a significant school or community issue. |
| TAP IN – Teachers and Parents Involved | This is a quarterly event that brings teachers and parents together in formal facilitated discussions |
| POWS – Parents Observing With Solutions | A process that engages parent feedback on daily school climate |
| PRIDE – Parents Reinforcing Individual Development Everyday | A process of that places volunteers in direct support of students when school staff may not be available during the school day. |

Parents can develop advocacy for equality with stakeholders in urban schools and communities when the concept supports their needs and do not seem to be disconnected from their methods in the beginning. However, as time progress and more opportunities for involvement are presented to parents and their comfort levels are reached and not only interactions, but also relationships begin to form. The process of parent and community engagement is to change mindsets and shift social paradigms.
The model strives to give stakeholders educational knowledge on how to feel less intimidated and empowers them to have a voice and speak up for the resources and necessities that would make the partnerships within the communities and schools more successful and positive. The model hopefully will create opportunities for parents to become more involved with their community and school officials in order to address barriers and negative perceptions that often plague urban underrepresented parents.

**Engaging Stakeholders “The People, Partners and Process”:** This national call for family, school and community networks continues to support the organizing, engagement, sustained mobilization and leadership development aimed at increasing the number of urban family, school and community networks that are actively engaged in change activities. These activities set short and long-term goals in order to meet expectations as well as having measurable objectives to support the goal. In order to combat the lack of parent engagement and the uninvolved crisis in urban schools is a reality. We must be willing to forge alliances that will help in the efforts of giving the stakeholders of the community and school other options and opportunities. By becoming more involved with their school and community in this way, parents are more likely to develop healthy norms that reduce anti-social behavior. The parent and community involvement process will enlist approximately 25 educational leaders, community and concerned citizens that will come together and form a committee. The committee will be a part of creating a transformation plan for the urban youth and adults in the school and community. The committee expectation will be to brainstorm and build a framework through dialog that promotes solutions focusing all of the school and community resources, programs and tools for addressing the problems within the larger school climate and community.
Putting It All Together – Understanding Variations: There are important factors pertaining to practices of family, school and community partnerships and how youth and adult personal development and community change can occur when community stakeholders are involved in the decision-making and practical planning processes; educational stakeholders must learn to respect African American voices without prejudice and critical analysis. Sustainable educational systems exist as systems with opportunities, resources, and quality that are distributed without an outside voice. Educational stakeholders must also take in consideration the social and civic environments our parents are experiencing as well by conducting assessments.

Table 3 PACE model – Putting it All Together

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Developing a PACE Profile</th>
<th>Cultivating PACE Resources</th>
<th>Building PACE Partnerships</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• What are the needs?</td>
<td>• Identify the pre-existing assets and resources the community and school have for youth and adults</td>
<td>• How do parents, schools and communities work together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Who or What in the school and community are meeting those needs.</td>
<td>• Identify Events &amp; Activities</td>
<td>• What linkages can be made in support to identify critical issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What gaps and overlaps make it difficult for students and families to participate in school and community development?</td>
<td>• Utilize the local community, universities, foundations, businesses</td>
<td>• What other initiatives or groups focus on this area of concern and how their efforts can be linked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What are the challenges faced and oppositions for developing a successful and positive PACE model</td>
<td></td>
<td>• What do we need in place to ensure family, school and community engagement?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Transformational Movement: Transformation is a process that supports efforts to raise awareness and take aggressive actions against inequitable and unjust situations within the urban environments. Transformation is a critical part of change. Mezirow (1991) defines a perspective
transformation as the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world; changing these structures of habitual expectation to make possible a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative perspective; and finally making choices or otherwise acting on these new understandings. (p. 167). Challenges of the 21st century make it necessary for the PACE model to provide transferable skills, so that individuals gain significant levels of self-sufficiency and achievement that promotes independence, personal growth, and team development. “A perspective is transformed by the resolution of a dilemma through exposure to alternative perspectives and participation in critical discourse with others to verify one’s new reality. Transformative learning is not a private affair involving information processing; it is interactive and inter-subjective from start to finish.” (Mezirow, 1990a, p.364) Cultural responsive pedagogy strategies, aligned with academic and social supports and other enrichment activities are centerpieces for providing parent, family and community stakeholders with a comprehensive process in order to increase engagement efforts and support professional development outcomes. Transformative learning implies a process of challenging sociocultural distortions in meaning making perspectives acquired in the process of socialization “by the uncritical acceptance of another’s values” (Mezirow, 1990b, p. 14)

I envision a yearlong twelve-month leadership program that recruits 20 to 25 urban stakeholders to act as a core group. Within this group two to three participants will be identified as the ambassadors during the first 60 days. Once the leadership team is assembled, the leadership team will then be asked to nominate other stakeholders into the leadership program with the desire to build additional participants over the next 12 months. The expectation in the first year will be to grow an additional 80 members totaling approximately 100 persons who will
have professional development training in leadership and civic engagement within the school and the community setting. The trainings will be instructed in an “exploratory learning” format increasing critical thinking skills and positive leadership behaviors.

Everyone involved in the PACE model will be trained utilizing the “7 Habits of Highly Effective People” By: Steven Covey and the Leadership 2.0 text by Travis Bradberry & Jean Graves (Talent Smart Print, 2012). The team members will take the 360 degree refined skills exam to support their learning and leadership skill development. This will support everyone in a systematic process to increase the development of twenty-two Core and Adaptive leadership skills.

Table 4 Understanding Covey’s Seven Habits, Core Leadership and Adaptive Leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Covey’s 7 Habits</th>
<th>Core Leadership</th>
<th>Adaptive Leadership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Be Proactive</td>
<td>1. Vision</td>
<td>1. Integrity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Begin with the end in mind</td>
<td>2. Acumen</td>
<td>2. Credibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Seek to First Understand, Then to be Understood</td>
<td>5. Decision Making</td>
<td>5. Information Sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Sharpen The Saw</td>
<td>7. Mobilizing Others</td>
<td>7. Lifelong Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Risk Taking</td>
<td>8. Developing Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Results Focus</td>
<td>9. Self-Awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. Agility</td>
<td>10. Self-Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11. Social Awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12. Relationships</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHAPTER 5

GENERATIVE IMPACTS AND ANALYSIS

As an educational leader, the primary goal of this work is to “enhance the lives of children as well as the lives of professionals.”

(Mills, 2007, p. 10)

Chapter 5 supports the research of Epstein (2001) that states children learn and develop through three overlapping “spheres of influence:” family, school, and community. Therefore this work will analyze the PACE model process as a suggested guide for parents, families, schools and community members to use as a way to positively create generative impacts for urban communities, families and school environments. In addition, the PACE model supports a design for training parents, community members and school officials on how to extract and interpret data to plan and support effective parent, school and community relationships. Through the process it is imperative that change reflects how school personnel, parents and community stakeholders work together to gather, understand and analyze data being used to effect and support involvement for marginalized groups of people. The PACE model initial processes were introduced in Chapter 4.

One of the important avenues to address during the PACE model are parent’s perceptions of how urban school districts prepare to engage with people that do not come from privileged situations and therefore their understanding and ability to engage marginalized people and community members that are not of majority. The focus on parental, community and school official engagement will ask questions which are designed to provide insight to parent, school officials and community members perceptions, behaviors and experiences based on their
personnel narratives that they have experienced when trying to build engagement collaborations with a holistic framework referenced below in Figure 9.

**Figure 9 Holistic Parent Engagement Frameworks**

The holistic engagement framework in Figure 9 created from the PACE model shows the relationships between the parents, community and the school. The diagram provides a visual framework that supports when networks are formed across diverse boundaries systemic actionable actions can occur to improve the educational conditions surrounding parental and community involvement in urban public school systems. Herrington (1996) notes that although collaborative arrangements have been on the increase since the 1960s, “schools have not been a major player in these new sets of intergovernmental relations until recently” (p. 204). The PACE model in reference of the diagram in (Figure 9) was developed to help with intergovernmental
relationship processes by a) creating parent, student, school and community relationships, b) change and enact policies and procedures, c) create awareness for local, state and federal policy makers, d) advocate for social justice and bridge parent school and community resources in order to overall increase achievement for students, parents and the school as a united unit. Payzant (1992) states, “The days are past when schools could concentrate simply on basic education and leave a child’s social, physical, psychological, and economic needs to others” (p. 140).

Therefore, the PACE model invites all educational stakeholders to use Figure 9 as a guide to their own areas of concerns to support situations of generative impacts for educational collaborative improvement in six key stages. The six key stages are listed as the following:

**Stage One: A Movement for Parent Engagement**

Parents of urban schools and communities will have to build and maintain strong, powerful, collaborative relationships, not solely relying on mobilizing numbers of parents at isolated times but building networks of involvement that yields change. Parents must take the lead in wanting to develop their interpersonal skills, engage in political education and strategic development, and directly negotiate and deal with educational bureaucratic power structures.

*Generative Change:* This process can be key for sustaining and keeping parents involved over the long-term. At the same time, it can ensure that there is a place and space retained for parents to advocate and be partners at the negotiating table.

**Stage Two: Shifting the Parameters of the Parent Engagement Debate**

Parents whom actively and strategically embrace and represent positions for change in schools and communities might not be popular in the mainstream. Parents aiming for policies that will seek to truly improve our schools and communities for the most part are faced with push
back. Parents who take on this daunting process are changing the balance of social, educational, economic and political power, while negotiating for concrete wins along the way.

*Generative Change:* Parents are seeking a position that will move the debate away from traditional parent involvement events i.e. (PTA/PTO, Fundraisers, and Volunteering) of social and educational justification to parent engagement strategies i.e. (Harvard Family Project, Americas Promise) that are centered with social and educational justice issues.

**Stage Three: Using a Combination of Strategies When Running Parent Engagement Campaigns**

Combined strategies for building a parent movement must entail leadership development, mass mobilization, and one on one socialization and not be limited to one process as necessary ingredients to achieve victories. Parents will derive their power through the effective combination of these strategies and more. Some key strategies utilized in building a collective network of parents include: base building, direct action, public education, grassroots-driven research, strategic communications, coalition building, and civic engagement. Parents must orient their work and collective networks around particular campaigns with specific intent to achieve concrete change and programmatic victories that will benefit parents.

*Generative Change:* Parents view their short-term strategic campaigns within a context of the longer-term structural and systemic change that ultimately seeks to address root inequities in urban school structures.

**Stage Four: Creating Spaces for Parent Participatory Democracy While Seeking and Building Collective-Led Networks**

In order to evolve the type of relationship between parents, schools and communities that are desired, schools and communities must believe and ensure that new spaces for parent
engagement be created. When parents are given the power to determine their own destiny for involvement, rather than having it dictated to them by the social and educational systematic structures, they will choose equity and collectivity over inequity and isolation. The networks work is critical to certain campaigns and goals, but parents must seek to participate in processes that are data sharing and directed by grassroots stakeholders that are directly accountable to their constituencies.

Generative Change: This creates opportunities to nurture and develop parent, school and community leaders, which builds overall strength and shared power. In networks where base-building stakeholders are not in the lead, parents directly affected by the issues of focus still ought to be deferred to for critical decisions that affect their involvement and ultimately their engagement.

Stage Five: Aligning With Broader Forces, Engaging in and Preparing for a Broader Parent Engagement

As parent’s value working with groups with similar constituencies and ideologies, parents must recognize the need for a broader array of forces to work together to truly shift the balance of power in their direction. Parents must be accountable that stakeholders will organize together and build alignment across their distinct bases and philosophies. Parents ought to believe that building their own organizational power is critical to social change and support activities within and outside that help to build the greater social change, economic and racial justice movements.

Generative Change: In preparation to base building, leadership development, and political education work parents are energizing a new pool of activist and advocates who are more prepared to take on broader movement roles when the moment arises and calls them to action.
Stage Six: The Disconnect With Connecting in National Parent

The problems faced with parent engagement in urban public schools within the United States have its racial and social disparities when diagnosing the NCLB act of 2001. This ACT is being deemed as being part of a broader attack against poor and low-income parents, schools and communities all over this nation.

Generative Change: Parents see policies impacting them abroad and beyond the borders of their home, therefore, see the necessity to couch this work in a context of a national attack and in solidarity with a national parent engagement movement in these United States.

What we Did - The Process

The First step in the PACE model planning ordered a collective approach that provided an often-overlooked methodology of getting different stakeholders involved, stakeholders that normally do not have a voice. Family, school and community members can become more involved when they become active partners in the improvement process. The PACE model process is an invitation to understand diverse educational stakeholders needs by ways of surveys, interviews, questionnaire, text, social media venues-twitter, videos, and Face book. Taking a collective model approach supports the foundation of everyone’s voice having the opportunity to be heard regardless of race, class, culture, or gender. Laurence Parker (1998) promotes and legitimates the voices of people of color by using storytelling to integrate the experiential knowledge drawn from history of the other into critiques of the dominant social order; he states:

… the critical centering of race (together with race, gender, sexual orientation and other areas of difference) at the location where the research and discussions are held can serve as a major link between fully understanding the historical vestiges of discrimination and the present day manifestation of that
Second step - The next meeting held on November 20, 2013 was a phone conference to discuss and review the execution plan for recruitment, outreach and organizing for the event. Over the next four days, each collaborating organization completed their identified responsibility. All parties agreed that all documents would be completed proofread and finalized via e-mail and distributed prior to Thanksgiving school break. A follow-up meeting was scheduled for December 2, 2013 at 4:30 pm and the actual event time and tentative schedule was set. During this meeting the formal name of the community school event “Teachers and Parents Involved in Students Education” (TAP IN) was adopted from everyone’s input and suggestions. The roles & responsibilities were agreed upon together and it was decided that the Doctoral students would contact by phone or email all school principals/teachers and provide four $25.00 gift cards as door prize raffles for the event. The community organizations provided the event flyer and distribute it through the community and schools as well as provided childcare for the event. The school reform organizations drafted the principal /teacher school invitation letters and distributed all of the letters to the schools as well as provided the food and beverages for the event. The community members and parents recruited additional parents and concerned citizens as well as made contact with pre-existing relationships they may have at the schools. During the various steps of the event overall the parents, school officials and community members were actively present and unified, ready to address critical engagement issues with the urban school community regardless of their prior negative experiences. Third Step - On November 21, 2013, the community event flyer was sent to the community new home page and the local community center confirmed space for the event. Fourth step - On November 22, 2013, all the letters were delivered and distributed to all the schools were students from the community attended. Also
the “TAP IN” event flyer was circulated at the community center to more than one-hundred (100) community members, parents and families who attend their pre-Thanksgiving community dinner. *Fifth Step-* On December 2, 2013 the final meeting was held prior to the “TAP IN” event scheduled for December 7, 2013 to finalize all coordination for the event. The Duquesne University Doctoral students were to serve as facilitators during the table focus group discussions with support from the community members and parents who would be recorders at their table discussions. Also on December 7, 2013 it was decided and agreed to follow and discuss three important questions that were of high priority for all involved. They were:

1. What are the assets/resources the community and school already have?
2. What are the challenges faced between the community and school?
3. What changes can we make that will support students?

   Achievement

   Safety

   Transportation
### Table 5 Table Discussions

#### Student Achievement

**Table Discussion**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Existing Resources</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
<th>Changes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Out of School Programs</td>
<td>Parent involvement in helping Students with homework</td>
<td>Expand opportunities in out of school programs like Fusion which bring parents and students together for tutoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In school programs: YMCA, Strong Women, Strong Girls</td>
<td>Communication between schools and community/parents</td>
<td>Expand opportunities for parents to meet with teacher in the community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School based interventions: 30 minute reading interventions, PRC, African American Center for Advanced Studies, 9th Grade Nation</td>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Focus on culturally relevant curriculum to motivate kids.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Student Safety/Socialization

**Table Discussion**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Existing Resources</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
<th>Changes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent volunteer bus monitors at bus stops</td>
<td>School buses are unmonitored and fights are rampant</td>
<td>Bus monitors on buses with funding for transportation back to neighborhood. Buses needed to arrive on time. Better supervision of students needed on the buses in the morning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School safety patrol</td>
<td>Conflicts of children from different neighborhoods at schools</td>
<td>Anti-bullying programs that provide training for students and faculty. Also ensure the school behavior management plan being implemented consistently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidance counselors/ mental health resources</td>
<td>Disruptive students in class hindering learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The focus group table discussions were presented and centered on the success of students which allowed for generative improvements to:

1. Transportation: Lateness of the buses, safety on the buses and at the bus stops, and bus drivers who do not seem to care about the children they are driving.
   a. The action is to ensure buses arrived on time to the schools and to create a bus monitoring system to ensure student safety on buses and at the bus stops.

2. Bullying: In school and the community.
   a. The action is to increase programming, training and resources to reduce incidents of bullying at school and in the community.

3. Tutoring/Academics: Teachers being culturally competent and having relevant cultural instruction methods.
   a. The action is to increase access to existing after and out of school time programs to help improve academic outcomes for students.

   a. The action besides having additional event in the community like the TAP IN event is to move some of PTA meetings, fun nights and parent/teacher conference into the community hosted by the school and to schedule these same events during times that are more convenient for all parents to attend.

In addition to the collaborative focus group table discussions by community members, school partners and parents attending the event, special attention was placed on recruiting “Game
Changers”. Game chargers are define as those who had decision-making power in efforts of a wider community and school change such as the following.

- Faith-Based Organization, Pastors, Reverends and Ministers representing resident congregations and parents who want to be more connected to the people at the schools where neighborhood children attend.
- Community Economic Development Organization, Director, who is connected to external community interest groups.
- Community Center Director who works with families of students daily
- Local School District Equity Office, Director to serve as a resource to answer questions about the teaching effectiveness work with the district
- Federation of Teachers Union, Vice President to address teachers and hopefully support their participation in community events such as this.
- The Principals to represent and address the school culture and climate.
- Teachers to be available representative to meet with parents and community members placing a name with a face.
- Foundation Officers to address funding support for schools and communities working together.

The New York State School Boards Association (1990) in support of parent and school meaningful partnerships has issued a policy directive that typifies this new perspective as:

Districts should develop schools as community where diverse elements of a community can meet and together reap mutual benefits such as enriched educational systems, a coordinated and more efficient social support system and a community strengthened through cooperation and collaboration. (p. vi)
What was Learned?

The PACE model collaboration process used during the “TAP IN” event supported stakeholders, especially parents who at once stated because of lack of time, educational knowledge, transportation, affordable childcare, non-traditional work schedules and negative past experiences with the community and school. Therefore, during this process two of the major challenges such as communication and collaboration were successfully addressed and tackled. It was clear from the beginning observation that at first, parents were reserved about interacting with teachers and students outside of the classroom during the initial process. The consideration for the meeting places and times that were suggested from the needs assessments were important foundational information that was successfully implemented into the plan in order to move forward and enact the next steps into the planning.

Parents can develop advocacy for equality with stakeholders in urban schools and communities when the concept supports their needs and do not seem to be disconnected from their methods in the beginning. However, as time progresses and more opportunities for involvement are presented to parents and their comfort levels are reached and not only interactions, but also relationships begin to form during the process. When the parents, community and schools begin to adopt a focus of shared common goals with one another and take a more active role in implementing and developing initiatives to make positive change. Thus, effective parent involvement comes when a true partnership exists between schools and families. Creating that partnership, especially around academics, is what works for student achievement because parents and teachers consider communication within a partnership as the number on factor to increase trust (Caspe 2015). The process for urban communities and schools
can change mindsets and shift social paradigms educating the parents on important issues and how to navigate various local educational, social and political systems.

. The following recommendations are for school officials to increase collaborative relationships with students, parents and community members within urban school districts. The recommendations are focused on the following:

**Recommendation Number One**- Parents have substantial needs to support, engage and hold schools accountable under the NCLB act of 2001 for the welfare of their children. Research does indicate, however, that multifaceted approaches to increasing student achievement in schools are more likely to succeed than single-component methods. Providing a creative forum for parent to meet teachers in the community from schools were their children attend using the PACE model might generate engagement changes. Forming a committee of school officials that are commented to addressing parental and community engagement can do this. Especially inviting school officials that exhibit a motivation to engage marginalized diverse groups of parents, community members and students. If teachers, school board members and state, local and federal legislators are committed to improving the educational conditions of engagement, perceptions and cultural discontent. Olivos (2006) argues that public schools have consistently been unsuccessful in establishing an authentic relationship with the communities they serve, particularly with minorities and low-income parents. The PACE Model vision is to build a road map that will create a pathway for change between the students, parents and school lines of communication. One of the goals is to provide a forum that magnifies students, parents and community members’ insight into their personal narratives that they have experienced when trying to build engagement relationships with each other. Minority perspectives in the form of narratives, testimonies, or story telling challenge the dominant group’s accepted truths (Zamudio
et al., 2011) The perspective narratives connected to a roadmap will provide intersections that bring diverse groups of people together to have culturally relevant conversations that will pave the way for the children’s academic and social successful endeavors in school and beyond. Therefore building situations of trust between parents and teachers to start a process of holistic parent and community engagement for urban public schools. This reality is consistent with Kantor and Brenzel (1992), who opine:

Restructuring efforts and reform within urban schools must come from within schools themselves and the communities they serve so that principals, teachers, and parents can envision fresh approaches to teaching and learning that build on the contextual knowledge and experiences in communities. (297)

**Recommendation Number Two** - Provide information regarding the curriculum, teaching effectiveness and equity reforms within the district and an opportunity for parents and community members to provide feedback on the implementation. In addition, also provide the parents with an opportunity to address student achievement especially in regards to minority students and parents concerned about closing the achievement gap. This can be done by way of identifying community leaders who will serve as ambassadors and community advocates for different sectors of the community to be trained in community organizing and school reform strategies and practices. Community awareness should be highlighted surrounding the different organizations working in the community in order to help teachers, parents and students. When different diverse subgroups are aware of who’s doing what work to help bring resources and parents, families, school and communities together a cohesive bond can be formed around similar goals and aspirations. School policies should be analyzed and established to see if they are meeting the needs of the clients that they serve. Professional development should be
provided for all school personnel members, parents and community stakeholders on a regular basics based on data driven instruments. It is critical for cultural relevant theories, policies and practices be addressed and embraced by all diverse stakeholders. Parent Centers could be developed to focus on providing parents the information and training they need to be proactively involved in their children’s academic success. Parent centers are vital in helping parents to develop effective strategies that welcome them and encourage them to: (a) stay informed - (b) get involved in their children’s education - (c) raise pertinent questions (d) voice their concerns appropriately - (e) learn how to access all aspects of the school system. Engagement and organizing can be successfully implemented by community & school-wide campaigns, awareness, monitoring, and assessment of students, parents, teachers and school staff. Components focused on teacher professional development that reinforces school-wide parent engagement strategies. Intervention component that support parent participation for students who are low performing. Partnerships and collaborations by local school districts and union leadership working hand in hand with PTA/PTO and Parent network groups are important steps to increase parent, student, and community and school engagement. Also there is a need for a checks and balance system that can be constantly reviewed and revised on an as needed bases according to the findings. The process should be transparent that provides room for common goals, growth and rewards. Bell (2002) asserts and we concur:

Without a willingness to continually critique out own policies, question our own motivations, and admit our own mistakes, it is virtually impossible to maintain programs and practices that are truly ethically related to the real needs of those we wish to serve. (161)
What We Can Do

The PACE model when fully implemented gave parents, community and schools the knowledge on how to feel less intimidated and empowered all involved to have a voice and speak up for the resources and necessities that would make the partnerships more successful and positive. More than fifty (50) teachers, parents, students, concerned citizens and other stakeholders voiced and placed their wants and desires in a positive forum that provided guidance and development. Parents showed great appreciation for being able to participate in an event that allowed for their issues to be address and answered. The parents became more involved with their community and school officials whom where present and teamed together to address barriers and negative perceptions that often plague the urban underrepresented and underserved parents.

The focus groups created direction on why it is so important to volunteer and gain followers because of the power in numbers. The focus groups helped to develop new programs that addressed parent participation in school reforms and community organizing. Parents were also able to address the school personnel’s perceptions and beliefs regarding the community they live. Parents advocated for better educational conditions and addressed courageous conversations such as critical race theory and other negative teaching practices indirectly and directly contributed to the racial achievement gap.

Action Plan Theory of Change

A collective model helps all involved as they share goals, missions, and visions. It identifies the importance of completing a needs assessment together and then prioritizing a plan based on the needs and resources that are within reach of everyone at the table. Through observations, it was clear that attitudes had changed towards parent integration in the community
school partnership. It was no longer an embarrassment for parents to participate in events like this one. In return teachers showed disappointment towards not having been understanding and this truly showed the desire parents developed in sharing in the learning experience with their children’s teachers. “A school connected with its cultural community enjoys school pride, open communication, productivity, cooperation, widespread involvement, sense of cohesiveness and acts of caring and sharing (NSPRA 2011).”

**Figure 10** Action plan grounded in a strategic planning process required to reach an ultimate change.

- **Strategy:**
  What exist today; current issues

- **Planning:**
  What area will be the focus

- **Action:**
  What will the work yield

- **Outcomes:**
  What will be the change

- **What exit today; current issues:**
  - Parents have substantial needs to support, engage and hold schools accountable for the welfare of our children. Barriers faced are cultural, language, school official perceptions and information sharing

- **What area will be the focus:**
  - Building a broad parental support for effective practices and equity reforms in local urban communities and schools to ensure that parents are engaged from the beginning to the end.
• What will the work yield
  o Parents will advocate for the intervention, prevention and response to low student performance that focuses on the needs of students first for equitable access to effective teachers.

• What will be the change
  o An assembled extensive network of parents and influential contacts in the wider community and school as independent public voices to improve parent involvement, engagement and participation in urban schools

Moving forward beyond the change will create advocates who will have found their voices with partnerships and collaborate in order to create sustainable change. In addition, challenges to change policies and procedures based on the impacts that can be made for marginalized parents and stakeholders in distress urban public school settings will be analyzed. Also recognition of the importance to embrace all stakeholders and create engagement efforts that is more diverse to meet the needs of students, parents and community members in which they serve regardless of race, gender, culture and social status. Therefore, parents will advocate for social justice for real changes while gaining social and cultural capital by having a seat at the table for decisions around school improvement and a productive parent movement within and outside the school and community, impacting the self-confidence and resiliency to speak out on matters of equality, equity, race, privilege and social justice for all parents will be established.
Conclusion

Within the context of urban education, little has changed since Kantor and Brenzel (1992) made this disturbing observation:

After two and a half decades of federal, state and local efforts to improve urban education for low-income and minority children, achievement in inner-city schools continues to lag behind national norms and dropout rates in inner-city high schools (especially among African-American and Hispanic youth) remain distressingly high, while many of those who do graduate are often so poorly prepared they cannot compete successfully in the labor market. (279)

When addressing the challenges of the urban educational system of the 21st century as scholarly practitioners we have to acknowledge that schools, policies, practices, knowledge and reform legislations are not implemented objectively or with a neutral perspective for all. Parent advocacy groups can help empower and strengthen school districts and student achievement by building relationships and addressing challenges that the students, parents, teachers and community experience in their daily lives in order to produce positive school and community environments. In addition NCLB supports the increase of parental involvement as an important step to increase student achievement and academic accountability (“No child left behind act of 2001,” 2002). Bell (2002) asserts:

Without a willingness to continually critique out own policies, question our own motivations, and admit our own mistakes, it is virtually impossible to maintain programs and practices that are truly ethically related to the real needs of those we wish to serve. (161)
Therefore, the purpose of this design for action was to describe and analyze the policies, perspectives and perceptions which influence schools, parents, students and community members that have been marginalized within urban public school systems and the effects that they have on collaborative engagement efforts. Derrick Bell (2009) has explained:

The problem is that not all positioned perspectives are equally valued, equally heard, or equally included. From the perspective of critical race theory, some positions have historically been oppressed, distorted, ignored, silenced, destroyed, appropriated, commodified, and marginalized-and all of this, not accidentally. Conversely, the law simultaneously and systematically privileges subjects who are White. (p. 42)

Notably, throughout this problem of practice paper critical race theory was one of the overarching theories utilized in order to analyze and challenge race, privilege and social class as they coexist, relate and impact parental, community and school collaborations practices and procedures within urban public school environments. Ladson-Billing and Tate (1995, p.48) stated educational stakeholders should “theorize race and to use it as an analytic tool for understanding school inequality.” My professional agenda Parents and Community Engagement (PACE model) was based on concerns for two major areas such as racial inequalities and social justice that was discussed in the Introduction section of this problem of practice paper. This call for action is intentional and designed to create systemic changes that are generative and intentional. Critical Race theory focuses on ongoing negative impacts of racism and how intuitional racism privileges Whites in education and lead to minority children being marginalized by the system (Decuri & Dixson, 2004; Harris, 1993; Ladson-Billings & Tate 1995). The PACE model will use CRT as a discipline focal point to help create a clear
comprehensive plan in which all stakeholders play an active part to create sustainable positive transformation. Theoharis (2008) notes, school leaders who lead with social justice behaviors must value and celebrate such voices of traditionally marginalized groups. The real life experiences and narratives shared within the model helps develop the people within the whole community because it bridges the communication of real life experiences embedded in the neighborhood rather they are good or bad. Minority perspectives in the form of narratives, testimonies, or storytelling challenges the dominant groups accepted truths. (Zamudio et al., 2011) This model offers a non-traditional approach to getting different members involved regardless of race, class, culture, or gender. Laurence Parker (1998) promotes and legitimates the voices of people of color by using storytelling to integrate the experiential knowledge drawn from history of the other into critiques of the dominant social order; he states:

\[ \text{... the critical centering of race (together with race, gender, sexual orientation and other areas of difference) at the location where the research and discussions are held can serve as a major link between fully understanding the historical vestiges of discrimination and the present day manifestation of that discrimination. (Dunbar 2008, 93).} \]

The PACE model will leverage change by providing a strategic process that helps formulate a comprehensive guide to follow in order to positively affect systemic reform initiatives inside and outside of school. To take action utilizing the PACE model framework as a matter of social and integral justice will help others incorporate a transformation planning process with the resources all educational stakeholders know to be working for the communities and families. This reality is consistent with Kantor and Brenzel (1992), who opine:

Restructuring efforts and reform within urban schools must come from within
schools themselves and the communities they serve so that principals, teachers, and parents can envision fresh approaches to teaching and learning that build on the contextual knowledge and experiences in communities. (297)

When parents become involved at their children’s school, they gain a better understanding of the school climate and services; therefore they improve their self-efficacy and sense of empowerment (Wandersman et al., 2002). In addition, when teachers, parents and students develop a partnership and inform each other about academic goals, career development, study skills, homework expectations and policies and procedures lifelong learning is create and negative barriers are broken across the different boundaries.

Racial and ethnic minority students face serious challenges from early childhood through secondary education. Schools continue to struggle with developing effective and authentic partnerships with marginalized parents and communities. White and Wehlage (1994) note that attention to social capital requires an honest assessment of both strengths and weaknesses within communities. They issue a strong warning against focusing exclusively on problems and deficits:

Recognizing the decline of families and other organizations that formerly served as community cornerstones is essential to an honest treatment of issues. Of course, a danger in this analysis is creating stereotypes around “deficits” and a “culture of poverty” that obscure the healthy and surviving aspects of the community. When this occurs, it gives permission to policy-makers to engage in paternalism that serves neither the stated goals of policy makers themselves nor the interests of the community. (p. 27)
REFERENCES


Bermudez, A. & Marquez, J. (1996). An examination of four-way collaborative to increase


Jaquith, A., Mindich, D., Chung Wei, R., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2010). *Teacher professional*
learning in the United States: Case studies of state policies and strategies summary report. Stanford, CA: Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education

The historical roots of the contemporary crisis, 1945–1990. Teachers
College Record 94(2), 278–314.

Kelley, M. J. and Clausen-Grace, N. (2009), Facilitating Engagement by Differentiating
Independent Reading. The Reading Teacher, 63, 313–318. doi: 10.1598/RT.63.4.6

educational administration. In B. Mitchell, & L.L. Cunningham (Eds.), Educational
leadership and changing contexts of families, communities, and schools (89th yearbook,

Knopf, H.T., & Swick, K.J. (2007). How parents feel about their child’s teacher/school:
Implications for early childhood professionals. Early Childhood Education Journal,
34(4), 291-296.


Bacon.

Research, 70(1), 25-53.

Educational Research, 70(1), 25–53.

Kumashiro, K. K. (2002). Against repetition: Addressing resistance to anti-oppressive change in


Littky D. (2004). If we love our children more than we love our school, the system must change. Educational Horizons, 82(4), 284-289.


Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development


Networked organization learning through doing. (2012). Retrieved from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching website:


Solorzano, D. (1997). Images and words that wound: Critical race theory, racial stereotyping,


prepared for the National Forum on Family, School and Community Engagement,
Washington, DC.


Williams, Marcheta Ganther. (2011). African American Parent Involvement: An examination of the characteristics that determine the most successful school and parent relationships between lower socioeconomic, African American parents, and highly effective schools. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5fs8f6z9


APPENDIX A

Table 5 PACE “Parent and Community Engagement” Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scope of Work</th>
<th>How to Implement</th>
<th>One year Timeline/Deadline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PACE Model will utilize a conceptual “Connected Learning Strategy” that engages efforts through a participatory management model of collective bargaining and direct response marketing practices for active support and participation from the community at large and local school leadership.</td>
<td>Staff will conduct meetings with leadership from the local school district, schools, community organizations and faith-based groups in an effort to build consensus for their engagement and involvement toward being active participants and providers of resources. This will include Local government, Parents, Teachers University, Superintendent, Principals, School Board Members, Reverends, Pastors, Business Owners and staff, Executive Directors and Youth. PACE will give the opportunity for communities and schools to engage and sustain the involvement of parents for the purpose of positively influencing the quality of life for all. The PACE community members and school staff will support participates in 4 stages’ that will engage, empower, excel and have partners emerge in transformative leadership and civic study.</td>
<td>Months 1, 2, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Interview &amp; Hire Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Conduct community school outreach i.e. flyers, press release, school news Letter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Recruit a 25 members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Identify key community school stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- coordinate, participate and facilitate community school meeting(s) to support the work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The project will potentially support a transformational planning design for the larger school climate.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Months 4, 5, 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You have to understand that changes occur within oneself before others can observe it, with the notion that people do not care how much you know, until they know how much you care.</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Provide a programmatic outline/report to the community school Stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is very evident, as one has to check and clear out their baggage and listen and talk with people not at people as we observe responses with a non-discriminative perspective.</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Conduct Leadership, PAC Team Trainings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checking your own personal narratives allows for one to succeed and obtain</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Identify community school partners to host community service activities and service-learning projects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Months 7, 8, 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- recruitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Leadership Trainings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- project planning sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Months 10, 11, 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- PACE will execute Service Learning advocacy projects and community service activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Months 10, 11, 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- It is expected that</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
participation while expressing one's loyalty and commitment.

| STAGE ONE: | The community and school team together will comprehensively engage in the effort to elevate voices and be heard through documentation. |
| STAGE TWO: | PACE will empower participates with the increased willingness and ability to be proactive and civically engaged in community and school programs. |
| STAGE THREE: | PACE will excel and become lifelong learners of advocacy and civic unification. |
| STAGE FOUR: | PACE will emerge with dialog, projects focusing on community school climate, before and after school study, education and social justice and civic, and citizen engagement. |

measurable and implementable actions and programs designed by PACE will be identified

- Solutions to the issues directly affecting youth and the community they live in and schools they attend must acquire.
- Reflections resulting in participating, becoming socially aware and emotionally present.
- Being culturally connected to the environment that provides guidance through actions displaying positive civic leadership.
- Output will depend on actions

The “Parent and Community Engagement Model” (PACE) timeline describes the model as a framework that leads families, schools, and communities to develop partnerships and relationships across all educational sectors. The model can act as a guide for parents to create sustainable positive transformation. The process of framing ideas and enacting ideas puts forth investing efforts that are critical when changing perceptions and belief systems. In conclusion, the PACE model implementation process gives stakeholders a purpose to have courageous conversations within the larger school community in order to enact change in a
positive manner, develop a plan, and encourage action that has long-standing generative impacts such as the following:

**Generative Impact Number One – Beyond Traditional Engagement** - A comprehensive plan such as the PACE model should impact the two largest engagement challenges such as communication and collaboration. The model helps with communication and collaboration because it creates a design to involve diverse stakeholders from families, schools and communities by considering meeting places and times for all members. Families, schools and community members are a part of the planning process from the very beginning. In addition, strategic plans are developed that engage parents beyond the standard parent teacher conferences, fundraisers, PTA events and sporting events. Social media, newsletters, text messaging and other instruments are utilized to get communication vines to all members in efficient ways.

**Generative Impact Number Two – Advocacy for equality** - The PACE model hopes to influence the way stakeholders share common goals with others. When common goals and data are shared stakeholders can take an active role by implementing and developing initiatives to make positive changes through strategic activities that meets the needs and interest of the members within the larger school community. The strategic activities based on the needs assessments often provides training opportunities for college readiness classes, health and wellness awareness, economics, and how to navigate various local, state and federal political systems. Throughout this model, trainings are developed with the purpose of changing mindsets and shifting social paradigms. In addition, parents that become more knowledgeable gain a sense of empowerment and therefore they become more insightful to enact advocacy initiatives because they feel less intimidated. The PACE model strategies are formulated in hopes to create direction. Therefore, stakeholders armed with valuable knowledge concerning the educational system become more equipped to address barriers and negative perceptions that often plague urban public school systems and communities.

**Generative Impact Number Three – Democratic process** - The PACE model proposes a system that helps all stakeholders at the table share common goals, missions and visions. It identifies the importance of completing a needs assessment together and then prioritizing a plan based on the needs and resources that are within reach of everyone at the table. Through this plan of action the PACE model helps coordinate the supports, resources and safety nets without
embracing the traditional top down model used normally by certain groups of privileged people and organizations. This model seeks to develop democratic partnerships and relationships between parents, school officials and the community.

In conclusion the PACE Model offers a non-traditional approach to getting different members involved regardless of race, class, culture, or gender as a matter of social and integral justice to positively affect change inside and outside of school. The model looks at the perspectives of all stakeholders and then provides suggestions on how to develop a clear comprehensive focus in which all stakeholders play an active part to create sustainable positive transformation plans. The real life experiences and narratives shared within the model bridges the communication of real life experiences embedded within the parents, schools and neighborhoods rather they are good or bad.