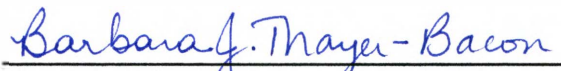


To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Judith Collins Hiscock entitled "Entering Public School Kindergarten: Family Attitudes and Expectations Affecting Young, Black, Working Class Mothers' School Involvement." I have examined the final paper copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Education.

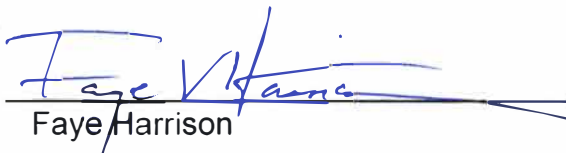


Barbara Thayer-Bacon, Major Professor

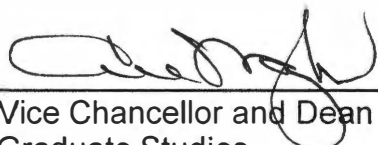
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Entering Public School Kindergarten:
Family Attitudes and Expectations Affecting
Young, Black, Working Class Mothers' School Involvement

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Judith Collins Hiscock
August 2004

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family:

my husband, Bill Hiscock;

my mother and father, Maude and Esridge Collins;

my mother-in-law, Mildred Hiscock;

my sons, Todd Hiscock and Aaron Hiscock;

and my special little granddaughter, Teagan Kaylee Hiscock.

Their love for me was demonstrated by supporting me

through the long and difficult process

with encouragement and the belief that I would achieve my goal.

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I am grateful to my husband, Bill Hiscock, for his many hours of proof reading the text.

Abstract

Parent involvement in schools has been a focus of educational improvement for many years. The belief that parent involvement can be the difference between schooling success and failure is shared by students, parents, society, school staff, and government. This belief is based on the American ideal "nuclear family" structure. The purpose of this study was to explore the attitudes and expectations of the families of young, Black, working class mothers as they constructed their role as a parent of children in the public school and developed their definition of parent involvement. Participants for the study were the mothers, preschool teachers, and family members of four entering kindergartners, two girls and two boys. The children were chosen from preschool programs, and their mothers and family members were interviewed several times during and after their first semester in public school kindergarten. The preschools and schools attended by the students were visited before the school year began to gather contextual information from staff and school handouts for parents.

Data highlighted patterns of initial family perspective, attitudes, and expectations; and revealed patterns of change in the perspective, attitudes, and expectations during the study. The findings identified six expectations the school system had for parents, and four areas where the mothers differed in their ability to meet these expectations. Family structures and other caregivers were examined. Issues of age, race, class, and family structure were considered as possible factors in each family's decisions concerning involvement with the child's school.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

My primary interest is public education in the United States. I have long been involved in the system, first as a student, later as a teacher, thirdly as a parent, and currently as both a student and a teacher. Although I am multiethnic, I have operated with the power of White privilege for most of my adult life. McIntosh (1988) defines White privilege as putting me at an advantage while putting others at a disadvantage, ‘...an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was ‘meant’ to remain oblivious.” I am aware of my power and privilege because other members of my family are often denied the power and privileges I enjoy, due to their appearance, working class language, and mannerisms. I enjoyed one Native American parent with a fifth grade education and one White parent with a high school diploma and some technical training. I realize my appearance and my formal education allowed me to attain power and privileges not afforded to several other members of my family.

As an educator I am always concerned with contributing to providing an equal educational opportunity for all public school students so that each of them has the chance afforded to me. My educational practice as a teacher is focused on conducting a classroom where each of my students has the opportunity to learn by using every available method. Many difficulties arise for me and other teachers in providing this level of experience and “equity.” My focus is on the meaning of “equity” and “justice” for each student regardless of their societal position.

I have taught for more than twenty years in urban schools. Many urban residents exist in poverty, and mainstream White culture operates within the

Protestant work ethic blaming poverty on the poor and believing they deserve their lack of means and low social position because they have not worked hard enough. Michael Katz (1989) called this group the “undeserving poor.” I have met and worked with many of the so-called “undeserving poor” as students, parents, and school staff in regular and special education settings. As both a parent and educator, I have a desire to understand the developing relationship between young, Black, working class parents, their families, and school staff. I want to examine the effects of age, race, and class on that relationship, and how that relationship can be enhanced to give Black students a more positive and successful educational experience. I define a positive and successful educational experience as one that leaves the individual emotionally, psychologically, behaviorally, and academically ready to go on to the next phase in their life. Possible next phase after public school K - 12 in the United States is a personal choice of higher education, vocational or technical education or training, or the work place. I believe the parental perspective has not been fully explored in the research, and that cultural attitudes, differences, and shifts in cultural perspective create a changing framework for both families and schools.

This study examines the relationship of young, Black, working class mothers, and their families with the school, as their oldest child enters kindergarten. Each of these descriptive categories was chosen carefully. Young people are not given the same legal rights as others in our society. One must be sixteen or older to drive, eighteen to vote, twenty-one to purchase alcoholic beverages, thirty-five to run for president of the country, etc. Individuals under the age of eighteen do not have adult legal rights, but do have adult responsibilities should they become parents. Even when adulthood is attained, they do not receive the same respect from older members of the society,

including school personnel. The status of respected adult parent within the school system appears to be dependent on many factors including chronological age, financial independence and stability, conformity to traditional White, middle class parental roles, parents' educational level, and in some cases the parents' appearance and dress.

Race has long been studied as a determinant of social position. Darker skinned people have traditionally held less power within colonial societies, like the United States', than lighter skinned people. Dark skinned women are generally considered the least powerful individuals in American society, equating to less financial stability. Being young, Black, and female in American society usually equates to being poor, especially if one resides in urban areas. If one is young, Black, working class/poor, and resides in an urban area when one becomes a parent, interacting in the best interest of the child can be difficult. When it is time for the child to enter public school, new problems can arise. How much is expected of the parent and what will the parent's role be in the child's school life?

Beginning public school is a major change in any child's life, and changes the schedule of the entire family. On the first day of kindergarten many parents come to bring their children, while other children come with someone other than their parent, or ride public or school transportation. This is usually a new and even unsettling experience for both parents and child, whether the student is brought to school by the parent, another adult or older child, or comes alone on the bus. Here are two of my personal experiences as a kindergarten teacher with young, Black, working class parents and their families. These two experiences stand out in my mind as creating many of the questions leading to this study. All names used in this dissertation are fictional to protect identities.

Cousins

I worked in an urban, public elementary school with a population of approximately 86% Black and the other 14% varied between mostly White with a few Asian, Native American, and Hispanic. Our population was 85% free lunch approved, and 19% were suspended from school for behavior problems. Most of my students resided in public housing. This by no means describes the wonderful variety of people entering and working in our building each day, but they were the government statistics used for funding our programs.

William and Maurice came to school the first day with William's mother, who was Maurice's aunt. Maurice's mother had sent all of the necessary papers signed and ready to go. The aunt, a young woman, explained that Maurice had a younger brother, and his mother, her younger sister, had stayed home to keep Maurice's brother. While I spoke with the aunt about the two boys, they ran around the room as many entering kindergartners do, examining everything that looked interesting.

William and Maurice were dressed in the usual way for the community, clean clothes that fit. Both had to be constantly reminded to tie their shoes before they tripped, and both were described among the school staff as "free lunch/school fee waived projects kids." William was of expected size and had medium brown skin, short Black hair, and dark sparkling eyes. He was usually happy, talkative, and easily understandable. Maurice, a small, thin child, moved quickly and usually quietly. He had dark Black skin, close cut Black hair, and beautiful brown/Black eyes. Maurice's speech was intelligible, but he was quiet and spoke softly. Any communication came with coaxing and prodding whether in class group or one-on-one with the teacher or a peer. They were two of one

White and sixteen African American children in the class. Both boys interacted well with most of the other children in the class, and on the playground they usually played peacefully with other kindergartners. Some of the school staff who lived in the neighborhood called Maurice a “bad child.” He did have a few “fights” with other boys, but no more than most male kindergartners. Once Maurice fell in the classroom and hit his head badly enough to have a one-inch bleeding cut. We applied ice and called his home, but he was left at school until regular dismissal time. Then a local daycare picked up both Maurice and William, the usual way for them to leave school.

I enjoyed my year with this kindergarten class. I never met Maurice’s mother. We only talked on the telephone and sent notes to each other. I saw the aunt on two more occasions. Once she picked the two boys up after we returned to school late after a field trip, and on a second occasion she came to a conference about her son, William. Neither of the cousins recognized all of the alphabet or numbers and numerals during the year, and both performed poorly on the exit exam for kindergarten. I left the school not long after William and Maurice entered first grade.

My experiences leave me bewildered when I remember the cousins. I had worked with other students whose parents did not attend school functions or come to conferences, but I had never before encountered a parent who did not come or at least send a family member when the child was injured. I remember the office staff, who were all Black, being worried that the cut on Maurice’s head would leave a large White scar if not stitched; and speculating that his mother was “smoked out,” meaning she was high on “crack.” I never had any evidence that Maurice’s mother used illegal drugs, and when I spoke to her a few times on the telephone, she seemed lucid but tired. I knew that her apartment was well

within quick walking distance of the school and that she was home. I also knew that she had Medicaid medical insurance for Maurice. As a White teacher in a "Black" urban school who was being advised by Black staff about young, Black parents, the confusion was frightening to me. I knew my expectation was for this mother to acquire medical treatment for this injured child. I knew the school system's and the school staff's expectation was the same as my expectation, for both White and Black parent's and children. Even the Black daycare workers who picked the boys up expressed the same expectation and disgust at his being left at school when he was injured. Everyone appeared to agree that his mother or at least a family member should address the safety and welfare of this little boy. His mother did not appear to agree.

It was easy to speculate that this mother must be an illegal drug user or some other "bad" element of society, but there is no evidence to support the speculation, other than her absence from her son's school life. I would have liked to have met with her and ask her about her life and how she perceived her role in her sons' lives, but I never had a chance to see her in person and only spoke briefly with her on the telephone. I never knew if she worked, had a husband or boyfriend, why she avoided the school, what her life was like; and that lack of understanding did not increase the chances for her son's academic performance in his kindergarten experience.

Bertha

Later, I worked in an urban, public elementary school with a population of approximately 82% White, 14% Black, and the rest varied between Hispanic, Native American, and Asian. Our population was 65% free lunch approved, and 7% were suspended from school for behavior problems. Most of my students

again lived in public housing. Again, this by no means describes the wonderful variety of people entering our building each day, but they were the government statistics used for funding our programs.

Bertha came to school with her young mother, grandmother, younger sister, and two great aunts. The entire group had gotten a ride with another kindergarten family from the housing project where they lived. She was dressed in new beautifully matched clothes with her hair braided, beaded, and barrettes at the ends of the braids. A large child, a head taller than the rest of the class and over 100 pounds (most kindergarten students are between 35 and 60 pounds), she was the proud owner of Black skin, hair, and eyes -- one of several African American children in the class and school. Obviously, her family doted on her, and her every wish was answered immediately, even as she entered the room. She held her grandmother's hand, but did not appear to be shy or afraid as many of the other children appeared, in fact, she appeared to "OWN" the room. By her speech, ability to use the kindergarten tools and equipment, and familiarity with readiness skills, she was obviously capable and ready for school. I was not uncomfortable since the little girl was adorable and I had worked for some years with Black families. I had encountered this situation before in my career. All went well and school began with a friendly encounter.

Before long, the school personnel, students, and other parents conceived of Bertha as "bossy." She meddled in everyone's business, told everyone (including the teacher) how toys and activities should be handled, hit and "bullied" smaller children, and wound up in the principal's office numerous times for violations of school rules. On several occasions great aunts called to "see what in the world is going on over there," but no information could be given to them because they were not in the immediate nuclear family, information could

only be given to the mother or grandmother, her legal guardians. The school and family relationship was becoming strained.

By second grade every teacher in the school knew who Bertha was and to “watch” her every move. The two Black teachers on staff had refused to have Bertha in their classes or to talk to her family members. Her younger sister was dead from a liver disorder, and her grandmother was no longer told any information because she had verbally assaulted and threatened several school personnel, including the principal and a school system supervisor. The grandmother called the school at least weekly, but was given no information even though she was a legal guardian, and the mother, who had recently moved away from the family to live with her boyfriend, was notified of any information about Bertha. Bertha was still performing on a first grade reading and mathematics level.

By fifth grade Bertha had many in and out of school suspensions; the fifth grade teachers all begged to NOT have her in their classes; Bertha was two grade levels below in mathematics, three reading levels behind where she should have been; and at five feet and six inches tall and over 200 pounds, she was as large as or larger than any teacher in the school. I cannot tell you what happened to Bertha, since I left the school and did not follow her progress. One of the reasons that I left the school was that I was promised a fifth grade position so that I could teach Bertha again, and I did not think I could avoid teacher burn out if I had to deal with Bertha's grandmother and family another school year.

I was not confused about the wants and desires of Bertha, her grandmother, or the grandmother's extended female family. I was confused about Bertha's mother and her role in Bertha's life. She was always pleasant and dealt with Bertha and school staff in a calm and polite manner, even when she

disagreed with the situation. She was always concerned and came when she was called. She ALWAYS took a secondary role to Bertha's grandmother and the extended female family in decisions concerning Bertha and her school performance/behavior, even though she was a legal guardian. Being a large, multicultural, female teacher operating with White privilege, I knew how important academics and behavior were to Bertha's ability to succeed at anything as an adult. Her gender, skin color and hair type, and weight were already liabilities for attaining any power in the mainstream culture; she needed adequate academic knowledge/skills and social behaviors that would allow her to interact in "an acceptable" manner. Bertha was capable of attaining what she needed. Her mother could and did act "appropriately," where "appropriately" is defined as exhibiting the expected actions and words that produce desired reactions or results. Where did the mother learn these appropriate actions and words? Why didn't Bertha's other female family members exhibit these behaviors? Why did the mother allow the grandmother and family to interfere with her role as Bertha's mother and diminish Bertha's chances? Did the mother realize that Bertha was diminished by her family's actions? Operating as part of the school system, I felt this mother needed to take over this child's education if the child was to be a successful adult in whatever she chose to do. Why did she leave Bertha with her grandmother and not teach Bertha the skills Bertha needed that the grandmother did not appear to have? I needed to know the mother's position, expectations, and desires for Bertha, and how she constructed her role as Bertha's mother. I never had the chance to find the answers to my questions.

These are just two examples of my confusion as a teacher about how to approach and interact with parents to identify nontraditional ways of helping in the education their child. School rules and procedures are established according

to law and tradition, and involvement of extended family is limited. As a government employee, I was forced to follow school procedure and could not go beyond the boundaries set by the system. As a school employee I was familiar with the school's expectations for parent involvement and followed all conventions and traditions of my position. I still do not know the expectations these mothers had for their children, the school, or how they perceived their roles in helping to educate their children. I do not know anything about the fathers' roles with these children. Without the understanding of parental position, expectations, and needs, I could offer only the usual and regular types of educational information and help (report cards, notes and forms home, telephone calls). Without understanding of the parental position, I could only speculate about the lives of these students and their parents, how entering public school changed the families' lives, and the reasons these mothers chose to be absent from the expected types of involvement with their child's school experience (parent teacher organizations, student performances, parent work days, etc.). As a teacher concerned about the future of my students, I could not see any hope for access to the power and privileges of middle class America for these three students. I truly needed to know how these parents perceived their involvement in their child's life and what they wanted me as a public school teacher to do for their children.

Definitions of Parent Involvement

My definition of parent involvement is derived from my education and experiences as a parent and a teacher. Parent involvement to me is interacting with both your child and the school on a regular basis. I expect an involved parent to talk with their child about school activities, practice academic skills, and

check for homework and correspondence from school on a daily basis. I expect them to be familiar with the school and classroom schedules and planned events, and to send back any necessary correspondence (field trip permissions, signed report cards, parent or doctor notes about illnesses, lunch or other money, changes in how the child is to go home from school, correspondence about any school events, etc.) in a timely fashion. If for some reason the parent is sending another family member or a friend to take their place or will be delayed with something that needs to be at school, a call followed by a signed note should come before the event, or at least with the other adult when the event is to take place. If notified of a behavioral or academic problem or if the parent thinks there might be a problem, I expect the parent to call or send a note to the teacher. A conference should be scheduled to explore the problem, and I expect an involved parent to do their best to help resolve the problem for the child and the school. I do not expect an involved parent to never forget anything or to always respond in a timely fashion during the kindergarten year, nor do I expect that the involved parent will always be able to resolve all of their child's problems.

School personnel usually have caring relationships with the children they teach. Most staff members are fond of children and become defensive of any child they feel is not well cared for or not treated well inside or outside of school. The law requires that school personnel be aware of common signs of abuse or neglect and that they report any possible cases to the appropriate authorities. This expectation and requirement of the law leaves school personnel in a position of being required to be suspicious about adults who are responsible for the well being of the children. The position requires that children be treated and that parents act in a certain way to avoid conflict with the law/school. Children are expected to be clean, healthy, rested, well fed, and dressed appropriately for

the weather. They are legally required to come to school on time and stay at school the entire day every day that they are well. If they are ill or injured, the expectation is that they will see a doctor or dentist if they are ill for more than one day, and they are required to bring a note from the parent and medical personnel to excuse the absences when they return to school. When a child becomes ill or is injured at school, a parent or family member is expected to be available to pick the child up and care for or take the child to a medical facility. Certainly, Maurice's mother did not meet this expectation. Children and parents/families not meeting these expectations are carefully watched and questioned to determine whether the authorities should be notified to investigate.

In my experience school staff expect parents to meet all of the above requirements as part of parent involvement. Staff members define parent involvement at school as responding to school planned parent programs, meetings, telephone calls, and notes. Expectations for parents include: attendance at parent organization (PTA, PTSO, etc.) meetings and planned work times; attendance at student celebrations, performances, and sporting events; scheduling and attendance at conferences and meetings about their children; answering or returning of phone calls about their children, signing or answering notes sent home about their children, and helping children with homework and difficult subjects, as well as listening to young children read aloud. Sometimes they are expected to come to school on a given day to perform skills from their occupations for students: career day presentations, take pictures of special events, work on or set up technology or computers, etc.

Higher expectations exist for non-employed parents. Because they do not work on a job outside of their home, they are expected to have more time for the school. They are also expected to come to school and work on preparation of

teaching/learning materials, maintenance of grounds (such as planting new shrubs or bulbs, painting scenes on walls, etc.); helping with clubs or other student non-curricular activities; and listening to children read individually. Often they become school aides or substitute teachers due to their involvement with the school and familiarity with school procedures. In my previous ten years of teaching, all of the aides and substitute teachers hired from our schools have been involved parents that we have recommended.

More is expected of parents than is expected of grandparents who become guardians. Grandparent guardians are usually welcomed but not expected to work at the school. Mothers and grandmothers are expected to be more involved than fathers or grandfathers, and biological parents are expected to be more involved than step or adoptive parents or non-family legal guardians. This ranking of parents by expectations will be further explored in chapter two.

If a parent does not seem to share the school's or teacher's vision of how the school should operate, they and their comments may not be welcomed. A few parents embrace each expectation the school holds for them, add unexpected services, and often become school system employees. Other parents comply only with selected expectations such as William's and Bertha's mothers. Some parents avoid all involvement with school staff and refuse any school expectations, as Maurice's mother did. A very few parents consider the school and staff an enemy of their child and themselves. Bertha's grandmother, although she was a legal guardian and not a parent, fell into this category.

Parent involvement is defined by Berger (1991) as active or passive support of the child toward continuous development in growth and learning. Active support (teaching specific skills such as recognition of colors, counting, etc.) has been determined to be more effective for aiding the child in cognitive

development and schooling success as measured by grades and test scores (Watson, et al 1983). Winters (1993) maintains that parent involvement includes assisting a child with homework, providing an atmosphere in which homework can be completed and monitoring completion of homework, and taking an active parental role in all of the child's learning behaviors. She includes being involved and participating in school activities and programs, and involvement on a day to day working basis such as notes, calls, and visits in the school, as well as being involved with parent organizations. While most educators and researchers support increased parent involvement, and there is general societal agreement that all types of parent involvement are important to the child's development, no agreement exists defining parent involvement or its improvement (Baker and Soden 1998).

For the purpose of this study, parent involvement will be defined two ways. One way will be from the school's perspective as determined by the school documents for parents and information gathered while visiting the schools. The second definition will come from the participants' perspective and will be determined from interview data from each family. A further investigation of parent involvement will appear in chapter two from the literary review of the topic.

Family Structures

The U.S. construction of the "ideal" family is the Euro-Western construction of the nuclear family: a conjugally based relationship consisting of a legally married mother and father, and non-adult children. The children are cared for and taught by the parents to attend to personal care, safety, and appropriate social skills such as language/communication, interpersonal skills with adults and other children, and acceptable manners. They are also taught a few academic

skills, such as colors, numerals, alphabet recognition, and counting. Children are expected to enter school at five or six years old and be able to perform those academic skills, or be able to “catch-up” quickly and perform the skills. Parents are expected to continue to introduce certain cultural ideas as the child matures, and to be sure that the academic material introduced at school is mastered.

Culturally certain learning and skills are traditionally gender related, and a specific gendered parent is expected to attend to the child in that area. Some examples are: mothers are generally held responsible for teaching home care and cleaning, food preparation and nutrition, clothing purchase and care, social and language skills, female gender roles, etc.; fathers are generally held responsible for athletic skills, transportation (learning to drive, vehicle maintenance), vocational choices and skills, mathematics and science skills, and male gender roles. The children are expected to leave their parents’ home at age eighteen when they reach the first stage of legal adulthood, and should go away to school or go to work and establish their own residence. More recently, the male and female roles have gone through changes with some softening and blending of expectations; however, in the mainstream they remain distinct roles.

The nuclear family is promoted throughout the culture, and is supported by government programs, the law, media, and all public institutions, including the public schools and most private schools. Social construction defines the nuclear family as the basic building block of social organization for people. The rules for living in public housing and the formula for funding Families First and food stamp programs allow only the nuclear family members to be counted in determining the amount received. Insurance companies drop adult children from the family coverage at age 18 (or at least by age 23 if in school), schools and medical institutions will give parents no information about family members over 18 years

old, and television programs portray family units as a nuclear family, where extended family members produce problems for the nuclear parents. (Examples are: 1950s: *Father Knows Best*, *Leave It to Beaver*; 1960s: *The Partridge Family*, *Bewitched*; 1970s: *The Brady Bunch*; 1980s: *The Wonder Years*, *The Cosby Show*; 1990s: *Boy Meets World*.)

The ideal nuclear family grand narrative is not a reality for most American families, including African American families. A young couple may live away from their family or in the home of one set of parents or other extended family members. As their children get older, the children may move away into homes of their own or remain with their parents or other relatives, or move away and then return to their parents' home. And, as grandparents or other family members age or become displaced, they may move in with an adult child's family or other kin. In addition to the previously discussed nuclear family disruptions, teen-aged parenting, divorce, parenting without marriage, premature death, and homosexual unions create more non-traditional family structures. In fact, Leith Mullings (1997) reports that according to the 1990 U.S. Census only three in one hundred households conformed to the classic nuclear family model.

A large number of family studies in the U.S. have been based on the Eurocentric model of the conjugally based, male-dominated nuclear family. Few families actually fit the stereotyped nuclear role and each family is a representation of its members and ethnic group. Consequently, these studies of families tend to place the participants, the members of the family unit, in the role of "other." This role of "other" compels us to see how people are different from the nuclear ideal, or from us, and leads to ethnic group stereotyping (Fordham 1996). Comparative studies of Black and White families use the nuclear family structure and characters as the basic, always comparing fathers, mothers, and

children (Miller 1973, Willie 1985). One example of this type of thinking has attracted much attention. Daniel Moynihan's 1965 publication, titled *The Negro Family: A Case for National Action*, compared information on African American families and stated: "At the heart of the deterioration of the fabric of Negro society is the deterioration of the Negro family (from Bracey, Meier, and Rudwick [eds.]. 1971. *Black Matriarchy: Myth or Reality*. [Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Pub. Co. Inc., 128])" (Sudarkasa 1996, xviii). Moynihan assumes a deficit model position and appears to assume that the differences found between the officially accepted Euro-Western nuclear family and African American families studied is a lacking or a needed change in the structure of the African American society.

African American scholars answered the traditional, accepted way of thinking. In 1968 Andrew Billingsley defended a new way of thinking about family structure stating, "A major distortion was [Moynihan's] singling out instability in the Negro family as the causal factor for the difficulties Negroes face in the White society. It is quite the other way around. But coming just at the time the nation was trying to find a single cause of the Watts riots, Moynihan's thesis struck a responsive chord in the collective American breast" (199-200). Billingsley further suggested:

A family is generally considered a group of individuals related to each other by ancestry or marriage and living together in the same household. This is a common definition of family. When we think of Black families; however, we are likely to think of a group of people of African heritage related to each other either by blood or marriage and who live together or who have lived together in the same household. It is evident that the standard definition of family is an inadequate description of our families (Billingsley 1974, 11).

By moving away from the nuclear family as the unit of analysis, a new unit had to be identified. The unit of "household" replaced the nuclear family. Household is identified as: "... empirically measurable units within which people pool resources and perform certain tasks. They are residential units within which personnel and resources are distributed and connected. Households may vary in their membership composition and in their relation to resource allocation, . . ." (Rapp 1987, 222). This shift in unit of analysis permitted recognition that some African American family structure is traceable to the extended family kinship structures found in countries in Africa, and that marital stability and family stability are not necessarily the same thing.

Most Black parents, as do most parents in every society, socialize their children to become self-sufficient, competent adults as defined by the society in which they live. For Black families in the United States, socialization occurs within the ambiguities of a cultural heritage that is both Afro-American and EuroAmerican and a social system that espouses both democratic equality for all citizens and caste-like status for its Black citizens (Peters 1988, 228).

Many African American family values are different from Eurocentric family values and must be understood in order to examine U.S. Black family structure. The seven cardinal values developed in some African families include respect, responsibility, reciprocity, restraint, reverence, reason, and reconciliation. Respect is extended toward all members of the kin group and the community. Each person holds value within the community. Responsibility implies being brothers' and sisters' keepers, as well as being responsible for the community. Extended family feel responsible for helping and taking care of any member of the family. Reciprocity indicates giving and taking in an atmosphere of sharing

with those less fortunate, and carries obligations sometimes from one generation to the next. If a parent is caring for someone and becomes unable to continue, the adult offspring often take over the responsibility. Restraint promotes considering any effects on the group as well as one's individual desires before acting. Members of the community avoid embarrassing the family or community. Reverence is held for the earth and its Creator. Religion plays an important role in the African American community. Reason is defined as compromise to reach a peaceful conclusion over the emotion of any situation. And, Reconciliation means forgiveness in order to settle differences (Sudarkasa 1996, 146-148).

These values are not specific to African and African American societies, nor are they universal within the Black population, but they explain a great deal about the behavior of African Diaspora societies. Many Blacks hold the idea that adult females have a right to male companionship and to become mothers regardless of their legal marital status. In fact, children are prized highly, and any birth is desired, elevating the status of the mother. Childless women maintain a lower status in these communities. Consequently, some African American families are based on a consanguineal core of blood relatives rather than the conjugal relationship of a nuclear family, and adulthood does not necessarily mean establishing a new household; on the contrary, the family tends to remain under the same roof and supports each of the members. Patriarchy and nuclear family structure are also found among African American families, and resemble White nuclear families (Hill 1999).

Many times African American male (father) figures are absent for a time or permanently. One of the main reasons African American males are absent from their homes is directly tied to government assistance and the legal system. Information from the U.S. Census for 1990 revealed that Blacks comprised 12%

of the U.S. population but were almost 33% of the nation's poor. The median wage for Black Americans was 43% lower than that of all Americans, and unemployment for Black males was twice the unemployment for White males. In addition, 25% of all Black males between the ages of 18 to 24 were in the custody of the criminal justice system in 1990. Considering these statistics, it is not surprising that in 1990 44% of American Black children under the age of eighteen lived in single-parent, female headed households (Winters 1993, 7-8). In order for poor Black families to survive, welfare assistance is necessary, and the rules disallow some Black families to live in their nuclear or non-nuclear structure. I often wonder if these conditions make African American families seem more predominately matrifocal than they would actually be if these conditions did not exist. Perhaps the conditions required to receive public assistance and the statistics reported about the people who need public assistance lead to a skewed view of the structure of African American families and poor families.

The role of family leader and the matrifocal structure of some Black families have allowed stereotypes of African American females to develop. Throughout history, African American women have been portrayed as inadequate mothers and promiscuous women (Mullings 1997). This seems odd considering the great number of Black slaves who served as wet nurses and nannies, and the "Black Mammy" image of the past (Collins 2000). African American women are also stereotyped as loud, bossy, and masculine. Robert Staples (1973) presented a description of Black women:

The usual cultural image of the Black woman in America is that of a domineering type who rules the Family, her husband included. She is seen as a masculinized female who must be subordinated

in order that the Black male may take his rightful place in society.

This image of her is conveyed through the mass media, is accepted by White people, and is frequently acted on by some Black nationalist groups Afro-American women had their role fashioned out of the racial oppression they endured and the need to assume the task of Black survival" (10-11).

Perfect examples of present stereotyping are the Phillip's Milk of Magnesia commercials currently running on television. The Black wife is constantly telling everyone about giving her husband the remedy for constipation, while he reacts with embarrassment and tries unsuccessfully to quiet her. Patricia Hill Collins (2000, 76-77) calls the image of the matriarch central to the intersecting oppressions of class, gender and race. This stereotyping certainly could have contributed to Bertha's difficulties in school. Bertha was large, loud, sure of herself, and confident in her assessment of any situation. She imitated her grandmother and other female family members in giving orders to school staff and students, and called on the grandmother to intervene if her orders were not followed. She certainly fit the stereotype. Bertha's orders were not appreciated by the adults and other children, creating conflict, and Bertha was resented.

John Langston Gwaltney in *Drylongso: A Self-Portrait of Black America* (1980) documented the matrifocal focus of certain Black American families and how Black women see themselves.

"I am a hard woman because I have had a hard time out here"
(Mabel Lincoln, Ibid., 64).

"My daughter listens to me sometimes, but I listen to my mother all of the time" (Ellen Saunders, Ibid., 200).

"I always wanted my mother to be proud of me, but I never really turned out to be nothin'" (Estelle O'Connor Kent, *Ibid.*, 206).

The women do appear to be focusing on their lives in relation to their mothers and daughters; however, many White and other cultures compare the lives of same gender individuals rather than across genders. The acceptance of patriarchy as a standard would divide the gender roles. "Unlike the patterns of patriarchy and male dominance so familiar in other families, the Black family reflects an egalitarian arrangement of complementary and mutually empowering roles for both genders that has endured across generations" (Harriette Pipes McAdoo from the foreword of Sudarkasa 1996, xiv). In describing the differences between Black family structure and accepted structure, McAdoo and Sudarkasa appear to be reductive in not recognizing that all Black families are not identical and that there are varying degrees of patriarchy, matrifocality, and nuclear structures in all family life across all "races."

Many people, Blacks included, have accepted the idea that the different (non-nuclear) structure of some African American families, and particularly the fact that many poor, urban households are headed by women, is the cause of the distressing living conditions and crime rate of the inner-cities.

"But the structure of the Black family . . . cannot be labeled the root cause of the wretched conditions of poverty; the reverse is probably the case. In fact, it is virtually impossible to envision a change in family structure so long as the systemic unemployment of males and other conditions of poverty and deprivation persist. Moreover, the evidence is unequivocal that most two-parent families in the ghettos are often powerless to combat the drugs, crime, and degradation that grow out of the conditions of poverty in which they

live” (Sudarkasa 1999, 198).

Certainly, few of the hard working mothers and family members that I have known in local urban areas have any criminal record nor espouse support for criminal activity. As far as I know, the families of the Cousins and Bertha had no criminal record or supported any criminal activity. However, the economic conditions surrounding U.S. urban areas and racism certainly contribute to the high numbers of male African Americans serving time in U.S. prisons and with criminal records. In my experience, Black mothers certainly take the major role in school contacts with young children, as do White mothers, and mothers from other cultures. Fathers (of all races/ethnicities) do come to school on occasion, and from child reports, care for and interact with their children when at home. Bertha often spoke of visiting her father and her “other sisters.” I never heard either of the cousins speak of a father; however, that does not indicate a lack of contact.

Parenting in urban, working class families is often shared among family members, and even among households. The families of the Cousins and Bertha are examples of shared carpooling and childcare. Babysitting/childcare, car pooling to and from school/preschool/daycare, to doctors, shopping and other necessary activities and transportation for adults and children is often witnessed. In public housing there is sometimes a sense of collective parenting resulting from a need to support each other by the sharing of meager resources. Many times this practice may be necessary to cope with poverty, as well as being convenient for the family members. Patricia Hill Collins (2000, 179) describes the “fictive kin” relationship of many Black communities. These are groups of people who share childcare for all of their families. Many of these practices clash with accepted conventions and laws, and create conflict between the parents and

school. These practices may be even more in evidence in young, working class parents. Parents who are under the age of eighteen when their child is born generally live with their own parents or other older adults, and receive parenting assistance that varies in type and amount. Assuming responsibility for the care of a child for extended family can lead to conflict with schools. School personnel and other government officials who must comply with the legal parent/guardian status, cannot give out information about or allow access to any child/student to anyone except a legal guardian. Even a legal guardian may meet with resistance if personnel believe the contact is not in the best interest of the child. Certainly Bertha's grandmother and great aunts met with the protection barrier based on nuclear family structure within the public school, and because Maurice's mother was unavailable he had no one to aid him during the school day with his injury, including the teacher or his aunt. The available adults could NOT take him for medical treatment due to legal constraints.

From experience I feel that there is no standard structure, either nuclear or African Diaspora based, that fits either White or Black families in the U.S. My own household currently has four generations residing together, and most of my students' families are not nuclear families, nor are they matrifocal. Research by Leith Mullings (1997) certainly supports the "no standard family structure view." Family structure changes continually throughout the existence of the family, and often the childcare role is shared by several individuals: biological parent with "step" parent, parent with grandparent, parent with aunt or uncle, etc. For poor families, the Families First legislation created even more caregiver requirements since poor, often single mothers must work or attend school in order to receive benefits. We now have nannies, babysitters, and daycare workers who are temporarily an extension of the family providing some of the functions of

caregiving and educational structure. Maurice's daycare workers certainly reported to his mother and served a vital service for his family. When a shift in any family's development cycle occurs, the question becomes: who takes the responsibility for the education of the child?

Education

Public school is the institution U.S. society has endorsed as the place to attain equality of opportunity for all citizens (Urban and Wagoner 2000, Spring 1990 and 2000). Democratic justice and equality are goals of the American political structure. Today that means acquiring the behaviors, skills, and academic knowledge to be able to provide economic and social existence. Justice, for me, is the existence of or struggle for the ideal state where all people have an "equal opportunity to" and the "fair distribution of" the elements of life, liberty, and happiness. Public schools in the U.S. are promoted as the social equalizer providing an opportunity for upward mobility within the social structure. Many argue that this is an American myth and public schools actually recreate social inequalities (reproduction theory, Bowles and Gintis 1976, Spring 1990 and 2000). However, ideally, each student is extended an equal chance to learn and perform in a way that allows him or her to maximize their financial and social position in their adult life. This dependency on education, especially on public education, is a major component of the democratic process, and is universally accepted as necessary to the continuance of democracy and freedom. The structural functionalist definition of education is " . . . the passing on of the knowledge and behaviors necessary to maintain order in society . . . and develop appropriate social values . . ." (Ballantine 1993, 8). Obviously, the family and public school are helping to fill this position in the American family grand

narrative. The role of the family is to nurture and begin the enculturation process, and the role of the school is to continue the process and be sure that the society continues as it is. Cornel West (1993) in *Race Matters* placed the structural foundations of culture in neighborhood institutions such as families, schools, churches, synagogues, mosques, and communication industries (Marable and Mullings 2000, 595). I would add daycare workers and child care givers to that list.

African Americans have traditionally accepted the social role of education for their children. From slavery times when any literacy and education were denied to most Black people, to the present when the courts have defined how schools should operate and what the rights of students are, most African Americans in the U.S. historically and currently support education for their children as well as supporting the public schools. Since the end of slavery in the U.S. in the nineteenth century, African Americans have provided support for public schools by giving and accumulating donations or money, land, materials, physical labor, and educational labor; and they have worked toward the founding of educational institutions to teach their children and give them an equal base for improving their adult lives (Anderson 1988, Walker 1996). However, most Blacks believe that public schools could and should be more responsive to African American families and their culture, and to the specific needs of Black students (Asante 1987 & 1990, Anderson 1988, Winters 1993, Ladson-Billings 1994, Ziegler 1995, Foster 1997, Marable and Mullings 2000).

One of the main purposes of public school is the acculturation of children into the mainstream (Urban and Wagoner 2000, Spring 1990 and 2000). Since the accepted social structure is the Eurocentric nuclear family and other Eurocentric ideals, most African American children and children from other

subcultures in the U. S. pluralistic society find the ideas and expectations strange and unfamiliar. The “minorstream” cultures that exist are sites of domination and subordination due to a lack of acceptance for their social status, but are also places of creative agency and comfort. Irvine and Irvine (1995, 133) describe the situation saying, “The middle-class cultural norms and behaviors often result in cultural discontinuity or a lack of cultural synchronization among the student, his community, and the school.” These children and their families live in multiple worlds, and must master the expectations of all of their worlds, despite a lack of financial means. Many of the teachers, staff, and educational leaders do not share the multiple worlds of their students, and must work to find ways to socialize the children, and sometimes their parents into the school (Winters 1993). Ora Benson, a Black teacher in Flint, Michigan, relates her search for common ground to reach her students and families: “I remember searching for ways to break the ice and form closer relationships with the children and their parents. The ice broke when . . .” (Foster 1997, 20). One of the goals of this project is to identify “ice breaking” strategies for teachers in urban schools, which will allow young, Black, working class parents to interact with the school in a more comfortable atmosphere.

Wendy Glasgow Winters (1993) documented how involvement of urban African American mothers in the classrooms and schools improved the quality of education for their children, and aided the mothers themselves to improve their own self-esteem and feelings of alienation from the schools. The children and schools benefited from the mothers’ work and assistance, and the mothers learned to be a part of the public organization. The school staff gained new understanding of the parents as individuals and of the community as a whole. Winters found that parental involvement was especially important in schools

where parents were less motivated and empowered in their own lives, and where there is a large difference between the values and expectations of the parents and school personnel (Winters 1993). Will parent involvement in urban schools repair the damage from poverty and racism? “Certainly parent involvement is not a solution to all of the problems of urban schools—poor academic performance, absenteeism, homeless families, inadequate supplies, deteriorating buildings, staff reductions, low teacher morale, and violence—but it can reduce the debilitating aspects of a number of problems” (Ibid., 5).

Positive parental attitude and involvement in a child’s school experience has been deemed vital to the student’s academic success by American society, government, school personnel, parents, and students themselves. The cultural beliefs and expectations of individual parents affect the number and type of interactions they have with the school that their child attends. In addition, the parent’s position within mainstream culture and their own subculture affects their view of their responsibility for and ability to assist their child in school. Parental involvement becomes an important part of parenting as a child enters school. The question arises: How do young, working class, Black parents initially choose to be involved with or not be involved with the public school their first child attends?

Research Questions

We know that parent/guardian and teacher expectations affect student learning and attitude toward school. A child’s caregivers are their first teachers (Piaget 1976, Bloom 1964, Hunt 1961, Berger 1991). An entering kindergarten student has spent five years learning from parents, family, and other caregivers before coming to school, and those five years have shaped the student’s thinking

and their approach to new information and learning. Those first five years also affect a student's reaction to school and the schoolteachers, since caregivers have determined the environment and educational experiences for those first five years. How parents perceive their child's school opportunities and the parents' initial experiences at their child's school may also affect the child's attitude toward the school, teachers, and learning.

The participants in this study are four young, Black, working class mothers and their families and childcare assistants. The topic is their parental and family expectations and attitudes as a new kindergarten parent. Focus is on parents because of the legal status placed on them, however other family members, "fictive kin," and caregivers contributed to the data. The study examines initial parental and family expectations and attitudes and any changes in those expectations and attitudes over the first semester as a young, Black, working class parent of a public school kindergartner. The effect of laws allowing only parents access to children and school records are examined in light of the role of the extended family for the mothers. Insight gained includes school practices affect the families toward a positive attitude and which toward a negative attitude about the school, and how extended family relationships strengthen or deteriorate due to the demands of entering school. The effects of the changes on the families' lives give valuable insights into the relationship of the family, parent, child, and school.

As parental involvement is examined, several questions are addressed.

1. How do young, working class, urban, Black parents and their families define their role in their children's education?
2. What do they expect public school to do for the children? What do they believe attending school will provide immediately and in the future to benefit or

harm the lives of their young?

3. What concerns and fears are felt by families as a first born child enters public school for the first time? Are those expectations realized in the family's thinking in the first semester of kindergarten?

4. Do the families believe that they can make a positive or negative difference in the educational experience of their child by interacting with school personnel?

5. Are the mothers' definitions of parent involvement and their role in their children's education the same as the school's definitions?

6. Do the families' definitions of parent involvement, expectations, and fears change through initial and first semester school contacts?

Context

Several studies employing various methods have addressed the issue of parent involvement. While conducting his ethnography of education in an urban community, John Ogbu (1974, Chapter 4) studied the educational attitudes of the parents and families through questionnaires, questionnaire interviews, informal intensive interviews, and observations in many households and the schools in the neighborhood over several months. The changing attitudes of the community were examined for three generations: grandparents, parents, and students. The attitudes of the parents and grandparents were determined from information gathered from parents and students. Parents' influence was found stronger than the schools' influence on the students' educational goals. Parent to school contact was found to be limited in the study to mostly formal conferences, PTA meetings, and school performances.

Mickelson and Klenz (1993) conducted a case study of parent involvement in a rural preschool in the southern United States. The participants were mostly

African American. Data were collected over nine months through field notes from observations and in-depth taped interviews, and documents. The question was related to the belief that parent involvement in preschool empowered the working class, enabled parents to transform their own lives, their children's lives, and finally their communities. Through several emerged themes, the findings of the study concluded that the program actually maintained the status quo for the parents due to the structure and control of the staff at the center.

Listed by Stake (2000, 438) as a collective case study of urban schools and their problems, *Savage Inequalities* (Kozol 1991), focuses on the differences between schools across the United States. Studying schools in the inner cities of East St. Louis and South Chicago, Illinois; New York City, New York; Camden, New Jersey; Washington, D. C.; and San Antonio, Texas, Kozol searched for patterns in schools where students perform poorly. Parent involvement is not addressed directly, but the role of parents' values about education for their children is considered when an article in the *Wall Street Journal* charges that more spending on schools in working class districts will not improve those schools, and that schools themselves don't matter nearly as much as parental value system and influence. Kozol counters with the argument that in the schools where impoverished parents are blamed for their students' working class performance, the residents often tax themselves at higher rates than the surrounding suburbs. Kozol maintains that the search for the one change that will cost the least and bring the best return, such as changing parent values, is a way of telling the working class that they have to choose among identified differences between their educational opportunity and that of the rich. He suggests that all differences should be addressed and an equitable opportunity made available for poor and working class students.

This study will be neither as inclusive of one area's population as Ogbu's ethnography nor as narrow a focus as Mickelson's and Klenz's case study of one preschool program. As in Kozol's collective case study, it will include a specific participant population, but, unlike Kozol, the population is limited to families from one race, and this study will limit the residences of the participants to a specific geographical region. The participant population will be limited to young, Black, working class mothers and their families residing in one urban area, and will examine their thinking about their developing relationship with their first kindergartner's public school.

Research Traditions and Design

Qualitative research constructs life pictures or stories with multi-layered context. As a qualitative work, this research does not search for empirical facts or scientific laws about the lives of the participants. It concentrates on capturing individuals' points of view in their everyday lives, and contains a contextual setting rich in descriptions of environments and events. Some research traditions (quantitative interviewing or survey) would not allow a focus on the specific questions about the intersection of race (Black), age (young parenting), class (working/lower), family structure, and parental construction of role in their child's education. How that construction occurs, changes, or remains with initial, short-term experience as a public school parent is the focus of the research. One research tradition (single case study) that does allow that focus does not give an end result of better understanding and theorizing about a larger collection of cases. Collective case study does allow focus on the specific questions for the targeted participant group, and holds promise of better understanding and theorizing about parent and family attitude, expectations, and involvement of

young, Black, working class parents in their children's education.

Qualitative collective case studies have a tradition in education with Connell (1985), Kozol (1991), Mickelson and Klenz (1993), and Raizen and Britton (1997), among others (Stake 2000). Qualitative collective case study (Stake 2000, 437) is defined as an attempt to understand and lead to better theorizing about a still larger collection of cases due to an interest in a phenomenon, population or general condition. This interest is in a specific population (young, Black, public school parents) and a specific event in their lives (the entering of public school by their first child). By choosing to conduct a collective case study, I could select the parent participant characteristics. The mother participants' race, age, and class are to be similar to each other. Equal numbers of male and female children are to be included, and I will focus on one event occurring simultaneously in their lives, the entrance of their first child into public school kindergarten.

Case study in general draws from six areas of data:

- 1) The nature of the case itself
- 2) The case's historical background
- 3) The physical setting,
- 4) Other contexts (e.g., economic, political, legal, and aesthetic)
- 5) Other cases through which this case is recognized
- 6) Those informants through whom the case can be known

(Stouffer 1941 from Stake 2000, 438-439)

This project is a collective case study (Stake 2000) of four families' experiences as a first child enters public school. It attempts to give insight into the four extended families and the political power structure of the school system. This study also explores the difficulty of locating and researching hard to reach

participants. The primary participants, the school system, and each school were given fictive, descriptive, names. The beginning methodology, each modification, and the final design can be found in Chapter 3, along with the rationale and justification for the changes. Identifying thoughts, feelings, attitudes, experiences, and reactions to those experiences that are both common and dissimilar among the participants give a picture of the family's position.

Initially by visiting the preschools, primary informants were located and their experience as a parent in the preschool programs explored. Then, visiting the elementary schools and examining school documentation for new parents and students give a contextual picture of school expectations for both students and parents. Next, I conducted initial and first interviews with each mother and some family members in the informant group before their first child entered kindergarten. Interviews occurred again just after the child received their first report card, and data gathering was to conclude with one final contact for all informants near the end of the first semester to verify data. All planned official interviews were audio taped and transcribed with field notes and observations typed as side notes. Secondary participant data and unplanned conversation data became part of the transcripts as notes. Participants were asked to review their data to insure that their views are represented correctly. Insight into young, Black parental relations, and reactions to their first contacts with public schools are increased and better understood. The information obtained from this study will inform teaching practice of some of the areas where policy and convention might be changed in order to create a smoother entrance for beginning kindergartners their parents, and families. Ideally, parental involvement in the school process will be re-defined, and hopefully encouraged and enhanced from the findings of this study.

Limitations

The participants sought were race/ethnicity, age, and class specific. The original plan was to search local Head Start Programs to find participants. Access was denied to the Head Start Programs. Locating sites and participants that fit all of the categories listed in the design of the study was close to impossible. Enlisting the help of persons fitting all of the descriptors (Black, under age 18 when their first child was born, and living in public housing) was not possible.

A major limitation of this study was time. The design demanded that the parents be located and interviewed at a very busy time in their lives when their schedules were changing. This was also a complicated time for me since I was returning to teaching for a new year and had time constraints and commitments other than the research. Scheduling and completing interviews were bound by time.

A third possible limitation was the appearance and persona of the researcher. Though I am multi-ethnic, my White appearance, the knowledge that I am a teacher and graduate researcher, and my acquired middle-class mannerisms combined with my age could have determined who was willing to be a participant. If young parents were rebelling and resisting White middle class society or they had generation gap issues, they probably did not talk to me. Peers, colleagues, and others have referred to me as an odd personality due to my family experiences as a child living in a dual culture household. My father was Appalachian and my mother is an American Indian. I look like my father, and worked very hard to pass as White. I have mixed culture and values due to this background. I do not know if these personality traits contributed to the

difficulty in finding and retaining participants.

Participant commitment was a fourth limitation of the data gathering process. Participants beginning the study who did not stay in the project the entire semester limited the data. New methods of gathering the desired data had to be devised.

Chapter 1 has introduced the problem, research questions, and rationale for this study. Chapter 2 contains the related literature, and Chapter 3 relates the details of the research design and changes. The stories of the preschools and public schools make up Chapter 4, and the participants' stories and school expectations are outlined in Chapter 5. Answering research questions, suggestions, and recommendations for further study in Chapter 6 conclude this study.

Chapter 2: Related Literature

Chapter 1 was an investigation and rationale for this research project. Chapter 2 explores the history of education for African Americans and others, previous research and theory on the topics of parent involvement in schools, factors affecting parent involvement, and schooling in childcare and public schools. It also examines theories of culture in relation to public education. These topics create a contextual picture for the families participating in my study. Much of the literature reviewed is concerned with education in the southern United States, especially the education of African Americans. This focus supports the research project, which is located in the mid-south with hard to reach, Black participants. Each section will explore the located literature and then analyze it relative to the research project.

History of African American Education

Understanding the history of a culture on any given issue is important to achieving understanding of modern context for members of that culture. African Americans acquired a desire and began a quest for formal education among the enslaved. Formal academic education in the form of a system of public schools was not valued in the White, southern United States and all literacy and education was provided by parents or tutors in the home, or at exclusive private White schools. Poor Whites were not generally literate, and there were few provisions for educating their children. Slaves were denied reading and all academic pursuit by owners and slave law, allowing for limited literacy. Blacks emerged from slavery hungry for literacy and demanding universal education for themselves and their children (Lightfoot 1978, Anderson 1988, Walker 1996). "Former slaves were the first among native southerners to depart from the

planters' ideology of education and society and to campaign for universal, state-supported public education" (Anderson 1988, 4). This struggle for education made White southerners fear that Blacks would become discontent with the social positions given them in the reconstructed society. Poor Whites feared that educated freed people would gain power and a higher economic status.

Believing that education was the road to complete emancipation, equality, and economic improvement, freed people began learning to read on Sundays at "Sunday Schools" and continued working toward founding an educational system for all Blacks. By giving of their time, labor, meager resources, and cash, many Black schools were founded by local freed people, with and without the assistance of northern Whites. By 1865 schools were beginning to appear all over the south for both Black and White children. Separate schools for different races were established according to the time. Industrial, vocational, and normal schools were established to "train" the freed people to work and to teach Black children. Many of these schools followed the Hampton-Tuskegee doctrine and model. The Hampton-Tuskegee doctrine grew out of two institutions. The Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute was founded in 1868 in Hampton, Virginia by Samuel Chapman Armstrong, a White northerner. The Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute was founded in 1881 in Alabama and was administrated by Booker T. Washington, a freed man and student at Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute. The Hampton-Tuskegee model operated under the common belief that Blacks were not as capable or worthy as Whites, and that Blacks were childlike people. Most northern philanthropists supported this ideology and these schools. By 1900 the lack of Black professionals and trained leaders was disputed, and The Hampton-Tuskegee model was recognized as producing a labor force for the working class positions through the promotion of a

particular social philosophy (Anderson 1988).

While the government established vocational schools to train a Black labor force, and Blacks sent their children to the schools, they continued to fight for intellectual development, academic excellence, and equality of educational opportunity. Black churches and mutual-benefit societies established "free schools" and fought for increased educational opportunities (Lightfoot 1978). W.E.B. DuBois, a Black of free ancestry from Massachusetts, argued for education containing the classics, humanities, and social and physical sciences. DuBois, a graduate of Fisk, Harvard, and the University of Berlin, was highly critical of Washington and the Hampton-Tuskegee Model, even turning down a teaching position at Tuskegee Institute (Urban and Wagoner 2000).

During the first third of the twentieth century, segregated common schools for elementary children were established throughout the south, followed by secondary schools in the mid part of the century. As funding to White schools increased, funding for Black schools systematically decreased. By 1950 the differences between the White and Black schools were easily recognizable. Black schools were consistently poorly funded, and equipped with old furniture, equipment, and textbooks. Black teachers were not paid equally with White teachers, and Black schools were not equal to White schools (Fultz 1995, Baker 1995). Desegregation began in 1954 with the Supreme Court decision in the *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka* (Spring 1990).

More recently in some of New York City's neighborhoods, Black residents have "expressed their disenchantment with both the desegregation and compensatory education efforts," and have established private schools or taken over management of public schools in order to provide an education for their children (Urban and Wagoner 2000, 337-338). Some Black parents and

educators have taken the position that government controlled and operated schools cannot meet the needs of their children. Many advocate school choice and vouchers.

African American parents have a long history of fighting for education for their children. History reveals a pattern of African American parental involvement from raising funds to providing construction materials and labor (Walker 1996, Anderson 1988), and more recently taking over management of urban public schools in order to provide a quality education for African American students. Since early history reveals that Black parents were not able to help their children academically, a pattern of teaching academics or working within the school setting is not found in the literature. Currently in the U.S., about 20% of public school students are Black, but only 7% of public school teachers are Black (Johnson, et al 2003). An examination of the literature about parent involvement in their children's education will help to clarify the current role of parents in the schools and the expectations for all parents. The anthropological/sociological categories of Black, young, urban, and poor parents are of particular interest to my research when studying parent involvement.

Literature about Parent Involvement and Parenting

Parent involvement has no agreed upon definition (Baker and Soden 1998). For the purpose of the studies cited, parent involvement has some or all of these expectations: 1-active or passive support of the child toward continuous development in growth and learning, 2-assisting a child with homework, 3-providing an atmosphere in which homework can be completed and monitoring completion of homework, 4-taking an active parental role in all of the child's learning behaviors, 5-being involved and participating in school activities and

programs, 6-involvement on a day to day working basis such as notes, calls, and visits in the school, and 7-being involved with parent organizations. The form and amount of involvement of any parent is a culturally based and socially determined behavior.

Commonalties can subdivide parents of any group of students. Any anthropological/sociological category that is common among the members of a group can be used to identify the comparison group. Bempechat (1998) used race/ethnicity as way of grouping for comparison. The research found that Black and Latino parents provided more motivational and academic support than White and Asian parents. Motivational support is defined as encouragement and relaying a message of educational benefit and academic self-esteem. Academic support includes helping with homework, school projects, school visits, financial support, etc. It also appeared that Black parents exercised more control over their children's free time than Caucasian parents did, and that the children themselves felt more responsible to the parents for academic achievement. The study implies that the families who participated are similar because of race, and are unlike the families of other races; although, there was some overlap between groups.

By generalizing data about parent involvement according to race/ethnicity only, we loose sight of factors affecting parent involvement other than race. In a discussion of the increase in poor, Black, female led households, Brewer (1995) discusses the " . . . complex interplay of gender, race, poverty, culture, state, and economy . . . " stating that the complex interrelationship of race, class, and gender must be considered to operate simultaneously in the lives of African American mothers. Any one of these factors alone has an effect on the lives of parents; however, the relationship of each factor to the other factors and/or the

combined effect of multiple factors demands consideration.

An additional factor for young parents is the social construction of age. Before the American colonial period, children were considered miniature adults by the age of seven years (Aries 1962). Since that time the concept of childhood has changed frequently. The lives of maturing humans are divided into ill-defined stages, and immature humans may be called infants, babies, toddlers, children, teens/teenagers, adolescents, young people, young adults, or various other identifications. The length of each stage is somewhat understood throughout the society, but there is no uniformity, and various privileges are awarded at different stages. Sharon Elise (1995) contends that the construction of childhood creates an additional factor to be considered for teenaged parents. When the additional factor of age is combined with the other factors of gender, race, poverty, culture, state, and economy, the effect of the combined factors is altered again.

Recent research on teenage parenting focuses on the pregnancy and birth period, particularly of the mothers; however, this research does not continue to monitor the parenting relationship as the children mature to school age (Foster 1988, Rickel 1989, Williams 1991, Kaplan 1997, Samples 1998). These studies agree that teenage mothers love and care about their children. Young-parenting age results in a lack of education about child development and necessary parenting skills. Teenage mothers do not usually have the knowledge or understanding of the changing needs of infants and young children that older mothers have. They have little formal schooling in order to find employment for earning childcare funding. The physical and emotional demands of motherhood in addition to having little opportunity to achieve the economic independence required to care for their children sometimes leads these young mothers to poor self-esteem and depression. These stressful conditions (youth, lack of parenting

knowledge, lack of formal education, physical and emotional demands of motherhood, a need for economic independence, possible emotional distress) and a low socioeconomic position can lead to other socially undesirable behaviors, such as prostitution and/or drug use. Often, child neglect and/or child abuse can develop. Teenage fathers are seen as mostly not connected to their children or rarely visiting and interacting with them (Rickel 1989, Bowser 1991). The lack of interaction between fathers and children was found to be present in all races and social classes as children enter school, and fathers were not found to be involved with their children's school (Nord, Brimhall, and West 1997; Nord 1998).

Most young mothers remain single. Single mothers and their children have a history of and continue to live in poverty. Twenty percent of all children live in poverty, while sixty-six percent of children living with a parent younger than age twenty-five are poor (from Children's Defense Fund 1991, *The State of America's Children*, 97-98 in Polakow 1993, 76). The discourse on poverty identifies the poor, including single mothers and their children, as "others" who are a problem for society and who place our future, our children's future, and the future of the country at risk. In this atmosphere poor children and their parents are not welcome in schools, and consequently may avoid contact. Calling poverty a disease implies that those stricken are less healthy and could infect all of us (Polakow 1993, 41-48; Holloway, et al 1997, 6-10).

In his study of inner city neighborhoods, Wilson (1987) found that there was no single explanation for the problems of welfare dependency, teenaged pregnancy, out-of-wedlock births, female-headed households, and crime. He found racism too facile an explanation, and suggested that historic discrimination, demographic factors, and economic factors must be considered as combined

factors. A 1986 study by Moore, Simms, and Betsey considered the combined effect of four factors: a high dropout rate, high unemployment, low-income, and single-parent household to have a stronger effect on inner city neighborhoods than the effect of any of the four factors occurring separately. Consequently, all social and economic factors should be considered in unison when examining their effects on the lives of individuals. When studying young (age factor), Black (race/culture factor), working class (poverty/socioeconomic factor), urban (community factor) parent (gender factor) involvement in schools, all of the descriptors identified should be considered in combination and not as single factors. The identified factors affecting parent involvement will be examined next.

Factors Affecting Parent Involvement

The 2001 National Education Household Survey, used as an indicator of parent involvement by most schools, found that biological mothers were more likely than biological fathers, stepmothers, or stepfathers to be involved in their children's schools. The most highly involved biological mothers were in two biological parent homes, followed by single mothers as the second most highly involved group of parents, and the least involved group was mothers who are married to stepfathers. Biological single father only families were the most likely fathers to be involved, followed by biological father and stepmother families, then fathers in two biological parent families, and finally single biological, non-custodial fathers were the least involved. Co-habitation was not addressed directly; however, marital status appears to be a factor in parental involvement. This survey is based on comparison groups classified by nuclear family structure and how involved each identified group was reported to be. There is no

information on how many surveys were sent out or what percentage of the surveys were returned, but the respondents must have been literate in English and had the time and inclination to respond. This would eliminate non-English speakers, non-literate individuals, and individuals who resist being a part of any organization. Any overworked and busy parent might not have time to fill out a survey. For my research examine these nuclear family factors, but I also consider the research on family structure from Chapter One, particularly the role of extended family, "other mothers", and childcare providers.

The age and grade of the child appear to be factors in parent involvement. Children in elementary school are more likely to have involved parents than older children. The younger the child, the more likely that one or both parents will be highly involved. Two other factors affecting parental involvement are: 1 - family resources measured by parents' education and household income, and 2 - family "social capital" measured by activities shared with parents and high parental educational expectations (National Center for Education Statistics 1998). Parent attributes that promote parental involvement include: warmth, sensitivity, nurturance, the ability to listen, consistency, a positive self-image, a sense of efficacy, personal competence, and effective interpersonal skills. Other contributing factors are marital happiness, family harmony, success in prior collaborations with the school, and openness to others' ideas (Swick 1992). It is not clear who comprised the study participants, but obviously Euro-western family structure and standards shaped the study structure and categories. Schools operate on the Euro-western ideal; however, an examination of "at risk" students could produce other factors and descriptors.

Parents of "at risk" children are usually described as poor minorities often from "other" cultural backgrounds. These children have the most to gain from

increased parent involvement, and statistically have the least involved parents due to Euro-western standards. The "at risk" parents may have feelings of inadequacy, failure, and poor self-worth because their values and family structure do not meet the accepted nuclear family model, or they have poor academic skills and training themselves. Often they have had negative experiences with schools, and view schools as institutionalized authority. The families experience economic, emotional, and time constraints. Minor problems such as a lack of childcare and/or transportation, scheduling conflicts, and language barriers can affect the amount and type of involvement (Liontos 1991). Scheduling conflicts can include work schedules in single and dual working parent families. The flexibility of the work schedule can affect the parents' availability for school functions (Ascher 1988). High hours of employment resulting in greater financial resources may compete with spending time on parent involvement. Changes in household composition such as the birth of a baby or divorce/marriage were also determined to be potential barriers to parent involvement (Driebe 1996). The racial make-up of the study participants is not clear, just that these were factors for "at risk" parents.

Teacher attributes that positively affect parental involvement include warmth, openness, sensitivity, flexibility, reliability, and accessibility (Comer and Haynes 1991). Other attributes have been identified as positive attitudes, active planning to involve parents, continuous teacher training, involvement in professional growth, and personal competence (Epstein 1984, Galinsky 1990). Schools and teachers, operating under the Euro-western model and expectations, often do not invite and/or welcome parent involvement. Organization of events is usually planned for the convenience of the school and the needs of at-risk parents are not considered (Liontos 1991). The traditional

Euro-western role of parent involvement was passive and home-based, and many institutions retain that view. Teachers may feel uncertain about how to continue their role as expert and still involve parents, and may believe that at-risk parents don't care about their children and/or don't want to be involved in their children's education. Myth and stereotype often surround involvement of fathers from low-income and high-risk households discouraging their presence (Levine 1993), particularly with younger children. The research does not use racial categories within its "at risk" designation. Due to a different history and culture Black parents may or may not be affected by these factors.

Making parents feel comfortable through frequent and positive communications is of vital importance to parent involvement. Parents who hear about their children's strengths and progress, are informed about classroom activities, and are told how to help their children were found more likely to monitor their children's progress and schoolwork (Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning 1994). As an experienced teacher, I feel comfort is of vital importance to all people in any situation, particularly for teachers, students, and parent visitors to the school. The issue becomes how does one provide the comfort level needed for the diverse school community? Parents with low academic skills or who live in a non-nuclear family situation may be uncomfortable in a school. Often I have parents or guardians say to me, "I can't read and write..." or "I don't know the letter (and or) sounds...." If parents happen to live in a lesbian or gay relationship or with another family, they are often uncomfortable with school personnel. Improving the comfort level includes changing expectations for parental involvement for those families. A study of parent involvement of young, Black, working class, urban parents should address all parent involvement factors identified by previous research.

Those factors include:

- parent's marital status, marital happiness and family harmony
- parent's educational level, household income, activities shared with children, and educational expectations for their children
- parent's personality characteristics including warmth, sensitivity, nurturance, the ability to listen, consistency, a positive self-image, a sense efficacy, personal competence, and effective interpersonal skills, openness to others' ideas
- parent's previous experience with schools either as a student or as a parent
- family childcare and/or transportation, parental work/school, schedules and hours of employment/school attendance,
- scheduling conflicts, language barriers, and changes in household composition

These factors are examined in my research because they closely relate to the schools' definition of parent involvement. The parents' definitions of parent involvement may or may not have included these factors. The parents were possibly not aware that these things were expected by the school, or possibly did not value these factors equally with the Euro-western ideal.

Literature about Schooling

Daycare, Childcare, and Preschool

Harry Broudy (1954) began his definition of education with the dictionary meaning of the word "education." He examines: 1) the process of instruction and training that goes on in school, 2) the art or science of carrying on instruction and training, 3) changes in behavior due to learning, 4) the sum total of a person's

learnings, and 5) the process or product of a deliberate attempt to fashion experience by the direction and control of learning. Broudy describes three specific kinds of education: milieu education (automatic learning of customs as the by-product of living), informal education (unstructured teaching and learning as by parents or on the job training), and formal education (schooling). Schooling for present day children begins at home, but for most quickly moves to childcare settings (daycare, Head Start, preschool, Mother's Day Out, etc.). When examining education, my research must encompass family, all childcare givers, and school staff.

Childcare and mothering are closely linked in Euro-western and African American society, and mothering is an important concept in Black culture. "An overwhelming majority of Black folks will testify that they were first loved by a Black woman. In African American life Black women have been love's practitioners" (hooks 2001, 93). Collins (2000) describes the institution of motherhood as ". . . a series of renegotiated relationships that African American women experience with one another, with Black children, with the larger African American community, and with self" (176). Biological mothers, referred to as bloodmothers, are expected to care for their children, but also integral to the rearing of children are other mothers, or women who aid the biological mother. The other mothers can be family (grandmothers, aunts, sisters, cousins, etc.), friends or neighbors, baby sitters, childcare workers, teachers, anyone filling the mother role for the child. Mothers and motherhood, including other mothers, have a positive image within the Black community, and are very important in the family structure and education of Black children.

Families' First legislation requires that mothers be in school or working in order to receive any kind of public assistance. The 2000 Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program report to Congress states (5):

States are promoting work in their TANF programs through a combination of requirements, incentives, and other policy changes.

Under the TANF program, parents or caretakers receiving assistance must engage in work (as defined by the State) within 24 months or less at the State's option. Twenty-eight States require families to begin participating immediately, and 9 other States require participation within 6 months of receipt of cash assistance. Twenty-two states have either no exemption for parents with infants or an exemption that is substantially shorter than the one-year period provided for under Federal law (i.e., three, four, or 6 months). In addition, every state has adopted the option to develop Individual Responsibility Plans for recipients.

The requirement for mothers receiving aid to go to work has increased the need for other mothers and demanded that the children be in childcare or preschool settings. The settings can be simply care settings where the child's physical and emotional needs are met, or they may have an educational component. Grandmothers often provided this service to young, Black mothers; however, with more grandmothers working themselves, other childcare had to be provided (Hill 1999). Regardless of the type of setting, the caregiver becomes a part of the child's group of "teachers," along with parents, extended family, "fictive kin," and preschool and public school teachers. This makes childcare settings part of all three types of Broudy's education: milieu, informal, and formal, and creates several "other mothers" for these children.

Part of the sweeping school reform has been an increased demand for early childhood education (Mickelson and Klenz 1993). One component of the TANF aid that mothers receive takes the form of a childcare subsidy that is to be used to pay for necessary services. The most prominent preschool setting for poor, Black, urban children is the federal Head Start Program founded in 1967 by Public law 90-222, Section 222(a)(1)(b). Head Start was part of the antipoverty program of President Lyndon B. Johnson designed to prepare disadvantaged children for school. It is founded in the "culture of poverty" deficit assumption that defines poor children and their parents as the "other" (Polakov 1993, 120-121; Winters 1993, 72-73; Bempechat 1998, 14; Peters 1998, 42-44). This concept grew out of a 1940s publication, the book *American Dilemma* by Gunnar Myrdal, a Swedish social scientist. The study, funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, focused on the social conditions of Blacks in the U.S. Poverty among Blacks was described as a set of interdependent causal factors (poor education leads to poor employment opportunities with low pay, low pay leads to low standard of living with poor diet, medical care, housing, and education). Myrdal concluded that a major moral dilemma between the ideals of American democracy and the conditions regarding race relations had a direct effect on behavioral patterns resulting from false beliefs about Blacks. These false beliefs cast Blacks in the role of the "other," someone who is different from the norm. "The main purpose of the study was to undercut the false belief systems and help end the American Dilemma by providing a true picture of social reality and a careful depiction of the actual conditions of American Black people (Spring 1990, 339)."

Head Start was designed to provide a "catch-up" for poor children, a way of off setting the conditions that cast them as "others" in public schools. Almost

all lower socioeconomic children attend Head Start, and that is the place that I first identified to look for participants for my study. Examining literature on the Head Start Program, particularly the parent involvement requirements, will shed some light on the previous experiences of the participant families. All of the kindergartners of the participant families in my research attended the Head Start Program.

Head Start teachers work with children not only on learning basic subjects such as the alphabet, numbers, and colors but also on learning social skills needed to succeed in school. In addition, Head Start provides health screenings for children. Most children who attend Head Start are three- and four-year-olds, but some children are even younger. Since 1994, the program has emphasized working with infants and toddlers as well. Head Start programs are run by local school districts, community action agencies, and other nonprofit groups under grants from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which oversees Head Start activities. The programs exist in every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and U.S. territories such as Guam. Native American tribes, such as the Choctaw in Mississippi and the Blackfoot in Montana, also operate Head Start centers, as do various agencies serving the children of migrant farm workers. Any child whose family earns less than the federal poverty level is eligible to enroll in Head Start. Each local Head Start program may also have 10 percent of its students from families earning more than the federal poverty level. In the late 1990s Head Start enrolled over 800,000 children nationwide, or approximately 40 percent of those eligible. Head Start programs also accommodate children with special needs. In 1998 about 13 percent of the enrollment consisted of children with health or speech impairments, emotional disturbance, mental retardation, or other disabilities

(<http://www.dashinet.com/childcare/> 2/10/2003, *Child care and day care centers in the United States*).

Parent involvement is a major component of the Head Start Program and is based on the belief that part of the process of empowering poor, disenfranchised parents to transform their own lives, their children's lives, and their communities is dependent upon their involvement in educational programs (Mickelson and Klenz 1993, 115). The involvement is to take the form of participating on a Policy Council (50% of the council membership is supposed to be made up of parents), being an employee of the Head Start program, or participating in center meetings. Mickelson and Klenz (1993) found that parent involvement in Head Start did not empower parents to change, rather it was likely to reproduce unequal social relations of domination and control grounded in class, race, and gender divisions. The theory of social reproduction in education provides understanding for the consequences of parent involvement in the Head Start Program (Bowles and Gintis 1976, Giroux 1983, Morrow and Torres 1994, 1995). Due to a paternalistic attitude adopted by Head Start leaders and a lack of cultural capital and linguistic codes, the parents were left to remain in their disenfranchised position, unable to improve their status or that of their children (Mickelson and Klenz 1993).

Contrary to the findings of Mickelson and Klenz (1993), Winters (1993, 24) found that "Head Start has proved to be a significant factor in strengthening the psychological development of parent participants and thus the family system." Peters (1998) found that the mothers reported themselves to be better mothers because of their experiences with parent involvement in Head Start. They reported experiencing higher self-esteem and felt encouraged to participate in community issues and organizations, such as G.E.D. programs, applying for

college entrance, and Habitat for Humanity. The argument that Head Start parent involvement maintains the status quo from a gender and socioeconomic perspective by viewing motherhood as a role construction for only women is plausible; however, the mothers themselves did not agree with this argument, even though they reported feelings of failure if their lives did not provide them the time to volunteer for the program (Peters 1998).

The TANF requirement for parents to find full time work and/or school and limited hours of Head Start (usually a half day program for three and four year olds), left room for supplementary or replacement preschool program development. Many non-profit organizations, such as religious institutions, YMCA, Boys' and Girls' Clubs, and private citizens founded childcare programs to fill this gap. These programs generally operate on a twelve hour basis (from 6:00am – 6:00pm); however, some are twenty-four hour programs due to third shift (11:00pm – 7:00am) workers' needs. Holloway, et al (1997, 154-157) found that the type of childcare chosen (baby-sitter, family daycare, center based daycare) depended on endorsements from family and friends, and the availability of a place for the children. When a childcare crisis occurred, social workers and welfare offices were relied on for referrals. Often the parents began in a baby-sitting or family daycare setting and then changed the type of childcare to a center-based daycare or preschool as their children got older. This change was interpreted as a concern for the children's educational opportunities, and certainly reflected early parent involvement. The parents were moving their children in stages to allow for adjustment to changing conditions and increased independence. After childcare, daycare, preschool, or Head Start a child will enter "regular" school. This research is interested in public school.

Public Schools

Joel Spring (2000) outlines the purposes of public schooling as political, social, and economic. The students are considered "human capital," meaning that they are to be prepared to be future law abiding citizens and political leaders who are efficient workers. The importance of the workers is to produce thereby increasing economic growth that increases the power of the state. Because all levels of workers are necessary to foster economic growth, Bowles and Gintis (1976) argue that schools play a role in social reproduction. Social reproduction fosters the idea that schools are not a place where social mobility exists, but a place where family background and socioeconomic level equates to limited occupational and income opportunities and limited social advancement, reproducing inequalities within the society. In order for social reproduction to operate in schools, a planned agenda of limiting students' educational opportunities with ranking, rating, and grouping is carried out by school personnel. Hegemony results within the school structure. Minorities, the poor, and girls/women within the U. S. educational system have been victims of social reproduction.

The values, behaviors, language, and knowledge of the White middle class is the standard in schools, and "others" are required to conform (Fordham 1988). However, students are not passive recipients of instruction and the schools hegemonic agenda. Even poor White students pressured into conformity resist by creating a "culture of silence," defined as a passive role where they become non-participants in their education, experiencing no joy in learning, often resulting in smoldering, angry withdrawal and resistance. Resistance is a rebellion against the lack of freedom in the school setting (Shor 1987, 121–126).

Giroux (1983) argues that students often resist the instruction and school agenda. The resistance represents a sense of rage toward the hegemonic agenda that prohibits educational opportunity and it can be detrimental to the students' educational opportunity. Resistance may be difficult to recognize and can be confused with deviance, defined as intentional crossing of moral boundaries and legal lines (Kanpol 1994, 36-37).

Student resistance can take many forms. Absenteeism, skipping classes, refusal to complete class and home work, acting out and disturbing classes, defying school rules, violating the dress code, vandalism, harassing school staff, and a myriad of other behaviors. The ultimate resistance is to drop out of school entirely. It is possible that teenage pregnancy and parenthood are forms of resistance to the role designed for teens by society. Becoming a parent bestows certain liberties usually reserved for older persons, especially on mothers. The response of the school personnel to resistance is correction and punishment for the offenses, and the resisting students are viewed as poorly behaved and a danger to themselves, their peers, and society (Kanpol 1994). Young, Black, working class parents have probably experienced a negative educational system where their position is diminished at school due to their nonconformity to the standard of parenting only in adulthood (out-of-school) within the confines of legal marriage (Kanpol 1994).

I have examined the literature concerning education, childcare, daycare, preschool, Head Start, and schools. The history and culture of Black parents, their age, socioeconomic status, and family situation have been identified as important factors in parent involvement toward helping their children in school. Since this research is concerned with public schools, next is an examination of literature about public school theories on the likely academic success of the

participant population. Parent involvement has been determined to be an important factor in the success of students in public schools. The laws and policies that most teachers and public schools must follow demand increased parent involvement, and call on school personnel to develop programs to get parents to "come to school." These theories will lead to understanding of the difficulties in defining Black parent involvement and increasing Black parent involvement by Euro-western standards.

Public School Theories: Cultural Deficit, Cultural Difference, and Beyond

Cultural models, or theories of the high rate of public school failure of certain ethnic minority groups, attempt to explain why the failure occurs and how society should address the correction or elimination of this failure. African American students have a history of a high rate of academic failure. Parent involvement is considered a major determinant of success or failure. The position or perspective of the theorist determines how the mainstream culture and how the minority cultures are perceived or portrayed in the model. The United States is a pluralistic culture, with the mainstream, dominant culture based on the White, middle class values of Euro-Western society.

Cultural deficit theories originated in the early 1900s following Genetic Deficit Theories. These sociological/anthropological theories assume the position that the mainstream, dominant culture is the standard. The accepted knowledge and values of the dominant culture become a norm. Any conflict or difference between the standard and any minority group value system exposes a deficit in the minority system that must be corrected. These theories assume an elite position for Euro-Western culture over other cultures, and assume that all

knowledge and learning styles of any value are found within Euro-Western culture (Deutsch, et al 1967, 1968).

The way to correct school failure, according to the cultural deficit theory, would be to call upon education and social services to change the minority group culture into the majority culture. That is to re-educate the parents and children so that they have the accepted knowledge and hold the same values as the majority culture. During the 1960s cultural deficit theorists gained credence and they began to focus on the idea of "nurture versus nature" (Erickson 1987). Several studies (Hess and Shipman 1965, Englemann and Bereiter 1966) blamed the child's environment calling it deprived of the elements necessary to achieve the behaviors leading to academic success. Many programs were developed to alter the environment for the deprived children. One of those programs was Head Start (Mickelson and Klenz 1993).

Cultural difference theories (Erickson, et al 1982; Erickson 1984, 1987; Foley 1991; Nel 1995) originated in the 1960s and took a cultural relativist position. These positions assume that the differences between the dominant Euro-Western culture and the minority group culture are the reason for school failure, but that neither is a standard for the other. "*Culture* in this more anthropological sense denotes ways in which a group of people, out of their shared experiences and history, makes meaning of their world. Shared meanings are manifested in such factors as common language, values, beliefs, material artifacts, and behavioral and communicative norms" (Goodenough 1971 from Lipman 1998, 27). Cultural difference theories call upon the school to teach the desired knowledge/curricula in a way allowing the students to integrate it into their cultural understanding. This model accepts Euro-Western knowledge and values and teaches them, but it also accepts minority cultures' values and

teaches those as well. Cultural difference attempts to foster understanding and acceptance for all cultures, particularly where conflicts between the dominant and minority cultures occur. According to these models the school, society, and minority group would change in knowledge and values to more represent the pluralistic nature of the populace. The standard constantly changes with a greater tolerance for differences, thus allowing minority students, as well as others, to have a higher rate of success.

My research is concerned with improving school experiences for students and their parents thus enabling them to better understand school culture and how it relates to their lives and futures. If using cultural deficit theory the research purpose for my project would be changing the minority culture to mainstream culture. It would not be important to the success of the students to know how their parents and families are different from dominant Euro-Western culture; the students just need to learn the correct cultural practices and knowledge. From the cultural deficit point of view the parents' opinions and feelings about school experiences and culture are irrelevant except to inform the school and the minority parents/students about the minority culture's inadequacies and to point out their knowledge deficits. Teaching practice would not be informed about possible ways to change, just where cultural changes are necessary and desirable in the students and their families. Cultural deficit theory is not appropriate for use with my research project.

Cultural difference theory is much more valuable to my research project. Highlighting minority parental/family responses to initial school experiences can inform teaching practice toward more positive interactions with parents, and can uncover underlying conflicts and tensions which hinder the development of trust between family and school thus hindering the education process. Through

discovery and acknowledgement of these conflicts and tensions, contacts between the school and the parents and their children can become more positive and affirmative for families and teachers. Consequently, a more successful method of presenting knowledge and aiding understanding and more minority acceptance of knowledge, curricula, and schooling practices might result in a lower rate of school failure for the minority groups.

Cultural deficit theory would have teachers simply tell the parents and children how dominant Euro-Western culture operates, and that they should follow the guidelines presented in order to succeed. The key to success for cultural deficit theorists would require that all change happen within the minority cultures, thus preserving majority culture. Cultural difference theory explores the parents' and students' minority cultures in search of ways to relate school culture to the families' cultures. The key to success for cultural difference theorists is in changes: first - in teaching practice developed from new knowledge and understandings of the minority culture, *second* - which leads to better understanding of cultural differences and results in acceptance by minority families of the knowledge in the school curricula. The new understandings could also lead to changes in the dominant culture. Hopefully, this could lead to a more positive experience for entering kindergartners and their parents, more understanding and accepting of young minority parents, a more understanding and tolerant school and society, and a lower rate of school failure for minority students.

Cultural discontinuity theories (Ogbu 1982, Nel 1995) actually go a step further than cultural difference theories in accounting for cultural diversity. Cultural differences theories do not address the fact that some minority group students are very successful in school, such as Asian, Indian, and South

American students (Ogbu 1987). Cultural discontinuity theories recognize the success and classify minority groups into three categories: autonomous (numerical minorities with no other differences e.g. Jews, Mormons, etc.), voluntary (immigrants who came to the U.S. for greater political freedom and economic opportunity), and caste-like or involuntary (groups brought to the U.S. as slaves, forced labor, or who were colonized). These three types of minority groups can be regrouped into two types: voluntary and involuntary. Voluntary minorities are those believing in the worthiness of effort and having a positive attitude toward overcoming cultural barriers. Involuntary minorities are more likely to suffer from societally imposed cynicism and a belief that all effort toward overcoming barriers will be in vain.

The voluntary groups are characterized by primary cultural differences such as language, clothing, child rearing practices, and money management. These groups choose to become part of the larger society and are not necessarily oppositional to mainstream culture. They view any changes in their differences as additions to their own culture for use in specific appropriate contexts. They believe that an eventual payoff is worth all of the effort and change, and tend to have an equal or better rate of school success when compared to the majority group.

Involuntary minority groups are characterized by secondary cultural differences that develop as a result of a specific contact between two groups where primary cultural differences exist, and one group feels dominated by the other. The minority group reinterprets the primary cultural differences, and these differences become symbols of collective identity to be preserved, resulting in cultural inversion. Cultural inversion requires embracing differences and non-acceptance of any commonalities between the two groups. Rejection of

mainstream culture results in difficulty in crossing cultural and linguistic boundaries and in adopting standard practices that enhance school learning. Consequently, these groups have a high rate of school failure.

Cultural discontinuity theory, like cultural difference theory explores the parents' and students' minority cultures in search of ways to understand and develop empathy with the minority group's plight and to relate school culture to the families' cultures. However, cultural discontinuity theory does not believe that culturally responsive pedagogy is the cure-all for the resistant involuntary minority groups' high rate of school failure. This problem can only be addressed by the majority society through addressing the issues of inequity, domination and subordination, both in schools and in the society at large. Since my research is primarily with an involuntary minority group, I find cultural discontinuity theory a valuable addition to my theories.

Cultural reproduction and resistance theories are specific discontinuity theories. Pierre Bourdieu (1984) explains resistance in terms of cultural capital and its use in school situations. Henry Giroux (1983) critically analyzes theories of social reproduction and resistance. In this critique, Giroux includes the work of Pierre Bourdieu. Giroux refers to reproduction theories as pessimistic and deterministic, ignoring human agency. He further maintains that resistance theories are promoted as strictly class initiated and they give individuals and groups no credit for their agency. Giroux suggests that "resistance" represents pockets of human resistance against injustice (Giroux 1983, 257). Bourdieu's work is the basis for the Lareau and Horvat Model (1999) which I examine next.

The Lareau and Horvat Model

Lareau and Horvat (1999) based their moments of social inclusion and exclusion on the work of Pierre Bourdieu in the area of social and cultural reproduction within the society, especially within the public school system. This model for school and parent/family relationships focuses on the ideas of cultural and social capital in a specific field of interaction, and the parent's ability or inability to use that capital to their child's advantage. The participants in the study were twenty-four families of a class of third graders in a midwestern elementary school of about 200 students. Located in "an overwhelming White and affluent part of town" (40), the Black participants in the study were bused in from the Black areas. There was a recent history of racial segregation, unrest, and unfair treatment of Black students in the school. All of the White participants were middle or working class and most of the Black participants were poor or working class.

The functioning of this model is explained by Lareau and Horvat in terms supplied by Bourdieu in describing card games, and presents a picture of the changing relationship between social structure and human agency. The card players are the *individuals* involved in the *field of interaction*, which is represented by the card game. The game itself (the *field of interaction*) operates within certain rules, depending on which game is being played. The individuals are dealt cards which represent their *social and cultural capital*. Each player relies on their knowledge, skill, and understanding of the rules which represent their *habitus*. An individual's *practice* is defined as the strategies they use in their habitus. The value of any individual's social and cultural capital is dependent upon the field of interaction and the individual's own habitus and practice. Each

player must rely on their own habitus and practice within the field of interaction in order to activate their own social and/or cultural capital, and as the field of interaction changes the value of the individual's social and cultural capital also changes, being dependent upon the individual's habitus and practice (39).

Lareau and Horvat consider Bourdieu's social reproduction theory and its focus on conflict, change, and systemic inequality worthy of attention; however, they draw " . . . two critical distinctions regarding the notion of capital in the process of social reproduction. First, all individuals have social capital to invest or activate in a variety of social settings or fields. However, all social capital does not have the same value in a given field. In addition, the difference between possession of forms of capital and activation in specific settings is compatible with Bourdieu's model. Bourdieu (1984) did not draw sufficient attention to it. The three aspects of social reproduction that Lareau and Horvat deem most important are: 1) the value attached to capital in a particular social context (Which cards were they dealt?), 2) the process through which individuals activate their social capital (What are their understanding of the rules (habitus) and which strategies do they use?), and 3) the legitimacy the institutions accord these displays by the individuals (Do the habitus and strategies make the best use of the cards dealt in this particular game?). Moments of *inclusion* occur when the individual is able to gain status or desired outcome from a situation where they have used their capital, and a moment of *exclusion* occurs when the status remains the same or is lowered and the desired outcome is not attained after a use of capital.

In the study Lareau and Horvat defined capital as how the resources utilized by the parents were valued in the specific context under investigation -- parent and school experience. The *field of interaction* is defined as the school,

school rules, school staff, and staff expectations for parent-staff relationship. The *individuals* are the parents of third graders who are interviewed about the school. The *social and cultural capital, habitus, and practice* are determined by the race, social class, and prior experience of the individual parent/family. Considering race, White parents had capital, habitus, and strategies that were not available to Black parents; and considering class, middle class parents had capital, habitus, and strategies that were not available to working class or poor parents. In a matrix of domination from the described group, the top down structure is: White middle class, White working class and poor, Black middle class, Black working class and poor. This matrix would suggest that race held a higher value than class in determining the value of parental capital in this social context; however, discrepancies were noted.

The results of the study revealed that the school staff operated under certain expectations for parents as well as students. The school staff praised parents who praised the school and reacted in a positive manner with empathy for the teachers and the difficulties with the job. They expected compliance with school standards and complete acceptance of any decision or assessment made by the school staff. Complaints, open conflict, and anger were not considered legitimate responses or actions.

White parents tended to be able to operate within the expectations. Some of the White working class parents had complaints, however the conflict was minimal. When conflict did occur, the White parents focused on their children's experience independently from school politics and racial climate. Many of the Black families (in all classes) had difficulty with being positive and supportive because of " . . . the parents' understanding of the broader context of race relations and the ways in which it pervaded the school" (43). Within this group of

parents, middle class families " . . . were much more likely than the poor parents to maneuver and 'customize'" (Lareau 1989) their children's school experiences. At times, they diffused the risk of racial discrimination without the teachers ever knowing of their concern. These patterns point to the importance of differentiating between the *possession* and *activation* of capital. In addition they point to variations (often by temperament) in the parents' skill and shrewdness in the activation process that have not always been noted in the empirical literature (44). Some Black families from a range of social class positions were supportive and positive, and felt resentment toward the other Black parents who complained about racial injustice; and some White families from a range of social class positions accepted the existence of racial problems.

Lareau and Horvat (1999) propose a model of attending to the *moments of inclusion* and *moments of exclusion*. For this study *inclusion* is defined as: " . . . the coming together of various forces to provide an advantage to the child in his or her life trajectory" (48). *Exclusion* is when there is no advantage to the child. The passage of privilege from parent to child was not found to be automatic, as social reproduction theory has implied, and depended on the performance of the child as well as the families' social and cultural capital and whether there was inclusion or exclusion for the parent's intervention attempts. Whiteness was found to be a cultural resource, and Blackness was found to be a point of exclusion, particularly when paired with working or poor class. Race and class appeared to be operating independently of each other, each holding specific value in relation to the other.

For other researchers, Lareau and Horvat (1999) suggest close attention to the *field of interaction* and the explicit and implicit rules for the field. These rules will determine the inherent value of social and cultural capital of *individuals*.

Also, attention should be paid to the *individuals*, their *habitus*, and their *strategies* since level of skills for the *activation* of capital varies. Last, researchers should recognize that

" . . . social reproduction is not a smooth trajectory based on individual characteristics that are seamlessly transmitted across generations. An individual's class and racial position affect social reproduction, but do not determine it. Each person . . . through the skill with which he or she activates capital or plays his or her hand, influences how individual characteristics, such as race and class, will matter in interactions with social institutions and other persons in those institutions. Thus, a closer focus on moments of the activation of capital situated in a field analysis that emphasizes how individual behaviors are recognized and legitimated or marginalized and rebuffed provides a more conceptually accurate picture of how social reproduction occurs (50)."

In my own research project I examine the attitudes and expectations of young, minority parents for their first child before entering public school, and how those attitudes and expectations changed during the first semester of their child's kindergarten year. Critical theory, including social reproduction and resistance theories, provides the foundation for my perspective. I expected age, race, class, and marital status to be factors affecting the social and cultural capital of the families, as well as the habitus, strategies, and skill level for activation of the possessed cultural capital of each individual. The Lareau and Horvat model for social reproduction provides the concept of the *field of interaction* (that is the school, staff, and the institutional expectations) to my particular study.

Without data on context, the interview data cannot reveal the complete picture of parental attitudes and expectations. The Lareau and Horvat model adds to my data collection and forces me to construct a field of interaction by researching and describing the schools where the kindergartners attended, and by searching out community data about the schools. I would probably have done this, but not with the same attentiveness to the explicit and implicit rules of conduct, particularly surrounding class and race, as well as age and marital status rules. By gathering those data at the beginning of the study before any interviews, I avoided participants' fears that I might interfere with their relationship with the school, and I compared participant's school descriptions with the picture that I constructed. One of the things this model did for me was to help organize the data in ways so that patterns of power and inequalities more easily emerge.

When dealing with individual social and cultural capital, habitus, and strategies close attention should be paid to each parent's family history and school experience as a student, as well as age, race, class, gender, and marital status. These data reveal individual historical and current conflicts, leading to understanding of habitus, strategies, and the ability or inability to activate capital. Detailed descriptions of each parent were gathered through interviews at the beginning of the study to give a more complete picture of the participants' lives. I hoped to seek out parents who are of the same minority category, African American. I also expected the participants to be in the same socio-economic class by seeking out parents under the age of twenty-five who resided in public housing or received other forms of TANF aid. These requirements eliminated some racial and class questions, assuming that the field of interaction was investigated and constructed, each parent should have similar racial and class

capital. The difference in capital should occur in history, habitus, and strategies. The next section was added to explain the difficulty encountered in locating the participants.

Hard-to-Reach Populations

This section on hard-to-reach populations was added after the design of my research had to be altered. Hidden populations are defined as "...hard to find, hard to retain, and hard to relocate for follow-up..." (Singer 1999, 125). The difficulties encountered with locating and maintaining participants fitting the original design description led to changing the identifiers of the parent participants. This is not an unusual event in qualitative research. Katz (1983, 129) notes that "...forceful questions have been raised as to whether formal research designs ever could be implemented according to their prescriptions." In changing the design, the identified participants were recognized as "hard-to-reach" or a "hidden" population. Hidden populations are hard to locate, and often have unusual or stigmatized conditions (Atkinson and Flint 2001, Vogt 1999). There are many types of "hidden" populations including unwed pregnant teens and welfare recipients (Schensul, et al 1999). Being identified as one of the "undeserving poor" and a single parent collecting more than one type of public assistance is certainly stigmatizing. Each participant has probably felt the sting of disrespect in dealings with mainstream society and its organizations.

One strategy for locating hard-to-reach participants is termed "snowball sampling" or just "snowballing" (Atkinson and Flint 2001). This descriptive term refers to rolling a snowball down a hill and seeing it grow with each revolution. The strategy locates participants by asking for the names of anyone fitting the participant description. I actually used a version of this technique with the

daycare site directors, daycare employees, and the participants. All of the participants were located in this manner, but this strategy also led to the redefining of participants because the age of the located individuals was older than the participant description.

A second strategy for finding hard-to-reach participants is termed "kerbside recruiting" (Browne 1999). In addition, a descriptive term, kerbside recruiting refers to standing on the curb of a street and asking individuals to become participants in the research. I did not attempt this strategy. I can see kerbside recruiting possibly working if one stood at a school as parents were bringing their children to school to register them in kindergarten. Gaining access to and being identified with the school might cause some trust problems for the parent participants, or could increase/decrease the desire to be a participant throughout the study. If only one researcher were available to recruit and all schools in a district registered kindergartners at the same time on the same day, the study would have to be limited to one school. I did not attempt this strategy.

Chapter 1 introduced the research project and gave the rationale. Chapter 2 has presented the related literature on African American history of education, parent involvement, schooling, theories about schooling, analytical tools, and research populations. The research is based on the literature that assumes the parents and families want an education for their children. Parent involvement is defined from the school's Euro-western view and from each parent's/family's view, checking the literature for consistency or deviation from the expectations. Theories about schooling were applied to the data using the theories discussed: cultural discontinuity/social reproduction, resistance. The population desired for the study was not found; therefore, the population had to be redefined. Some of the main ways to identify participants are creating a list,

using a pre-existing list, advertising, snowball or network sampling, asking for assistance from organizations, enumerating (door-to-door screening), and kerbside recruiting. My research used several of these strategies, but they were only partially successful. Next, Chapter 3 will explain the research design, relate the changes leading to the final design, and introduce the methodology used for this study.

Chapter 3: Design of the Study

Purpose and Methods

This project was a collective case study (Stake 2000) of four families' experiences as a first child entered public school. The intent of the case was studying a life experience of similar characteristic participants. The original purpose of this study was to explore the attitudes and expectations of young, Black, working class parents as they constructed their role as a public school parent and developed their definition of parent involvement. Included in this exploration was why young, Black, working class parents chose to be involved in all, some, or to avoid involvement in their children's school activities. The original goal was to examine only parental expectations and changes in those expectations over the child's first semester in kindergarten, while identifying thoughts, feelings, attitudes, experiences, and reactions to those experiences that were both common and dissimilar among the participants. The final goal became to understand the dynamics of how entering school influenced the family as a whole and altered the stress levels of the members (how each member responded to the changes). While gathering data, I realized how interdependent the family members were within each family, and understood the whole picture was necessary to be able to understand the parents' decisions about their children and parental school involvement. The structure of the family, the amount and type of childcare assistance given, and the interdependence of the family members all create a network of child support (Collins 2000).

Identifying Desired Participants

In the original design the primary participants sought were four to eight Black parents of four entering kindergarten students. The number could fluctuate between four and eight depending on marriage/co-habitation status and child-parent involvement. The design included only parents who were legal guardians, due to the legal constraints of the schools to not breach confidentiality and the societal requirement to involve parents as often and in as many ways as possible. The desired parent was to be under the age of 23, reside in public housing, receive other public assistance, and have children who attended a Head Start Program. Two of the children of the primary participants were to be boys and two girls so that any patterns of possible differences in parental and school expectations for girls and boys could be noted. The age and public assistance requirements for participation in this research were designed to identify parents who were very young and possibly living with their own parents at the time of the kindergartner's birth, and who have been forced into relying on public assistance. Head Start was contacted for permission to approach mothers fitting the participant description.

Participant Location Sites

The original design sites for locating participants were the Head Start Programs in a mid-sized city in the southern United States. The city had two distinct working class areas containing public housing. Two Head Start Programs and two elementary schools would be attended by the kindergartners of recruited informants. The hope was that one girl and one boy would be located in one preschool in each area of the city and would attend the same school, resulting in one boy and one girl in each elementary school. Further, one

school was desired that could be identified as racially mostly White, the other as mostly Black. The designated demographics of the schools was an attempt to uncover differences in cultural comfort level for the parents due to having more in common with the majority or the minority of individuals working/attending in the building. Initially, a letter (see Appendices 255) requested permission from the Head Start director in the city to enter Head Start sites serving public housing residents in each of the two areas in search of participants. When permission was denied stating that Head Start had a parent involvement program and was not interested in participating, and an appeal was denied, a new design for locating participants was necessary.

The final design contains a search for preschool programs in the city. Fifteen preschool and childcare centers in the two working class areas were located by driving on each street in the area surrounding the public housing sites. A database of the childcare facilities was formed containing all of the details. Letters (see Appendices 256-257) requesting assistance with locating participants were delivered to the directors a week later. This method was a form of snowball sampling (Atkinson and Flint 2001). By hand delivering these letters, identification as a researcher was established with the childcare staff, providing access to the facilities (Glesne and Peshkin 1992). A follow-up appointment was made with each director on the first visit. At each follow-up appointment about a week after the initial letter was delivered, appointments were made for meeting prospective participants. Eight of the fifteen facilities reported having no five-year-olds that were entering kindergarten. The other seven facilities arranged a time for meeting the parents of the entering kindergartners.

The final design continued with attending the meetings at each childcare where prospective informants were identified. Each childcare director signed a

permission letter on the childcare's letterhead, and field notes were collected in order to construct a complete contextual picture. The field notes described the physical facilities, business organization, staff, and children at each facility. At the initial meeting of prospective parents the research project and researcher's cover story (Glesne and Peshkin 1992) were explained. The cover story appears in Chapter 4 on pages 98-99. When this process did not produce four to eight primary participants, the parents and daycare directors were asked to recommend others that they knew who might become participants. This was more snowballing (Atkinson and Flint 2001). Several parents were identified, signed permissions, and were interviewed.

In both the original and final designs, the parents who wished to participate and met the criteria were asked to sign a permission form (Appendices 261-262) to become a participant. The elementary school where the kindergartner planned to attend was identified on the permission form. Notes were made of other information given. When all of the prospective parent group's initial interviews were completed, the four families best meeting the participant description would be chosen. Two from each area of the city would be scheduled for first interview appointments. If the family did not meet the participant description or did not wish to participate, they were again to be thanked and eliminated.

Elimination was not necessary. The first and only four willing participants were accepted due to the time constraint and the lack of interest in participation. The original design had changed into the final plan, and I researched hard-to-reach participants for Chapter 2. My lack of understanding about hard-to-reach participants, particularly my non-recognition of my desired parent participants as a hidden population, became a serious design flaw that affected the study, but

highlighted important findings.

The final design has four Black mother participants, but I raised the age of the mothers to being under 28 (from under 23). The mothers were all living with another family member at the time of the first child's birth, however the other family was not required to be the grandparent of the child. One of the mothers lived with a cousin, one with an aunt, etc. The third and fourth changes were related. They were the requirements for living in public housing and attending a Head Start Program. Most working class parents needing public assistance have had to be employed and/or attend school themselves due to the requirements of the Families First Act. The Act also provides childcare financial assistance. The new identifiers for participants became receiving a childcare credit to attend a childcare/preschool facility (not necessarily Head Start) and receiving at least one more type of public assistance. The new (changed) descriptors fit the participants, who were recruited. Time for recruiting was diminishing, so the research continued with the willing participants.

Identifying Primary and Secondary Informants

The primary informants were to be the parent participants themselves. The secondary/informal informants were to be the preschool and school personnel, family members of the participants, and any others who became known as the data were gathered. The issues surrounded the developing relationship of the young parents to the teachers and schools, which their kindergarten children attended, and the mainstream societal context and meaning for the participants and their children.

The final plan for site location was successful; preschool data were gathered on schedule. However, the willing parent participants did not fit the

original design. The parents located were all Black mothers under the age of 28, received housing, childcare and/or other public assistance, and had children who attended a preschool program and a Head Start program. Two of the children were boys and two girls. The two girls attended the same preschool, Head Start, and public school. The two boys attended the same preschool and Head Start, but attended two different schools.

Preschool and family member participants became visible from the initial meeting. Formal taped interviews and informal conversations where notes were taken initiated at the very beginning. It quickly became clear that the families must be included in the story, and that some family members other than the legal guardians would be primary informants, as well as the mothers. Grandmothers, aunts, daycare workers, etc. became known to me as informants, some primary and some secondary. Descriptive data about preschool parent involvement were collected from preschool staff.

A letter (Appendices 258) was sent to the school system to obtain permission to conduct research. Permission was received, and faxes (Appendices 259-260) were sent to the identified schools requesting permission to visit from the principals. Permission was received from all schools, and visits were arranged. Public school staff were secondary participants who were identified by their employment status and availability during observational visits to the school sites. All school data were collected. One school had to be visited twice due to staff being unavailable on the first visit. This delay violated the time line, but did not change any other aspects of the original design. The second visit was after the kindergartners went to first grade so that the parents had no fear of the exchange between the researcher and their child's teacher.

The original plan identified three groups of secondary participants

contributing to the data collection. These groups were comprised of adult extended family, preschool staff, and public school staff. The secondary family participants were identified by their availability during telephone calls and visits to the homes or at the actual interviews. Eight extended family members contributed information about three of the mother participants. The preschool and school secondary participants were located due to their employment status and availability during observational visits to the preschool and school sites. Three childcare directors, three school principals, and eleven kindergarten teachers provided contextual information and written documentation. There were a total of four primary participants, seven family secondary participants, three preschool secondary participants, and fourteen public school secondary participants in the original design.

The final design reclassified participants according to their data contribution. The research on family structures, "other mothers," and "fictive kin" from Chapter 1 support this change in design. The reclassification resulted in seven primary participants consisting of the four mothers, two grandmothers, and one daycare worker. The secondary participants consisted of seven family members, two preschool workers, and fourteen public school staff members. A visual organization chart of the final design can be found in the Appendices on page 266.

Interview sites were the choice of the participants. All chose to be interviewed in homes. Two of the mothers chose to be interviewed at their mother's homes, and the other two at their own homes. The group interview site was to be a local pizza eatery and video game arcade. No one could attend, so the group interview was eliminated from the study, and the questions became part of the written follow-up. Trying to reschedule was avoided since all four

mother participants were reluctant to commit to any new date. Several interviews were conducted on the telephone due to difficulty scheduling a meeting time. Since the original design could not be followed, the interviews were conducted in any way available and according to the participants' wishes in order to finish collecting data. Family members were re-classified from secondary to primary participants during this time due to the need for contacts and the amount of information each provided.

Data Collection Methods

The data collected were from:

- the scheduled formal interviews with transcribed tapes
- informal home visit and telephone interviews with written follow-ups
- information gained during the preschool and school visits from observations and informal conversations
- the written documentation provided by the preschool, school staff, and parents

The original research plan provided for the primary parent participants to be interviewed individually twice and as a group once. A written reminder (Appendices 267) and a telephone call preceded each scheduled interview. Interview questions were open-ended and stemmed from research questions. An outside group reviewed initial interview questions for understanding and open-endedness. The review group was made up of young adults between the ages of twenty-one and thirty that lived in the areas where the participants were being recruited. There were six members in the review group, consisting of:

- 1) four women and two men

- 2) two college students, three other high school graduates,
and one high school dropout with a GED
- 3) three White, two multiethnic, and one Black
- 4) four parents, two childless
- 5) two divorced, four never married

This group was chosen to test understanding across all socioeconomic groups within the age group for the desired participants. Wording of questions was revised so that all review group members agreed on the meaning of the questions. The questions were:

I. Tell me about your life now.

1. Married or living with someone?
2. Job?
3. School?
4. What do you do for fun?
5. Who lives in your apartment?
6. Who helps with child-care besides your daycare?
7. What are your plans for your future?
8. What do you want for your child in her/his future?

II. Tell me about your school experiences (K-12+).

1. How far have you gone in public school (K-12)?
2. What did you like best about public school?
3. What did you not like about public school?
4. Did you go to Kindergarten? How did you feel about K?
5. What did your mother/father do with you and the school
when you were in K?

III. Tell me about being a parent.

1. Describe your child.
2. Tell me about when s/he was born.

Parent's age at birth:

Were you a student?

Describe the other parent and your relationship.

How did you feel about becoming parents?

What is each parent's relationship with the child now?

3. How did your family feel about your becoming a parent?
4. How did the other parent's family feel?
5. Does your family have a relationship with your child now?
6. Does the other parent's family see the child now?

IV. Tell me about enrolling your child in school.

1. Tell me about filling out the forms and meeting the school staff.
2. How do you feel about sending your child to school?
3. Are you looking forward to anything?
4. Are you dreading anything?
5. Are you afraid of anything?
6. What do you plan to do with your child and the school?

Attend teacher conferences?

Go on Field Trips and School Visits?

Attend student performances?

Attend PTA and other meetings?

Help with homework and other home academic activities?

Take your child to school?

Pick up your child at 1:00pm?

Other:

V. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me?

The review group was chosen carefully and did not include scholars. This was to be certain less educated individuals understood the meaning of the words, and that the questions elicited the desired information. The participants appeared to understand all of the questions from the answers and data received. Later interview questions followed the original questions (asking about events occurring since the previous interview) and any specific questions resulting from previous interview data (Glesne and Peshkin 1992). Copies of all questions can be found in the Appendices on pages 263-265.

The two planned formal parent individual interviews (each about one hour in length) and one parent group interview (about two hours in length) were to be audio taped and transcribed in the original design. The group interview was to be held at a local pizza restaurant and video arcade with tokens for the children and food for everyone provided by the researcher. The invitations included each mother, all of her children, and another adult to care for the children during the interview. Descriptive notes and observations were to be written during all interviews, and typed soon after the interview was concluded. The notes were to be attached to the transcript from that interview. Unplanned, informal interviews with parents were expected and could take place in person or on the telephone should a parent initiate contact, or should a further question or clarification arise (occur to the researcher) from analysis of previously collected data. The informal interviews were not taped. However, the information was written and typed as a side note.

The final design completed much of the information gathering on the

telephone and with informal interview visits. There were several reasons for canceling and postponing interviews. The demand of the school schedule to rise early and attend most of the day tires young children, making them open to new germs to which they are exposed. This led to illnesses of the children and the childcare providers and other family members. The result was reschedules, telephones, and alternate participants. Data were gathered by any method that I could think of to make contact and elicit the information needed to answer the questions.

Documents designed for and/or given to parents were requested and collected from the schools to provide information about school expectations for children and their parents. Formal interviews with the specific teachers were not scheduled because the research was attempting to form the school expectations from parent data and parent access to data. In addition, I did not want the parents to be anxious about contact with the teachers affecting their child. The data then could note any hidden expectations relayed to the parents but possibly not realized by the staff. Notes were made from observations of and the informal interviews with school staff. School documentation concerning parent involvement that was given to parents was requested and copies made. All researcher notes were typed and included as descriptive data. Interviews of secondary participants at the schools were not taped, but researcher notes were taken and included. Individual school profiles were obtained from the school system's website by Internet. No preschool, school, or teacher contact occurred after the descriptive visits were concluded during the kindergarten year in order to protect the identity of the participants and their families, the preschools, and the schools themselves. The one necessary second visit to a school occurred after the kindergartners had gone on to first grade.

All of the planned interviews were scheduled, and reminders were sent through the mail and telephone calls; however, not all were completed. All four mothers were interviewed initially, two at their childcare facility and two on the telephone. Only one mother was able to complete her two interviews in person, and due to a sick child, she could not attend the group interview. Another mother had children with the flu during the second interview period and could not attend the group interview due to being sick herself. Being new to school germs, kindergarten children experience many infections and take them home to their families. None of the participants attended the scheduled group interview due to illness, discontinuing participation in the study, and other personal difficulties. One parent participant returned the data verification form and one answered the remaining questions by telephone, consequently these two stories are constructed from parent words. One grandmother answered the remaining question by telephone, and another grandmother and mother each partially gave the final information by telephone. The telephone was found a valuable tool for gathering data. Participants were more willing to participate over the telephone than in person due to time and transportation issues.

The difficulties encountered in gathering data led to the final design. Several other participants partially answered the questions by telephone or through unscheduled visits. I found that calling or dropping by to say hello could produce some answers and create a closer relationship. Those stories were constructed from family and daycare worker words, as well as the mother's words. All of the primary participants provided information over the telephone due to the interview difficulties, and some unscheduled in person interviews were used as a follow-up. All primary and secondary participant data were written as a note attached to a transcript. Data were gathered in every way I could imagine.

Analysis

The original and final designs for analysis are the same. All data (documents, interviews, informal observations, notes) were transcribed for access to language search. The transcriptions were searched for patterns and themes pertaining to parent expectations for the schools and their children, parental role construction in relation to their child's school experience, school expectations for parents and children, and any other related emergent themes. The date of data collection combined with line numbers within each data collection was used for identification of each data transcription excerpt. Themes discovered were assigned a number (1 for parent expectation, 2 for school expectation) and a "key word(s)" for identification of the specific area, followed by the date and line number. Font or color was used for easy location within transcribed documents. Then a cut and paste process put the collected data together in files. Parental/family perspectives and positions are determined from the participants' words, and school position is determined from the written documents and staff statements.

Analysis examined the parents' construction of their role in their child's education before the child entered school, how that conception differed from school expectations, and how the original conception changed or remained the same over the first semester of kindergarten. The data for parents' construction came from researcher understanding of interview tapes and data that were validated by a primary participant. The school's expectations for parents and students were constructed from school visits and documentation, and are viewed as the mainstream culture's position (context). Differences or similarities between the parents' initial role construction and role after the first semester

were treated as forms of agreement with, social domination by, or resistance of the status quo, depending on the data collected. The issues surrounding the difficulty of data collection were examined. Cultural differences (Erickson 1987), cultural discontinuity (Ogbu 1982, Nel 1995), social reproduction and resistance (social inclusion and exclusion within a specific field of operation from Lareau and Horvat 1999) theories were all applied during the data analysis, which appears in Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

Validity

Since this is a descriptive, narrative project, no specific “reality” is constructed. For both the original and final designs each position, that is the position of the school and each participant’s position, is examined for points of agreement and conflict. Descriptions of the school and school’s expectations come from the words of the staff, school and system website information, and gathered documents. Readers (my family and friends) were asked to interpret written descriptions to the researcher to ensure clear understanding of written work. This process included having the description read, and the reader verbalize the description. If we agreed on the mental image, the description was left alone. If we did not agree on a clear image, I rewrote the description. For the original design, a primary participant was asked to examine a written version or read an oral version of their individual position to check for validity of key informant position. This version was a color-coded copy of the questions and included return envelopes with postage. Since none of the families could attend the final group interview and celebration, the final design placed some questions at the end of the written version of the follow-up. I included fast food gift certificates as a way of thanking the mothers for their participation since the

pizza party did not occur. Follow-up telephone calls were made to aid in the return rate and to gather some of the data. Of the four sent out only one was returned by mail. Several follow-up telephone calls and visits were required to complete and verify as much information as possible. School documentation and informal interview notes were checked for validity of the descriptive position of each school against the collected documentation. In this way both the description and interpretation were checked to insure the data were reported in a way that portrays the informants' stories in light of the context (Maxwell 1996, Glesne and Peshkin 1992, Stake 2000).

Limitations

As I stated in Chapter 1, the participants sought were race/ethnicity, age, and class specific. The plan was to search local Head Start Programs to find participants. Access was denied to the Head Start Programs. The denial of access to the Head Start Sites and the denial of my appeal, added time and researcher stress to the study. I knew from teaching kindergarten that most of my parents fitting the desired participant description could be found in Head Start. I knew that Head Start parents would be familiar with societal parent involvement expectations. I knew that being introduced at the Head Start Program would give me credibility with the parents, and in some ways, give me a foundation for discussing parent involvement choices. By being denied access to the program, I lost all of these advantages. This became the most significant limitation of the study.

Locating sites to search for participants that fit all of the categories listed in the original design of the study took an extra month. Enlisting the help of persons fitting all of the descriptors (Black, under age 18 when their first child

was born, and living in public housing) was not possible in the amount of time with the conditions of the search. The fact that the desired participant population was hard-to-reach or a hidden population compounded by my non-recognition of that condition, was the second most significant limitation. Since I began the study believing that had a way of locating the participants, I did not consider them a hidden population. With the denial of access to Head Start, they became a hard-to-reach group.

A major limitation of this study was time. The original design demanded that the parents be located and interviewed at a very busy time in their lives when their schedules were changing. Finding participant location sites, locating the families, scheduling and completing interviews were all bound by time. The information needed to be gathered during a very busy time for both researcher and participant families. In order to get developing reactions rather than later reactions, this time schedule had to be followed. The time line was repeatedly revised and data gathering could be only minimally extended. The time line was violated; however, the initial data remains within the original time line.

Though I am multi-ethnic, my White appearance, the knowledge that I am a teacher and graduate researcher, and my middle-class mannerisms combined with my age could have determined who was willing to be a participant. If young parents are rebelling and resisting White middle class society or they have generation gap or school issues, they probably did not talk to me. If they had unpleasant experiences with or memories of a teacher who resembled me, I am sure they did not talk to me. Locating participants was a major limitation; however, participant commitment became a more severe limitation of this study. Two of the recruited participants did not finish the interviews, and other informants had to be located and recruited.

Timeline

The research proposal was completed and approved in spring, and Institutional Review Board, preschool, and public school system permission were attained. The preschool programs were visited, and parents with the final participant characteristics were recruited and interviewed during the summer. When the participants were located, they were initially interviewed, and the schools that their children were to attend were identified. The schools were contacted, and visited in late summer before and just as school began in August. The parent initial and first interviews and transcribed tapes were completed by August. Descriptions of the parents and children, preschool programs, and schools, were written and analyzed during August.

Parents were to be interviewed after school got underway to collect first impressions, but the second interviews were postponed until mid-November after the children received their first report cards. The first interviews had finished as the children were entering school. During the first interviews, we discussed what data I desired from the families. Two of the mothers themselves thought it would be better to have some feed back from the school and a chance to be accustomed to school before the second interview. I agreed with their reasoning. Some difficulties with illness were encountered in November, and only two parent participants completed their second interview. The data for the other two mothers came from family participants in person and over the telephone by the end of January.

A group interview was scheduled for early December. Invitations were sent with follow-up telephone reminders. No one could attend the group interview, so the final interviews were conducted mostly by telephone.

Participants could voluntarily contact the researcher at any point before the end of data gathering to add information or ask questions. Two of the participants contacted me several times and became friends. The family members of the other two families finished the interviews and verified the data by telephone. Data approval letters were sent out in January. One was returned by mail, and the other three were completed over the telephone. Final analysis and writing was to be completed by March, but due to time constraints, continued longer. The timeline reflects the purpose of the research to gather first impression data from the parents, not later in the school year reflections. The school rationale was to get parents involved initially as their child entered school, which is the time when they are least knowledgeable and most interested in their new role as parent of a kindergartner. This role formation is of prime interest to the research.

Chapter 1 introduced the problem and researcher experience, position, and rationale. Chapter 2 presented the related literature. This chapter, Chapter 3, presented the two designs, identified as original and final, and tracked and justified the reasons for the design changes. Changing the design of a qualitative research project is not an unusual event. Emerson explains that " ... fieldwork is not technically systematic in the sense of being able to specify in advance its exact methods, it does gain a different sort of systematic quality from the careful, self-conscious reflection on its doings. These sorts of reflections, either as one is actively engaged in carrying out a fieldwork project or as one is subsequently analyzing and thinking about a study already completed, need to be encouraged (1983, ix)." The stories and analysis of the preschools and public schools make up Chapter 4, and the participants' stories and analysis are contained Chapter 5. Final analysis and discussion of data, recommendations, and suggestions for further study in Chapter 6 conclude this study.

Chapter 4: The Preschools and Public Schools

My Cover Story

When recruiting participants, researchers must explain their identity and why they are asking the specific questions they are asking. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) termed this explanation a “cover story.” Delmos Jones (1970) describes establishing this role from the perspectives of being an insider or an outsider. An insider is a researcher who belongs or can be assumed to belong to the community being studied. The insider knows certain information about the culture of the community and has a different perspective. An outsider is someone easily recognizable as not belonging to the community with only research information and perspective. For this research I needed a role to cover both, since I was an insider in the school setting and an outsider with the families.

My cover story was completely accurate and included that I was a kindergarten teacher in graduate school working on a project to discover ways of improving communications between kindergarten teachers and new kindergarten parents. I promoted the research as a way to express an anonymous opinion about schools and school improvement, and to be part of improving schools for the students. I divulged that I was working toward my doctorate to preschool and school personnel, but did not feel that personal information was as important for the families. I felt that information might create a problem with comfort level for interviews. I gave only these details and was not asked for more details from anyone whom I met. I did divulge to the grandmothers and mothers who became participants, that I was a mother and a grandmother with four generations living at my house, and we discussed family life in general. The disclosures seemed to

make each of my participants more comfortable when talking to me about school and/or their family's life.

After being denied access to Head Start sites to search for participants (see Chapter 3, Participant Location Sites), fifteen childcare facilities were discovered while driving around two public housing areas. Eight of those facilities had no entering kindergartners. At the seven other childcare facilities meetings were scheduled, and one of those meetings provided two of the mothers, and a director helped to find the other two mothers of the four participating families. The preschools providing the families were given fictional names with inventive spelling describing the director of each.

Preschools

Graduation Day at MaryPoppins's Childcare

MaryPoppins's childcare was located in a 1950s, ranch-style, two-bedroom house. It was in a part of the city where many Black families lived, and three public housing projects were located. The main classroom was the living room, the kitchen doubled as the office, one bedroom was a computer lab/playroom, and the other was a sleeping room with cots. All of the rooms were furnished with colorful child size furniture, tables, and chairs. There were many toys, games, and activities on colorful shelves and storage crates, and the walls were covered with the children's artwork. The facility was clean and neat, but also cluttered and cheerful. MaryPoppins explained that her curriculum focused on language and mathematics skills to support the kindergarten curriculum. She provided each child computer time and attempted to reinforce public school expectations such as arriving on time every day, dressing appropriately, and calling if absent or tardy. I had been invited to attend the

graduation ceremony for the children who were to attend school in August. They would be leaving the preschool program and joining the after school program. MaryPoppins thought that this was the perfect time to have the parent meeting to ask for participants. In the main classroom, child-sized chairs for graduation guests were arranged in rows to the left of the front door. The program was to take place between the front and hallway doors in the walkway.

The graduation ceremony for the four children who would enter kindergarten in two weeks was scheduled for 9:30am. I arrived at MaryPoppins's Childcare around 8:55, and went to find a seat where I could observe. MaryPoppins, the owner and teacher, was an enthusiastic and pleasant young Black woman. She introduced me to the five Black children who were present and signed the permission to be a participant in the research project. The two brothers were ages five and three, the lone girl was three, and the sister and brother twins were five years old. MaryPoppins explained that one of her five-year-olds, another Black boy, was late, as usual. She said that all of her children attended Head Start for part of each day, and that she provided transportation when the bus did not, as she did for kindergartners if the parent needed her. A little after 9:00 a.m. a grandmother arrived with two older grandsons, about ten years old. Patience was the paternal grandmother of the older of the brothers who was graduating. Shortly, the other grandmother, Spring, arrived with Violet, the mother of the five and three year old boys. MaryPoppins greeted each arrival and sent the children into another room to prepare for the ceremony. The grandmothers and Violet discussed the five-year-old boy.

A middle aged woman and her teen-aged daughter entered and took seats. They explained that they were the mother and older sister of the twins. The mother was a student and worked full time as well as having five children,

the twins being the youngest. MaryPoppins appeared, greeted the mother and teen-ager, explained who I was again, and looked out the front door. It was close to 9:30 and the boy and his mother still had not arrived. She went back to the playroom where the children were becoming noisy. About 9:35 music began playing ("Pomp and Circumstance" by Elgar) from a tape player, and the three year old girl carried out a sign announcing the graduating class. As she took the sign back to MaryPoppins, the missing boy, a smaller brother, and Rose, their mother who was carrying her baby girl, entered. MaryPoppins motioned to the boys to come to her and waved the mother and baby to a seat. The ceremony proceeded complete with mortarboards and diplomas. All of the children took part and it ended about 10:00am.

I helped to serve refreshments and was invited to explain the research project and my cover story. Although I was the only non-Black in the group, I felt comfortable, and the other members appeared at ease. MaryPoppins was supportive of my research and me, and it was discussed freely among the mothers and grandmothers. The mother of the twins realized that she was older than the targeted participants, and excused herself from the meeting. The other two mothers decided to participate and we did initial interviews. In the group of the two grandmothers and two mothers, each mother was asked how she felt about her child entering school, which school her child would attend, her address and telephone number, and we discussed kindergarten in general. The two mothers then signed permission forms, and identified the public schools that the boys would be attending in writing. Appointments were made to meet for the first in depth interviews, which were to take place within a week. The families and experiences of the two mothers found at MaryPoppins's Daycare were described in Chapter 5 as Violet who has two sons and Rose who has two sons and a

daughter. Violet and Rose were the mothers of the two kindergarten boys in the study.

After the visitors left, including Violet, Rose, and Rose's baby daughter, the children returned to play and MaryPoppins and I discussed my project and the two mothers. She guessed that both of the mothers were very young when their older sons were born, and emphasized how much interaction she continually had with the grandmothers, including Patience and Spring, Violet's family, and Terra, Rose's mother. Her descriptions of the two young mothers included constant tardiness and absenteeism without calling and frequently late pick-up. Rose was also described as forgetting special events and programs. MaryPoppins expressed surprise that Rose had attended the graduation, especially since her mother had not come. MaryPoppins believed that these two mothers exactly fit the participant description for my research. She expressed hope that by Violet and Rose being involved with my research the two kindergarten boys would have help and do well.

Owner, Director, Teacher, and Van Driver: MaryPoppins

MaryPoppins was the single staff member/owner of her preschool/daycare facility. She constantly focused on "backing up the kindergarten teacher" and transported her students to and from the nearest Head Start program and kindergartens. Her curriculum focused on academics (alphabet, numbers, numerals, computer skills, music, and art) which are some of the main elements of most kindergarten curricula. The physical facility and daily schedule emulated the public school. The furniture type and arrangement, equipment/manipulatives/activities available, display of student work, and lessons presented all resembled a public school kindergarten. Even the

graduation ceremony emulated a public high school graduation right down to the music and attire. The main difference was the fact that the house and climate felt home-like and comfortable. I felt like a family member who was welcomed home.

MaryPoppins is a young, unmarried, Black mother of an eight-year-old. She is an established businesswoman, performing all of her business duties herself. She is administration, teacher, bus driver, etc. She understands her own micro-cultures, and obviously she understands and can function in mainstream, White culture. Her focus in her daycare appears to be the same as my focus with my research: to assist the families she works with in learning and using information about how to be a functioning part of White, mainstream culture in order to enhance their lives. MaryPoppins's expectations for her daycare parents include: parent acceptance of their responsibility, parent care for their children (physically, emotionally, etc.), periodic parent contact with her, parent involvement in child academic support and preschool activities, consistent attendance, arrival and pick up on time, telephone contact and notification of attendance and other changes. Expecting academic help implies an expectation of parent literacy.

MaryPoppins accepts the societal view of parent role and parent involvement. She referred to the tendency for Violet and Rose to bring or pick-up their children late and/or to be absent and not call. This reference demonstrates her knowledge of attendance law and school policy, as well as her understanding that these would be problems for both mothers in public school.

MotherGoose's Childcare

The daycare/preschool was on the ground floor of an old school building located in a poor, urban area. The school had been converted into a community

center, and the childcare facility was funded by a large nonprofit agency. I entered the front of the building upstairs from the parking lot and found myself in the midst of a basketball game. The teams were made up of middle and high school students, and the older elementary students were watching and cheering. It was loud and competitive, and had spilled out of the gymnasium into the hallway where I was standing. I spotted a small office near the door to the gym and asked the young lady sitting at the desk where to find the daycare and preschool. She pointed and gave me directions to go down the stairs.

At the bottom of the stairs, there were three directions, left, right, and straight ahead. All of the wings of the building were closed off with large, heavy metal doors. All of the doors were identical. I went straight ahead first and found a few rooms and an exit. Next, I tried right and found elementary aged children. I retraced my way and found the correct doors. I entered a colorful and cluttered hallway. There were adult and child size desks, tables, chairs, and easels with children's artwork hanging on and above them on lines. A telephone was ringing, and I could hear voices of adults and children coming from the rooms. I did not see anyone. I walked down the hallway and looked into each of the six darkened rooms, three on each side. It was naptime. Young children on cots and mats, and women sitting in child size chairs were visible. The children varied ethnically and racially, as did the women. The women were of different ages from very young to middle aged.

Eventually a Black woman in her thirties came out and asked if I needed assistance. I explained that I was there to see the director. She asked me to wait and brought a young, White man out of one of the rooms. He explained that he was assistant director and a parent of one of the students. He led the way into one of the classrooms. The large room was semi-dark and divided by

partitions and furniture. We wound our way into a corner containing a desk, computer, and some chairs. When we sat down he explained that MotherGoose, the director, was in a meeting that had run over, and she would come for our appointment as soon as the other meeting ended. We continued to discuss the childcare facilities and the research project. I discovered that all of the children attended a nearby Head Start program and were transported by bus. The daycare curriculum concentrated on supporting the Head Start curriculum, which was based on the language and mathematics skills expected in public school kindergarten.

In about twenty minutes MotherGoose rushed in and apologized for being late. She explained again about her meeting, typed, and printed the permission letter I had requested. She said that at a regular meeting with the parents of all of her entering kindergartners, she had asked for volunteers for the research, and had only two of five Black mothers who were interested in participating. She had given them my telephone number and they were to call me during the week. She described these two mothers as good, involved mothers that attended most meetings and were always available for their children. MotherGoose and her assistant were both supportive of my research project, and I got a feeling of insistence toward these two mothers. I felt as though MotherGoose and her assistant were trying to "sell" me on using the two chosen mothers. I later learned that each of the mothers had connections to the childcare program in addition to their children. One mother and an aunt of the other mother each worked in the childcare program part time. I thanked MotherGoose and her assistant and left for my appointment to interview Rose, one of the mothers located at MaryPoppins's Childcare.

After a week, I had not heard from either of the mothers. On August 12, I

called MotherGoose and asked if she would remind the two mothers to call. She was surprised that I had not heard from either and said she would ask them if she could give me their telephone numbers so that I could call them. We arranged for me to call her back the next day. I called her on August 13 and received the two telephone numbers. I called several times and finally conducted initial interviews and arranged first interviews with both mothers. The two participant mothers whose daughters attended MotherGoose Childcare are called Tulip and Iris in Chapter 5. They were the families of the two kindergarten girls.

MotherGoose and the Power of Community Organizations

The daycare/preschool was on the ground floor of an old school building that was converted into a community center. The feeling of the importance of the building and how small one person is came to me as I entered. I could not help thinking how three, four, and five-year-old children and their parents must feel as they enter. The building and its climate probably feels overpowering and in some ways frightening. This aura surrounds public schools. The large nonprofit agency controlling the daycare was definitely part of the mainstream society.

The furniture, procedures, curriculum, and activities all emulated a public school. The children were ethnically and racially varied, as was the staff, who were of different ages ranging from very young to middle aged adults. The administrative staff consisted of a young, White woman and her assistant, a young, White man. The assistant remained in the building while the director worked inside and outside of the building. The teachers were of varied ethnic and racial backgrounds, but all appeared to accept the acculturation purpose of the institution. This system resembles the principal to assistant to teacher

relationship found in public schools, and in other administrative positions within mainstream society. The daycare curriculum concentrated on supporting the Head Start curriculum, which was based on the language and mathematics skills expected in public school kindergarten.

MotherGoose spoke at a regular meeting with the parents of all of her entering kindergartners and asked for volunteers for the research. She and her assistant were both supportive of my research project, and I got a feeling of insistence toward the two mothers who were recommended to me. By recruiting the two mothers instead of allowing me to interview them, the original age description had to be changed to the final design, and the initial interviews had to be done by telephone. The top down power structure and control certainly imitate the public school system, and extended to any formal activity the daycare was involved in, such as my research.

The large nonprofit agency controlling the daycare, MotherGoose, and her assistant more mimicked the expectations of the public school than did MaryPoppins expectations. The expectations of the program for the parents were identical to MaryPoppins expectations, but extended into more time commitment. Parent acceptance of their responsibility, parent care for their children (physically, emotionally, etc.), parent involvement in child academic support, consistent attendance, arrival and pick up on time, and telephone contact and notification of attendance and other changes were all identical. Periodic parent contact with the program included working within the program much as in Head Start, which MaryPoppins and the school system encourage but do not require. Parent involvement in child academic support and preschool activities (implying parent literacy expectation) extended to assignments for children to encourage academic growth. This extension mimics homework in

public school.

Preschool Expectations and My Reflections

My reaction as a public school employee is: Wonderful! The children who attend these preschools and their parents begin early to interact with the demands that will be placed on them in public school and in their adult lives. They begin learning the Euro-Western expectations for the workplace that will allow them to earn money and support their lives before entering public school (Spring 2000, Fordham 1988). As a teacher this prior learning of expected group behavior and necessary skills (like children opening milk cartons, zipping clothing, and parents helping with homework, attending conferences, etc.) is quite desirable. My reaction as a multiethnic child of blue-collar workers is: Good. If these children accept and learn to get along in the preschools, they will be able to make it in jobs later, maybe even make the transition to attaining some power and privilege not available to the Black, working class social position. The parents will at least know what is expected of them. Part of the recent school reform has been increased early childhood education (Mickelson and Klenz 1993) for exposure to the ideas of White, middle class, group behavior and expectations.

I believe that micro-ethnic groups feel powerless to change mainstream culture from within their groups. Many African Americans and others know that if their children are to survive they must be able to join the work force. Many feel that they must become a part of the main stream in order to make a difference for their microcultural groups and at the same time they desire to retain their micro-cultural identity. This dilemma probably stems from the history of the fight for individual rights in the United States (Anderson 1988, Spring 2000). Many of the

changes have come first through the schools and the court system based on the constitution, so most groups believe that is the best avenue for change. African Americans are one of the groups who have demanded and embraced schooling, and have fought for the right to have quality education (Lightfoot 1978, Anderson 1988, Walker 1996, Spring 2000).

The two childcare facilities provided me the four participant families. The children attended three different elementary schools. All three schools were part of the same public school system. The system and schools are described next.

Public School

CountyCity Public School System

CountyCity Public School System, as the fictional name implies, covered an urban, suburban, and rural area. On the Internet site and in parent literature, the system was described as consisting of approximately 90 K-12 schools, 52,000 students, and 3,600 certified employees. The racial makeup of the student body for the entire system was 13.6% Black, 83.5% White, and 2.9% Other. Gender data were unavailable for the system and individual school student populations. 20.1% of the students were enrolled in special education programs, 31.9% of the students received free or reduced price lunch, 12.8% of the students were Title I certified, and 1.2% were English Language Learners. The student academic performance (as measured by achievement, ACT, SAT, and other test scores) for a two-year period received all grades of C (average) or above, as did the non-academic areas of attendance/dropout and promotion, and overall the school system student performance was above a B average. The system; however, received poor evaluations in finance with an F in per pupil expenditures and a D in average teacher salaries. There was no data available

about the racial or gender make-up of the certified staff, just that there were nine teacher waivers and two teacher permits. The mission statement was: "We the people of 'County' County will inspire students to be life-long learners who are ethical, contributing citizens."

The system was described as abiding by all federal, state, and local laws, as well as its own regulations and policies. Covered under the laws were attendance, health requirements, curricula, financial responsibility for school requirements including food during the school day and fees, and special education needs. School system regulations and policies augment these areas and extend into the use of electronic media and expected student and parent behavior. Individual school policies further refine all of the expectations and address specific issues at the building level.

The right to attend school was guaranteed to each child, but for kindergartners enrollment was not required. The compulsory school law begins at seven years of age in this state. Most families decide to send their children to school at the expected age of five years, and if they choose to wait, their child must still begin at the kindergarten level, at whatever age they enroll. In order to enroll, the child must have a social security number or some other registered identifying number. They must have a physical exam after March 1 of the year they plan to enroll, and they must have proof of required immunizations or show reasons for medical or religious exemptions.

The parent must show proof of residency in the form of mail received at the residence addressed to the parent, and a utility statement or other government correspondence was preferred. The parent was required to provide vital information such as address; home, work, cell telephone numbers; siblings and family members; ethnicity and language; medical, physical, and social

history including allergies and asthma, etc.; and any other information the parent/guardian wishes to include. For parents who enroll their children, information was provided in written form from the local health department and social services such as assistance with clothing, shoes, or supplies. Information was also distributed about an optional health insurance plan for students.

Once enrolled, kindergartners were subject to the compulsory attendance law guiding daily attendance, absences, tardies, and early dismissals. Children were expected to attend school every day on time and stay the entire time. For kindergartners in this system, that was five hours and fifteen minutes.

Kindergartners may ride buses to school, but were not provided bus service home at the end of their school day. The system policy allowed the children to stay for an extra one hour and forty-five minutes to ride the buses with the older children, but made no provisions for their care during this time. Each school must handle any children who stayed on their own, and usually kindergarten teachers must keep the children. This information was given to parents by each school. For the first two weeks of kindergarten each student attended only one day each week and left an hour earlier than the regular kindergarten day. This procedure allowed the student an adjustment period and the teacher to test readiness and literacy skills. A letter explaining the system policy and "staggering enrollment" was provided by the system to each school for distribution to parents.

The curriculum covered literacy (development), language (experience), and multi-sensory (exploration). These areas met the state and local curriculum requirements. Literacy included alphabet, numbers, big books, guided reading, interactive writing, and computer skills. Phonological awareness, songs, Spanish, chants, and vocabulary were encompassed by language. Finally, multi-

sensory exploration was described as movement, manipulatives, music, art, and counting. In order for the school to provide the materials and hands on requirements, each child was assessed an annual fee. Other financial needs were food during the school day (possibly breakfast and lunch) and field trips or special programs. The parent was financially responsible, and if they cannot meet this responsibility, forms were provided to apply for financial aid. If approved for financial aid these things were covered through waivers.

Federal law prescribes special educational needs and services for children. It also requires that each school system notify all parents of those services. Forms were provided to the schools for parents to read, sign, and retain a copy. Forms were also provided for parents to give permission to their child to work online on the Internet at school. The system's electronic media policy released the school and system from liability and responsibility for damages incurred with its use, and a parent copy of the policy accompanied this form. It required the student and parent to accept the responsibility for appropriate use and abiding by all laws, terms, and conditions described in the guidelines.

Expected student behavior covered school bus transportation, student dress code, acceptable language and actions, conflict resolution, and the procedures and consequences of not following the policy. For parents directions were given for following the laws and policies, and for assisting their child to be successful in kindergarten. Those suggestions were:

1. Read every day
2. Talk about books
3. Count
4. Sing the Alphabet
5. Identify print and numbers in the environment
6. Teach the children their name and other family names,

family address and telephone number

7. Visit the public library

The only other records or correspondence generated at the system level was a copy of the literacy record, mathematics record, and kindergarten report card. These records were available to parents at conferences or on request, and the report card was sent home with the child on a six-week interval. Educational terminology found in the records would be explained when shown to the parent in a meeting, but the terminology in the report card was left to the parent to decipher. The report card will be discussed later in Chapters 5 and 6 where questions arose during the study.

OurChoiceUrban School (Violet's School)

OurChoiceUrban School, Violet's neighborhood school, had 685 students classified as 82.5% Black, 16.2% White, and 1.3% Other. Described as a large inner-city school, 12.4% of the students were tested for admittance to special education programs, and 83% of the students received free or reduced price lunch, which qualified the school for Title I funding. In addition, the school had a technology focus as a magnet school. On achievement testing, the school received an F in all areas (reading, language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies) for the years 2000 and 2001. The original building was constructed in 1972 and twenty-three classrooms were added in 1996. The building was bright and colorful, and served grades K - 5. There were forty-three classroom teachers and twenty-five instructional aides. This school had a Black principal, White assistant principal, and a large number of White and Black staff members. Several of the staff members were parents of students, and all of the staff that I met were female. "The mission statement of 'OurChoiceUrban School'

is to empower students to become life-long learners by involving parents, staff, and the community in providing a positive learning environment that nurtures children's mental, physical, social, and emotional needs."

When I visited after school hours on August 21, the office staff, who appeared busy, greeted me. The Black principal was pleasant and friendly, and the two, White kindergarten teachers that I was able to speak with were tired, but pleasant. The kindergartens were all located in one wing of the building with restrooms and water fountains available. We walked down to the kindergarten wing and looked at all six kindergarten classrooms. The walk down the hallway was quite wonderful with large windows, a great deal of outside light, and colorful displays. The rooms were decorated with children's work and contained many hands on activities. The classrooms were small, but had storage, running water, and cooking facilities.

The teachers talked generally about their program and specifically about parent involvement expectations. Dwindling parent involvement had resulted in disappointments in the past few years due to parents who have been working and/or going to school and were not able to come to planned parent involvement activities. Parent conferences were attended regularly by most parents; however, there were always those few parents who were impossible to reach by note, telephone, or conference. Home visits were not mentioned. Many of the poorer children were living with extended family, i.e. grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, etc., and involvement of the guardians was often difficult. All system policies and guidelines were followed, i.e. student dress code, "no tolerance" violence and drug policies, etc., but no written documentation was provided for me to copy when I asked.

Near the end of our meeting, the two teachers talked about the poor

achievement test scores. The state ruling and system offer of a transfer to each student had affected the school. Staff morale was low. Everyone was pleasant, but tired all of the time. Each of these teachers was questioning her competency, and wondering if going to teach in another school or system was the answer. Fear of what would happen to the school and the teachers' careers was evident. Throughout the entire conversation, each teacher periodically returned to her students and how all of this would affect them and their education. It appeared to me that these teachers were concerned with their image as educators, but they were just as concerned with the level of education and care that the students at the school received and the public image of the school. I thought requesting parent involvement literature a third time (the original fax to the principal contained a list of requested paperwork) was an imposition, considering the crisis conditions at the school. I decided to use the system policies that the teachers referred to and the school web site and profile available by internet as the written standard for OurChoiceUrban School. That information can be found earlier in this chapter in the CountyCity Public School System profile and documents section.

When writing the final report in early 2004, I realized that I needed the information that I had not gotten. I faxed a letter to a kindergarten teacher (not either of the two spoken with during the visit) asking for the information. She called back in the afternoon and discussed at length the parent involvement difficulties at OurChoiceUrban School. According to the teacher, only about one-fourth to one-third of the parents in the school were ever seen or interacted with the school. She had been at the school for more than ten years and had been part of many efforts to distribute information and involve parents. The "good" parents were often volunteers or became teacher aides at the school.

She sent a packet of information including parent notices and letters, Open House invitation for parents, and a parent handbook given to all new kindergarten parents when their child enters school. The notices were pleasant invitations to parents to enroll their children in school. They give all of the information necessary to enroll the child. The side note confirms that the notices were posted at local food stores, Head Start programs, preschools/daycares, and were sent home with students. The spring enrollment remains a poor turnout, and most of the kindergartners enroll at the beginning of the school year. Parent letter samples were informative and have a pleasant tone. There were graphic images decorating the notes. They cover a variety of topics from parent meetings to class celebrations. One paragraph begins, "Parents are welcome to visit our classroom. In fact, I need parents to work in the mornings in the classroom with small groups and individual students. If you are interested in helping, please let me know."

The teacher-made parent book contains all of the school system regulations for kindergartners. It has thirty-five pages and informs about the necessary:

- birth, social security, and medical forms
- supplies that parents should purchase
- dress code and requirements to dress self (zip, tie, button, etc.)
- hours and attendance policy
- meal and food prices / directions for applying for free lunch or fee waiver
- school calendar containing inservice and other days there was no school
- hints for a smooth entrance and continuing kindergarten year

- special programs at the school such as a computer lab
- typical kindergarten schedule and day and curriculum outline
- a copy of the upper and lower case handwriting alphabet and numerals 0 – 10

The other information sent was system level forms, such as report cards, and school handbook with policies for students.

SuburbanWhite School (Rose's School)

Rose's son attended the school that was zoned for her mother's house. SuburbanWhite School was a long way, and the kindergartner had a forty-minute car or bus ride each day to school from home, and a longer ride to daycare after school with MaryPoppins, who picked him up. I visited the neighborhood school on August 23, and met with four kindergarten teachers and the principal. The school was 19.4% Black, 78.2% White, and 2.4% Other and had 261 students. Described as "... located in a beautiful area of the county," this school served only grades K – 2. 50.2% of the students received free or reduced price lunch. There were no statistics on the number of students who were tested for admittance to special education programs and there were no achievement test scores for this school. The missing statistics were probably due to the limited ages and grade levels in the building. K – 1 students were often considered too young to have a valid score on many psychological tests, so they were often not tested until late second grade. This system did not test kindergartners on achievement tests, and usually began testing in the 2nd or 3rd grade, meaning there were probably not any test statistics to report.

The building was bright and colorful, built in 1963, and had twenty-one classrooms. There were sixteen classroom teachers and eight instructional

aides. This school had a Black principal, all of the teachers that I met were White, and all of the staff that I saw were female. Some of the staff members were parents of students. The school mission statement promised to “. . . work in partnership with parents to provide a positive learning environment for each child to become academically successful.”

The secretary greeted me in the office. She sent me to the kindergarten wing where all of the kindergarten rooms were located. The halls were wide with many displays and welcome to schools signs, and the rooms were bright, colorful, and neither very large nor very small. One kindergarten teacher called me into her room and went to get the other teachers. Three White teachers came and sat at a reading table with me. The teacher from the room where we met explained that the fourth teacher was not able to meet with me. I explained my research project and cover story, and asked if any school literature was gathered for me. (Each principal's fax had contained the requested paperwork list.) I was given a packet of information that was given to parents, and some extra forms that were used at the beginning of the school year. The packet included system and school forms and information. I will list and discuss the documentation at the end of this section. The group discussed the parents at the school, who were described as mostly cooperative with a few exceptions. The “shop” talk turned to the parents who were difficult to involve. One younger teacher expressed frustration at all of the accommodations teachers made with such poor results. She listed evening meetings, home visits, meetings on non-teaching days, and telephone calls during and not during school hours. The teachers agreed that the group of non-involved parents were not all racially the same, but they were all “poor.” The description included being usually young, poor students themselves, and being unmarried, sometimes co-habiting, with

poor parenting skills. When I asked for clarification of poor parenting skills, I was given a description of the children and some parent behaviors:

- poor hygiene and poorly dressed (dirty face and hands in the morning, smelling of urine or other odors, always hungry, torn/dirty/ill-fitting clothes and shoes, no coat or socks on cold days, heavy clothing on hot days),
- required school forms and homework almost never returned,
- report cards lost or returned unsigned and sometimes dirty,
- supplies not provided and lost if the teacher provided for the child,
- poor attendance, frequently tardy and not picked up on time
- not answering teacher requests for conferences
- not attending parent meetings

The meeting lasted about an hour, and the tone remained pleasant.

Everyone was looking forward to the school year. As I was leaving the school, the principal came and walked out with me. She explained that she had been at a meeting and asked if I had the information that I came seeking. I thanked her and praised her staff for their help. She admitted that she was very proud of her school and staff.

The parent documents described here were intended for four specific times during the initial kindergarten experience. First contact with parents came when the child was registered at the school. This contact may be as early as April when kindergarten registration began with a one-day community event or later in the spring or early summer. At this contact, the parent was asked to complete an application form with the child's name, birth date, social security number, the parent's name, address, and telephone number. They were

informed about the information they will have to provide before their child can enter school. Those requirements were social security number, birth certificate, current physical exam, proof of completed required immunizations. A one-page sheet of recommendations for preparing the child for kindergarten suggested that parents be patient and work on helping their child feel comfortable about coming to school. It also suggested the children learn to share and wait patiently, practice listening and communicating verbally, learn to leave the parents, learn their full name and their parents' names, be able to recite their address and telephone number, and practice reciting letters, counting, and writing their name.

The next contact was just before kindergarten began during the summer. A letter was sent from the principal and the assigned kindergarten teacher to each child and their parent(s). The principal's letter explained the "staggering enrollment" process (explained in the system section) and gave the dates the child was to attend during those two weeks. It reminded parents about the required paper work (social security number, birth certificate, current physical exam, proof of completed required immunizations), the school hours for staggering enrollment days, the date that regular attendance began and the school hours, and to send lunch money or a lunch with their child. This letter also invited the parents to an orientation meeting just before regular attendance began, and asked parents to accompany their child to the classroom the first few days. The letter from the teachers took the form of a newsletter and welcomed the parents to the school. It gave the school telephone number, school hours of attendance, explained regular methods of sending information to parents, and reminded parents to check their child's backpack for notes daily. Included with the letter was a copy of the upper and lower case handwriting alphabet, numerals 0 – 10, and a list of needed supplies. The supplies list had eighteen items listed

and each child was asked to bring some of them. This list included hand soap, backpack, scissors, batteries, headphones, paper, and art/hands on supplies. If the child was enrolled at this time, the earlier paperwork was also to be presented.

The third contact included paperwork to be given out as the parent brings the child to school for the first staggered day. This included a welcome sheet with directions for leaving all of the paperwork and other items the child needs. The required paperwork was again listed along with the system-requested paperwork (questionnaire, emergency cards, special services form). All forms were available if the parent has not brought their own copy. Directions were given for leaving fee and lunch money and fee waiver and free/reduced price lunch forms were available. The parent was reminded of the early pick-up time, the date and time of the regular school days, and was re-invited to the orientation meeting. Each teacher had her own method of collecting and dispensing the supplies.

The final beginning of school paperwork was to be distributed at the parent orientation meeting just before regular school attendance began for kindergartners. This was approximately two weeks after the official opening of school. The agenda listed the principal and each kindergarten teacher as speakers. The topics covered were:

- Principal: welcome and introduction of kindergarten staff (teachers and aides), distribution of student handbooks and copies of the kindergarten curriculum units and skills checklist
- First K Teacher: importance of kindergarten, breakfast and lunch, fees, fundraisers, parties, special reading program, discipline and procedures, news and information distribution

- Second K Teacher: attendance, tardies, early dismissal, after school pick-up and available childcare, illness, medication, report cards, homework, and academic assessments
- Third K Teacher: dress code, back packs, special classes, field trips, curriculum, reading, foreign language instruction, parent volunteers
- Fourth K Teacher: a specific academic program used in the system (a video was shown as she speaks)
- Question and Answer Session

The student handbook contained twenty-four pages, which was covered completely by the teacher explanations. This handbook covered all school rules and procedures and all system regulations and policies. The kindergarten curriculum contained twenty-four units and a checklist for expected beginning skills. The other documents provided at SuburbanWhite School were system based and were discussed in the school system and documentation section earlier in this chapter.

DiverseCity Elementary School (Tulip's and Iris's School)

DiverseCity Elementary School, Tulip's and Iris's neighborhood school, was 22.8% Black, 62.0% White, and 15.2% Other with 322 students enrolled. Described as a small urban school, 4.9% of the students were tested for admittance to special education programs, and 79.6% of the students received free or reduced price lunch, which qualified the school for Title I funding. In addition, the school had received a parent involvement award. On achievement testing the school received a passing grade (A, B, or C) in some areas (reading, language arts, and science) for the year 2000 and in all areas listed except social

studies in 2001. However, they received a D in mathematics for both 2000 and 2001 and a D in Social Studies in 2001. The building was constructed in 1958 and had twenty classrooms. The building was bright and colorful, and served grades K - 5. There were twenty classroom teachers and two instructional aides. This school had a White principal, and a large number of White staff members. All of the staff that I met were female, and I met only one Black teacher. DiverseCity's mission statement read: "The mission of 'DiverseCity Elementary' is to create challenging learning opportunities by providing a nurturing environment integrated by the family, community, and staff."

The secretary greeted me in the office. The principal was out of the building, but the secretary called for a Title I teacher to take me to the kindergarten wing where all of the kindergarten rooms were located. The halls contained displays and welcome to schools signs, and the rooms were bright and colorful. Four White kindergarten teachers were sitting at a reading table waiting for us. I explained my research project and cover story, and asked if any school literature was gathered for me as I had requested in the fax. I was given a huge packet of information that was given to parents, and some extra forms that were used at the beginning of the school year. The packet included system and school forms and information, some of the same forms that I had received at SuburbanWhite School. I have listed and discussed the system documentation earlier in this chapter in the section titled CountyCity Public School System, and the school forms will be discussed at the end of this section. The group of teachers discussed the parents at the school, who were described as ethnically diverse and mostly cooperative. I was told about the extensive parent involvement program that had won the school the award, and was given literature about that school program. One younger teacher discussed all of the successful

strategies, but complained that they were time consuming. She specifically listed evening meetings and telephone calls not during contract hours. The teachers agreed that the parent involvement efforts were sometimes time consuming, but that they seemed to be effective. I asked if there were resistant, non-involved parents at the school. The teachers replied that there were a very few. They described the few as mostly young, poor, and out of the mainstream value system. We went through the provided paper work and each piece was explained to me. It appeared that this group worked together well as a team, divided the workload fairly equally among the members of the group, and that they desired to be a support structure for the parents in their school. The meeting lasted about an hour and focused on the paperwork that I took with me.

The data from the paperwork fell into five categories. The first category was first contact with parents as early as April during initial registration during the one-day community event or anytime before school begins. For the one-day event, each of the teachers prepared a part of the presentation for the registrants and the parents. One teacher greeted the parents and students and distributed the necessary system paperwork and a letter signed by the principal and all four kindergarten teachers. The letter has an encouraging tone and lists seven skills each student needs to master before the beginning of the school year. Those seven skills were:

- 1) Dress themselves (ties shoes, buttons, zips)
- 2) Uses the bathroom by themselves
- 3) Takes care of their belongings
- 4) Knows their name, address, and phone number
- 5) Plays well and shares with other children
- 6) Practices good safety rules

7) Tries to solve their own problems

The letter also suggests a buying guide for school clothing:

1) School clothes should be sturdy, comfortable, and washable.

Paint and food seem to always end up on clothes no matter how hard we try to keep them clean. So clothes that you do not mind having dirty are best suited for school.

2) When buying school shoes, keep in mind that leather soled shoes slide. Rubber or crepe ones do not, making them more practical for running outside and in gym class. Slip-on or clog shoes are not a good choice for active play either; they can easily fall off in the middle of an activity.

The letter finished with an explanation of the staggering enrollment procedure explained in the system section. Parents were then given an overview of the curricula. A second kindergarten teacher presented language arts in her room. Parents were then sent to a third kindergarten teacher in her room to discuss mathematics, and finally to the fourth teacher in her room discussing writing.

The next group of papers was designed for distribution at the first of the school year. Included was a folder with the parent/student handbook printed on three of its sides. The handbook covers all school rules and procedures and all system regulations and policies in a shortened form. Enclosed in the folder were several sheets of information: kindergarten rules, playground rules, after school care options, and recommended kindergarten reading. A yearlong school calendar was included with the packet.

The next group of papers was parent invitations to special events at the school for their involvement. Six events were listed on the calendar, one each month in August, September, October, November, March, and May. In addition

to these events, a parent involvement program had monthly meetings and programs. At these meetings, parents were given information about caring for and assisting their child in school. There was always food provided and a game or craft created. When I inquired about attendance at these events and meetings, the teachers responded that it was not consistent.

The other two groups of parent materials were a group of newsletters from both the school and the kindergarten and a group of correspondence sent at the six-week grading period. The newsletters related school happenings complete with pictures and up coming events. The report period correspondence included conference requests and demands. If the student was having difficulty, the parent was required to come to a conference in order to receive the information about their child. Report cards were not sent; the parent must pick them up. The system level paperwork was discussed previously in the CountyCity Public School System section of this chapter.

Preschool/School Expectations

Preschool Expectations

The preschools, according to the name, modeled themselves after public schools. This modeling implied that the children were trained to function as a group as they will when they are older and enrolled in school. In order to provide this level of experience, all of the values and practices of the public school must be promoted by the preschool philosophy and curriculum, and must be accepted by the staff. Certainly, the Head Start program can be described in this way, and all four kindergartners in this study attended a Head Start facility. The directors of the two childcare facilities that the kindergartners attended stated that their goal was to produce children who were familiar with and would be successful in

public school kindergarten. Each facility was set up to emulate public school and all procedures and activities followed public school format; however, MotherGoose's Preschool was larger and more institutional than MaryPoppins's facility. The directors and staff modeled their respective positions after public school principals and teachers. The expectations from both preschools were similar to but not as extensive as public school expectations. The public school expectations listed in the next section encompass the preschool expectations.

CountyCity Public School System Expectations

CountyCity Public School System and all of the individual schools were required to comply with the system level expectations, so the three schools in the research would have similar expectations. The expectations identified were:

- 1) The parent should know or learn and abide by all federal, state, and local *laws*, all school system *policies*, and all school and classroom *rules*.
- 2) The parent should be completely and solely *responsible* for their children. If for some reason, they cannot provide care, they are responsible for making arrangements and notifying the school, usually in writing.
- 3) The parent should completely *trust* the teacher and school staff.
- 4) The parent should *accept and support* all school staff decisions.
- 5) The parent should be literate in *English*. They must be able to speak, read, and write in English.
- 6) The parent should have available and be willing to give as

much *time* to their children and the school as is required.

A discussion of each expectation follows.

We accept that each individual will know and understand their own micro-cultures; however, we also assume that each citizen of the U.S. will know, understand, and be a part of the mainstream culture. The school system and each school operate from these beliefs, and all expectations are based in these beliefs (1). When addressing laws, system policies, and school rules, parents are expected to familiarize themselves with all laws and accept/abide by/comply with the laws. As demonstrated above, the schools went to a great deal of trouble to make sure that parents had copies of all laws, policies, and rules. The expectation was that with knowledge would come compliance. Parents often promise to follow all policies without reading and understanding those policies. In my experience dress codes (particularly shoes), consequences for children for violating the rules, and following up at home with homework are the three that school personnel often get complaints about from parents.

The family structure and initial compliance to school requests are usually the first contacts between the parent and school staff. If the family structure (required information in the paperwork) is a nuclear family structure, and the parent is able to follow the instructions and school's directions, the parent and family will be viewed as part of the mainstream culture, regardless of race or class. If the family structure is perceived as not nuclear and the parent has trouble understanding and following the school's requests then the parent is likely to be viewed as not meeting this expectation (Mullings 1997, Collins 2000). Many Black households do not meet this expectation (Winters 1993, Mullings 1997). Single mothers, especially who are young and were never married, are viewed negatively in Euro-Western society (Elise 1995, Foster 1988, Rickel 1989,

Williams 1991, Kaplan 1997, Samples 1998). This situation, especially when combined with a low socioeconomic position, is viewed as part of a social breakdown contributing to the distressing living conditions, drug problems, and crime in urban areas (Sudarkasa 1996, 1999). When the school views parents as lacking, it is difficult to involve those parents in their children's education. They are not comfortable encountering staff who do not respect them as citizens and parents.

The most prominent expectation was that of parent responsibility (2). The custodial parent(s) is/are expected to take responsibility for everything that must be addressed in the student's life. Implied in that expectation is caring and love for the child leading to providing for all physical, mental, emotional, financial, and academic needs. Parents may get help from family members, friends, government programs, and others; however, the main responsibility remains that of the parent(s), and they are expected to acquire all needed help and inform the school of any changes, usually in writing. Parents must have identifying numbers for their children to file tax forms and request government assistance from the Families First program. Most parents want their children to remain safe and healthy. These requirements probably do not provoke any response in young parents, and they were the same as the requirements for childcare and Head Start. However, the writing requirement can sometimes lead to conflict. Parents may not be able to communicate by writing, or may not have paper and pencil or pen available. Sometimes they may just forget. The single group these expectations do affect are parents who do not understand spoken and written English.

For any citizen an invasion into their family life must feel intrusive, but for young parents any intrusion, especially requiring your location every moment,

probably feels much like having your own parents rule your life again. For the school personnel this is vital information allowing the children to have access to their parents through school personnel at all times, if they are needed for any reason. I can understand the parents' reactions. However, being a mother, grandmother, and kindergarten teacher, makes me support the position of safety for the child. Since a parent or legal guardian is the only person who can authorize any medical treatment or help for a sick or injured child, schools need this information to remain current in their files.

A family's structure may affect a parent's availability. In many cultures mothers depend on older women to advise them and help in raising their children. Young mothers often have their own mothers care for their children. Many Black families depend on family members and others to assist in raising the children (Sudarkasa 1999, Collins 2000). A legal guardian is required to release from school or treat any minor by law. If a child needs to be picked up from school for any reason (ill, injured, need to change clothes, etc.), the legal guardian is required to provide the transportation, or at least notify the school in writing who will provide the assistance in their absence. The parent must be available by telephone, fax, or prearrange their spokesperson in writing. For poor, young parents these communication tools may not be available or they may not have the understanding required for compliance (Foster 1988, Rickel 1989, Williams 1991, Kaplan 1997, Samples 1998). If these expectations are not met, the school comes to view the parents as irresponsible and not complying with legal requirements. Mutual lack of respect can develop resulting in a decrease in parent involvement (Polakow 1993; Holloway, et al 1997).

The expectation that the parent trust the school, staff, and especially the teacher (3) is challenged repeatedly by many news stories and public

personalities. The school expects parents to leave their children in the care of strangers and trust that they will be cared for and returned in healthy and content condition. Implied in this trust is the expectation that teachers and school staff will make the "right decision" in each circumstance and that parents should defer to school staff judgement (4). For many young parents this is not difficult since they have experience with preschools, Head Start, or other children's programs where care is provided. The TANF requirements for single mothers to work or go to school and the provision for childcare has resulted in most young children attending daycare, Head Start, or both. However, for parents who have not left their children or who have had negative experiences with other caregivers, this trust must be earned (Urban and Wagoner 2000, Johnson, et al 2003, Spring 1990).

By putting parent information and reports in writing, the school obviously expects all parents to be literate in English. Every parent correspondence provided to me was written in English, only English. All vital information was provided and requested in written form. "Hard copy" is required in order for legal protection of everyone—students, parents, staff, teachers, school, system. Two schools provided several meetings where documents could be explained, but the legal requirement for paper documents signed by parents remained (5). If one is not literate in English or is not able to understand the forms and requests for information, this is a major obstacle to understanding their child's school and progress. Having children early in the parent's life can interrupt schooling, inhibiting literacy skills in young parents. Admitting that one cannot understand written language could be embarrassing and provide a reason for avoiding parent involvement situations (Foster 1988, Rickel 1989, Williams 1991, Kaplan 1997, Samples 1998).

All parents are expected to provide the time it takes to care for their children's needs (6). Included in those needs are to attend all meetings about their children, read and fill out all paperwork required by the school for their children, help their children with homework and any academic difficulties encountered. It also implies that parents should attend with their children certain recreational, sport, holiday, or other school activities. This expectation is probably the most difficult for all working parents, but particularly for young, single parents who have recreational needs of their own and limited financial resources (Brewer 1995, Elise 1995). If receiving TANF aid they must be working and/or going to school so, their time is limited. They must have or acquire transportation to and from meetings and school functions, and they must find to time to do required paperwork and help children with their homework and other activities (Bempechat 1998; Lontos 1991; Ascher 1988; Driebe 1996; Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning 1994).

Once enrolled, kindergartners were subject to the compulsory attendance laws controlling daily attendance, absences, tardies, and early dismissals. Children were expected to attend school every day on time and stay the entire time. For kindergartners in CountyCity Public School System, that was five hours and fifteen minutes. School begins at 7:45 a.m. and ends at 1:00 p.m. Leaving the school at 1:00 p.m. has not proved difficult for several years due to the number of after school programs picking up kindergartners that are accepting childcare vouchers; however, transportation may become an issue for some parents (Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning 1994). The parents of my kindergarten students often admit that they perceive of the time that their children spend in school and childcare as "free childcare" and use the time to pursue their own education, jobs, and lives. Certainly attendance

law requirements give the parents in my kindergarten classroom the most difficulty, particularly tardiness, early dismissal, and absenteeism (Liontos 1991; Ascher 1988; Driebe 1996; Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning 1994).

The curriculum covers literacy development, language experience, and multi-sensory exploration. These areas meet the state and local curriculum requirements. In order for the school to provide the materials and hands on requirements, each child was assessed an annual fee. Other financial needs were food during the school day (possibly breakfast and lunch) and field trips or special programs. The parent was financially responsible, and if they cannot meet this responsibility, forms were provided to apply for financial aid. If approved for financial aid these things were covered through waivers. Young parents living with government assistance are more likely to need financial aid for their children than are older parents or parents not already receiving aid. Filing these forms was much like filing the forms for childcare credit or other TANF programs, but a lack of literacy skills might make this a difficult task that requires help.

Federal law prescribes special educational needs and services for children. It also requires that each school system notify all parents of those services. Forms were provided to the schools for parents to read, sign, and retain a copy. Forms were also provided for parents to give permission to their child to work online on the Internet at school. Since kindergartners do not read, both of these forms can frighten parents new to the school system. They are not familiar with and do not understand the system's legal protection procedures, and fear for their child. Often my parents of new kindergartners refuse to sign these kinds of forms until the purpose is explained to them. Parent literacy issues

could affect the ability to fill out forms, or just understand what the forms represent (Foster 1988, Rickel 1989, Williams 1991, Kaplan 1997, Samples 1998).

Preschool and School Expectations and My Reflections

My understanding of the school's definition of parent involvement is: complying with all school policies, requests for help, to attend meetings and programs, and to provide any aid needed by the student; while supporting the teacher and school in all decisions, programs, and activities. The school and staff expectations for parents and the way those expectations are introduced to parents can determine the relationship the school and family will have during the student's schooling (Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning 1994). Since we as a society believe that relationship will affect the educational experience of the student, we are interested in making the relationship as pleasant for all parties involved as possible.

My response from my teacher position is familiarity with all of these expectations. I am the representative of the school where I teach kindergarten and I know the teacher position very well. I know and work by Euro-Western, middle class standards, believing that my students will benefit from knowing and being able to work within the guidelines. I understand each law, all school system policies, and all school and classroom rules are based on the safety and legal protection of both the student and family AND the school and staff. I know school staff as caring people who support students and families to the best of their knowledge, understanding, and available resources. I am comfortable as a part of a group of people providing social services to children and families within my society. Schools have no desire to force families into society, only to aid

families in understanding and gaining the tools they need to function in society. Individual staff members can become forceful through a lack of understanding of the family, its structure, and its micro-culture (Spring 1990, Fordham 1988).

As a former student from working class parents, I see a great deal of invasion into family matters. Children and parents are expected to interact in ways that appear unnatural to their family culture. If school expectations come into conflict with family values and practices, many responses are possible. The response will depend on the family culture and how much cultural capital (Lareau and Horvat 1999) the parent possesses and whether the family culture is autonomous, voluntary, or involuntary (Ogbu 1982, Nel 1995). Parents may avoid the school and all staff or they may seek out one person at the school as an ally. They may become angry and oppose all activities and interactions (as Bertha's Grandmother did), or they may abandon the ideal of education for their child, leaving the child floundering in the educational system. The relationship between the family and school may never develop placing the parents and children in a position of constant exclusion (Bourdieu 1984, Giroux 1983, Lareau and Horvat 1999). These experiences with exclusion prevent parent involvement and inhibit the inclusion of children.

Chapter 4 has presented all data gathered from preschool and school visits. Two preschools, the school system, and three elementary schools were visited. Data include staff conversations and interviews, all gathered written documentation, and Internet website information. These data paint the contextual picture of the preschools and schools. Six stated and implied expectations for kindergarten parents are identified as:

1. Knowing the expectations of American, Euro-Western culture, including knowing and abiding by the law, school system and

school rules and policies, and the teacher's classroom policy

2. Accepting the primary role in caring for their children and the responsibility for providing for all of the needs of the child
3. Trusting the teacher to care for the child and to teach everything the child is supposed to learn
4. Trust, defer to, and accept all school staff decisions.
5. Literacy in English
6. Give as much time as the school requests

The preschool and school data will be discussed and analyzed in Chapter 5 in relating the stories of the four families and again in Chapter 6 during final analysis of the families' first school experiences with parent involvement. Next, Chapter 5 will tell the stories of the four families.

Chapter 5: The Families and Their Lives

This chapter contains the stories of data gathering as well as of the four families and their lives. The data originate from all observations and interviews with the preschool personnel, the four mothers, and the other family members. All of the fictional names of participants and institutions are descriptive. Each family is identified with the primary participant mother's fictional "flower" name.

The card game description from Lareau and Horvat (1999) in Chapter 2 will be applied at each level of analysis. The preschools, school system, and public schools are considered the field of interaction for each mother and family participant. The field of interaction was similar for each participant family; however, small differences made each experience unique. Each preschool and school was modeled on middle class values and accepted mainstream culture. A description of the field of interaction in relation to the mother/family is included in the analysis. The level of comfort for each mother/family member was different due to the family's micro-cultures, experience, acceptance of the mainstream culture and school expectations, and how the staff interacted with her/them (field of interaction).

The mothers or family members acting for them are considered the card players. They occupy this position due to their legal position of mother or temporary caregiver. This position is determined by societal norms, since single mothers head all four families and make the decisions concerning interactions with the school. Each mother/caregiver has her own social and cultural capital, which are her cards. This social and cultural capital is part of the mother's experience and background with her family and friends. Each mother's understanding of the school's expectations and rules is her habitus and her

practice is how she copes in order to aid her kindergartner. Moments of inclusion are when a mother's practice assists her family; and moments of exclusion are when a mother's practice is not successful according to participant assessment. Inclusion and exclusion are examined for each mother not as "all or nothing," but as positive or negative results in the eyes of the interviewed participant. The reason that the mother gave for participating in the research and my perspective on what she hoped to gain and what the family actually did gain from their participation are included. The analysis of each family's story in relation to each field of interaction appears at the end of the family's section. Each participant section will end with the participant's expectations for school for her child.

Violet and her Family

*A violet is a fragile flower bending with the Spring wind
that returns year after year.*

Violet was the mother of the three and five year old brothers attending MaryPoppins's Childcare. She was brought to tears by the graduation ceremony, but otherwise was jovial. I first met Violet, her sons, her mother, Spring, and her older son's paternal grandmother, Patience, and his two cousins at the ceremony. Although Violet was 25 years old, she looked and acted much younger with the two older women. She was fidgeting, giggling, and continually requesting the approval of the grandmothers. Her excitement and pride in her children was evident from her statements and picture taking. She was attractive, of medium size, and had dark brown skin and short Black hair. She seemed uneasy about being a participant, but the two grandmothers and MaryPoppins were very interested in my research and encouraged her to participate. We signed the permission form and made an appointment for the next Tuesday,

August 6 at 5:30pm. I was comfortable with meeting wherever she wanted, and she wanted to meet at her mother's house. Spring thought that was a great idea. I got the address, telephone number, and directions.

I arrived at 5:20 in front of the small, gray, frame house. It was located about five miles from MaryPoppins's Childcare. It had two or three bedrooms and a garage converted into a den. Violet, Spring, and both boys were waiting on the small front porch. They were very friendly and seemed glad to see me again. The house and yard appeared neat, clean, and in good repair. The yard was well kept with the grass cut and flowers planted near the porch. There were two newer cars in the driveway, and the living room furniture looked new, considering the two children who jumped on it. As we entered the house the grandfather called the two boys to the den to play on the computer, and Violet, Spring, and I sat down in the living room with the tape recorder. We all seemed a bit nervous, but after the first few questions and some small talk, the interview went well and lasted for two hours, twice the time I had anticipated. Violet and her mother were both interviewed during the first seventy-five minutes, then Spring had to leave for a church meeting, and Violet and I spent forty-five minutes with the boys. There was a tremendous change in the way Violet answered after her mother left. She gave childlike answers and always asked for approval from her mother as long as Spring was present. After Spring left, she appeared to be more at ease and became serious and thoughtful with her answers. Her descriptions and answers suddenly became longer. All of the data that I gathered from Violet will appear at the end of this section. At the end of the interview we talked about meeting again in early November and made sure that we exchanged correct telephone numbers.

On November 2, I sent letters to the four primary participants reminding

them that I would be calling to schedule the next interview. On November 6, I called the telephone number that Violet had given me and it had been disconnected. I called her parents' telephone number and reached her father. I left my name and number, and asked him to tell her that I called and to return my call, please. I waited a week and did not hear from her. I called her parents' house again and spoke to Spring. We had a wonderful conversation, and I found out a great deal of new information that is included in the data at the end of the section. I again asked that she relay the message to Violet to call me. She promised that I would hear from Violet soon. I never heard from Violet. The second interview with Violet never happened, so the telephone information gathered from Spring became the second interview information.

I sent out invitations (Appendices 268) to the group interview on November 23 to all four of the primary participants. The interview was to take place on December 7 beginning at 11:00am at a local pizza and video arcade. The mothers and children were asked at the initial interviews where they would like to go and if the date was a good day. The pizza and video arcade was named unanimously, and the restaurant determined the time that I could have a room for interviewing. I was paying for each mother, all of her children, and her adult guest to watch the children. On December 4, I called Spring to be sure that Violet and the children had received the invitation. She assured me that they were planning to come, that she was coming to watch the boys, and all were looking forward to the experience. When they had not arrived at the pizza arcade by 12:00 noon, I called Spring. She said they had changed their minds and decided not to come. She apologized for Violet not letting me know and thanked me for waiting and calling, but gave no reason for changing plans. She seemed truly sincere.

I mailed all of the information that I intended to put in the data to Violet and the other participants on December 27. I enclosed fast food gift certificates and a stamped return addressed envelope. I never heard from Violet again. I called Spring one last time to verify that I had reported the data correctly. She gladly answered my questions and verified the information.

Violet's Story According to Spring, Violet, and MaryPoppins

Spring provided most of the information, followed by Violet, MaryPoppins, and Violet's father. Violet is the younger child and only daughter in her birth family. Her brother is two years older, married, and has two children (one boy, one girl) both older than Violet's two boys. Violet attended the local elementary school from kindergarten through fifth grade, then went to middle and high school. Her elementary school was racially mixed, but more White. Her middle school was predominantly Black. She attended two different high schools. For her first two years, she attended a racially mixed high school, which was closed by the school system. She finished in a mostly Black high school. She loved kindergarten, and still goes to visit her teacher, whom she also loves. She was in the band, played clarinet for nine years, and marched with the color guard during football seasons. Violet remembered only one thing that she did not like in school, getting up early to be on time. Violet's mother fully agrees.

Spring, Violet's mother, was involved in everything that Violet did in school, and was a band parent that chaperoned the trips. She attended all of the games to see Violet perform. Violet does not remember her father being very involved. After high school graduation, Violet earned a commercial driver's license, studied for and acquired a cosmetology license, and was working as a cosmetologist at the age of twenty when she became pregnant. She was

surprised by the pregnancy, but was not unhappy. Her mother reports feeling saddened, but that the pregnancy was Violet's business—and Spring immediately said, "I wouldn't take nothin' for any of my grandchildren!" The father of the baby was not as surprised since he already had one son. The paternal grandparents accepted the pregnancy and hoped for a granddaughter to go with their three grandsons; two of those grandsons attended the MaryPoppins's graduation with their grandmother. Violet moved back home with her parents and applied for public assistance, but continued to work in cosmetology.

After Spring left for her church meeting, Violet told me the story of her older son's birth.

You know what my parents said was I was a grown woman; I had finished high school; and was on my own. I already had my cosmetology license and was working as a cosmetologist. I did not live with my parents (*when she got pregnant*). I had my own apartment, even though I was young. I had my own car and everything. She (*Spring*) used to tell me that no birth certificates came into this house until my diploma and that was hers, then I could bring anything else I wanted to. With (*name of older son*) she had never seen childbirth and she wanted to see it, so she was the coach. My mom was the one who admitted me and then I had to sign some more paperwork, and they handed them to my mother. My mama said (*to*) give them to me. The nurse said, "No, I have to give them to you." And my mama said, "Why? She's the one having the baby!" (*Nurse*), "Because I—uh, parents of minors have to sign the papers off." So they just assumed that I was a

minor. And my mama said, "She's 21 years old, She isn't a minor."
The nurse said, "Oh I'm sorry we get so many ---" My mama said,
"That's not the point, you could have asked, just cause I'm her
mama and I am with her does not mean she's a minor." My mom
was mad; she didn't like that at all. It was a hurtful thing. I mean all
she (*the nurse*) had to do was ask.

Violet continued to work and moved into public housing for a time. She
had a second son, whose father is different from the older son's father. Violet
has never been married, and lives alone with the two boys. She qualified for
assistance in purchasing a house, and has continually received other public
assistance in the forms of food stamps, childcare credits, and health care. When
discussing childcare, she admits that she has a great deal of support. Spring is
always available to pick up, deliver, keep over night, take to the doctor, and help
raise her grandsons. Violet complains lovingly about her mother being indulgent,
over protecting, and over emotional concerning the boys. When discussing her
son, who is entering kindergarten, Violet expects Spring to cry as much as she
expects to cry herself.

. . . you hear me. I'll tell you how she is. I can be at work or
something and that boy, one of them can fall and skin their knee,
and she'll call me crying. "I am so sorry, you know it was a
accident, I just didn't mean for them to fall down." I be like,
"Momma, he's fine. He's a boy. Brush him off and let him go." So
she will (*cry the first day*). She'll probably cry before I will.... My
mama says that that is what grandparents were for to spoil them.
When we were growing up we didn't get a cookie or anything
before our dinner. You ask for it you ate everything on your plate.

You did not get your drink until you finish your plate. (*I'll say*)
"Mama they haven't ate dinner yet!" "Well, that's OK sweetheart. Nana will wrap up your dinner and you can take it home with you." My brother will say "She never let us do that when we were growing up." My mama will call me and say "Are you anywhere where you can go by Toys R Us?" "Why" "Well, the boys were watching the TV and saw (*some new toy*). Is there any way you can go by ToysRUs?" She'll give me the money back when I get here with it. My mama spoils all of her grandchildren. She sits right there in that rocker and rocks them and tell them they are her baby. (*Younger child's name*) tells me she wants him to be her baby. So I had to tell her "Mama I know you love him, but you have to stop telling him cause he act like a baby." She says "I did that to you all when you were babies too." She rocks and kisses them. I know when we get him in the car that first day of school she's gonna cry—I know—she gonna cry. She'll get tired and she'll say, "I'm so tired you all can't come to visit tomorrow." So we'll go home the next day and she'll call and say, "Are you trying to be funny or something?"

Both boys visit their fathers on weekends and holidays, and spend time monthly with their paternal grandparents. The paternal grandmother of Violet's entering kindergartner is available for childcare, pick up, delivery, etc. should Violet and Spring happen to be unable to take care of his needs. MaryPoppins, who operates the childcare facility, is a friend of Violet's and has taken the boys home with her in the past. Violet has an extensive childcare support system. Violet does not acknowledge any personal life other than her family life and job. Violet continued to work in cosmetology for a time, but decided on a career

change because of the anticipated demands of having a child in school.

I'd be off some, but I was working late nights and stuff. I wouldn't be home until like 9:30 or 10:00. I felt like that wouldn't be good for him 'cause he's going into a whole totally different environment so I wanted to make sure that I am home by a decent time so I could get him home, get him fed, and get him in the bed. To where I can get him on a schedule . . . I'm just not—I'm so used to dropping them off at daycare and picking them up and of course, he gets little artwork. He's going to have homework and stuff like that and that is something that was totally new to me. And I didn't know until some of my friends told me—I didn't know kindergarten had homework. I did not! Yes. I always helped out at the daycare. Any time I'm off I'm gonna go down there and volunteer—stuff like that. I'm gonna do everything! (laugh)

Violet was working in daycare when I interviewed her in August, but Spring told me on the telephone in November that Violet took a job with the school system after her son began kindergarten. She works as a teacher's aide at her son's assigned school, and she does do "everything."

Violet does not admit to any personal life of her own. When I asked what she did for fun, she immediately turned the conversation to her sons.

Nothing really—I have two kids. My kids are my fun. I mean it's like every other weekend when they go to their dads' I might sit at the house and watch TV or one of my friends might call and I'll go to Appleby's get something to eat or something like that, but other than that ... (*Child's name*) dad is the main one 'cause I will call every few minutes and finally he will say, "Will you stop calling, you

got a break, he is fine, will you quit calling---“ and he will hang up the phone. Sometimes they might spend the night with my mom and she will say, “Will you please stop calling and leave us alone—we are fine—find yourself something to do. She’ll say—you’ all want to talk to your mama.” They’ll say, “NO.” And then my mama will say, “OK, bye, we’ll talk to you later.”

Violet’s expectations for her future are undecided, but she is very clear on what she sees for her children.

What do I want to do? —I don’t know really. I have so many things to choose from—I am a licensed cosmetologist and I have a commercial driver’s license, so there is a number of things I can choose from—a number of things I can do, but I work in childcare now. I thought about it (*going back to school*), but I just don’t know. I been working and I have to clean up and do laundry so I just don’t have time. I go to work between 7 and 7:30 and I get off at 4:30 and take them and pick them up at daycare and I’m off on weekends. I want to have time to be with them and help him with his homework and stuff. He’ll ask me a question and then he’ll give me the answer and tell me I’m wrong. I get so mad at him for that. Well, he’s a very intelligent child, not because he’s my baby, but because he’s very smart and I would like for him to graduate from high school and I would like for him to go to college, and I would like for him to decide what he wants to do more than what I want.

Violet seems to take the idea of school as a safe place for granted. When asked about her feelings about her son entering school, if she dreaded or feared anything and what she expected, she answered with enthusiasm.

No— *(laughing and looking at Spring)*—he told me a couple of weeks ago—he’s very excited about going—I said *(Child’s name)*, you’ve got to be a big boy, that’s what he calls it, He said, “Momma, I’m ready to go.” I said, “*(Child’s name)*, when I take you the first day I might cry.” and he said, “Momma, please don’t embarrass me in front of all those people! Please don’t embarrass me, Momma! If you gonna cry me please let my Nanny take me.” That’s what he told me. He said it. Well, he’s gonna like school cause he does not meet any stranger and he can talk to anybody and he’s friendly. I felt like he could have held his own in kindergarten actually last school year. So, I’m excited and I think he’s grown and going to big boy school. I have two nephews and he thinks he’s as old as they are now that he was going to big boy school now.

In August, Violet had a school choice dilemma. The neighborhood school where her son was zoned to attend was placed on a list of poor schools by the state due to test scores, and all of the families were offered transfers including transportation to other schools in the system. They were to complete paperwork and designate a first and second choice of schools if they were not planning to attend the zoned school. Violet and her mother filled out the paperwork together and returned it by the date due. At the first interview when asked who would pick him up from school, both Violet and Spring were unsure.

We’re trying to find out—see I don’t know exactly what we’re going to do. We put in for a transfer—there was something in the letter that they may provide transportation, but if they don’t then my mom is going to take him to school for me. Yeah, my mom said, if there was no transportation then she will pick up. *(At this point, the*

grandmother asked) Will they pick him up at the house or will they pick him up at the daycare? (*Violet answered:*) That's my thing, I don't understand, are they gonna pick him up from the house or will they pick him up from the daycare—because I have to be at work sometimes at 7:00 and sometimes at 7:30.

The question was deferred to me, but I could not answer it. I suggested that they call the office of the person listed in charge on their copy of the transfer form. I visited all three schools, the zoned school and their two choices, in anticipation of what would happen when school began. Two schools, the zoned school and the first choice, are predominantly Black and located near home for Violet. The second choice is located very near Spring. The racial profile and size of the two schools that they requested are (first choice) 85.5% Black, 13.8% White, and 0.7% Other with 512 students located near Violet and (second choice) 36.4% Black, 61% White, and 2.6% Other with 515 students located near Spring. Both of the school requests were denied, and the school that they were offered is 6.5% Black, 92.2% White, and 1.3% Other with 511 students. The school offered is several miles away from both homes. I learned from Spring in November that they had decided to stay at the neighborhood school because the offered school is too far from both of them. OurChoiceUrban School, Violet's neighborhood school, was described in Chapter 4. Violet's initial contact was pleasant for her.

I filled out all of the forms and I actually found out who was going to be his teacher. We got to meet her and everything—he talked to her and everything. It was very nice.

According to Spring, Violet did have some trouble with getting to school on time in the beginning. Since she has taken the job at the

school, she is able to get to school on time and comply with all of the school's expectations.

Violet's Analysis

Violet's Field of Interaction: OurChoiceUrban School

Certainly, the fact that OurChoiceUrban School was 82.5% Black with mostly female staff paints a picture of cultural comfort for Violet. 83% of the students receive free or reduced price lunch, placing Violet's son in the majority of the students. In addition, the school has a technology focus as a magnet school, which Violet, Spring, and Violet's fathers spoke about on my first visit. On achievement testing the school received an F in all areas (reading, language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies) for the years 2000 and 2001, which could make one think before sending a child there. During my visit to the school, the two teachers talked about the poor achievement test scores and how the state ruling and system offer of a transfer to each student had affected the school. They were concerned that the transfers would create a loss of good students with only poorly achieving students left in their classrooms. Violet and Spring considered having Violet's son attend a different school, but decided on OurChoiceUrban in the end, and Violet even joined the staff. Several of the staff members are parents of students, and Violet became a staff aide during her son's kindergarten year at OurChoiceUrban. The teachers' fears were well founded; many students and their parents did request transfers. Violet's two choices for transfer were denied, and she did not feel comfortable with the school offered to her. Although Violet requested a transfer, she chose cultural comfort and close to home over the offered school with the higher test scores.

Violet's Cultural Capital

Violet and her family accept the mainstream expectations for the children and want to give the children every advantage possible. Violet's social and cultural capital includes a Black, middle class upbringing. Her parents, who are still married, own their own home, and raised her in a middle class neighborhood. She is the younger child and only daughter in her birth family. Violet attended racially mixed (more White) to predominantly Black schools. She preferred neither and stated that she liked going to both schools. She loved kindergarten, and still goes to visit her teacher, whom she also loves. Although Violet has had to depend on some public assistance, she has been able to find several jobs, the last one with the school system at her son's school. She has been able to move into a home and arrange to purchase it, and remains independent with her sons as a family unit. These are all signs of success according to White, middle class values.

Violet is very comfortable in a school setting. She has been successful in every educational endeavor and has loved the academic, social, and cultural environment she has encountered at each of her own schools. Violet's practice/strategy is to become a part of the situation. Violet and Spring expect inclusion to occur in educational settings and expect Violet's actions to result in a desired outcome. Her family has been supportive of her educational choices and performance, and continues to be supportive of her life choices. Spring defended Violet's right to have children as a young, unmarried mother, who was an adult. Exclusion occurred at the hospital, and Spring was offended. She felt the exclusion was not justified because Violet was an adult. This exclusion occurred because of a value difference between the Black micro-culture and the

nurse's assumption about Violet's age and her White mainstream view of childbirth (Ogbu 1982, Nel 1995, Lareau and Horvat 1999). The nurse stereotyped and judged Violet by her societal beliefs and values.

Violet's birth family has a nuclear family structure, unlike the family she has established with her children. Spring does appear to fit the stereotype of the Black wife and mother who dominates the family into adulthood. She still tells Violet how to interact with her sons, advised and almost ordered Violet to be a participant in this research, and had no problems answering my questions for her family. I wonder if most mothers and daughters who have a close relationship continue that relationship into the daughter's adult and parenting life when the daughter is young and single? Does the daughter's age when she becomes a mother affect the continuing relationship? What happens to Violet and who will dominate her family as it grows older? Will she assume the role her mother has played during her younger years as her mother gets older? Would Violet's marrying make a difference? Violet has two sons and no daughters. Will that make a difference?

As a teacher, I have seen this relationship before, and I know that it is not specific to any race and occurs in both working and middle classes. My blue-collar, multi-ethnic history leads me to ask questions about what effect being a young, unmarried mother has on inclusion. Could it affect the responses Violet receives from school personnel and others? Certainly, it affected the responses of the hospital staff. Spring has experience in mainstream culture and she was successful in gaining a position with/for her family. Perhaps Spring was more protective of Violet because she perceives her daughter and grandchildren as being vulnerable because of Violet's age, life choices, and/or personality? Perhaps she was using her own cultural capital to create moments of inclusion

for Violet and her grandchildren. As a grandmother, I certainly attempt to create moments of inclusion for my young adult son and grandchild, but I do not desire to dominate their lives. Spring may have no more or any less desire to control her family than do I. Since these questions did not occur to me when I was collecting data, I will not be able to answer them for this project.

MaryPoppins is Violet's friend, which probably affected the childcare choice Violet made. Violet and her children felt uncomfortable and excluded at the first daycare she discussed. The family members did not have the social capital needed to fit into the social positions the staff, parents, and other children at the first daycare made available for them. Violet and the boys are accustomed to family and friends, "fictive kin," and "other mothers" being around them. When confronted with unknown caregivers and unfamiliar children, they were extremely uncomfortable. If they had felt cultural comfort they would have soon become familiar with the daycare and Violet would have included them in her "fictive kin." They experienced inclusion at MaryPoppins's facility because they already knew her as an "other mother" (Collins 2000) and the two women belonged to the same microcultural group.

Violet accepts the parent responsibility expected by the preschool and school and has changed many aspects of her life for her sons. She has a great deal of childcare help with MaryPoppins, Spring, her father, Patience, and the boys' fathers. All of these people meet the definition of "kin" or "fictive kin" child care givers, and Spring and MaryPoppins fit the role of "other mother" (Collins 2000). Violet does not acknowledge any personal life other than her family life and job. "Nothing really---I have two kids. My kids are my fun." She decided on a career change because of the anticipated demands of having a child in school. These choices and her words indicate that Violet is willing to give all the time

necessary to her sons and the school. She was working in daycare when I interviewed her in August, but Spring told me on the telephone in November that Violet took a job with the school system after her son began kindergarten. She works as a teacher's aide at her son's assigned school, and she does "everything." Inclusion occurred and Violet became part of the system.

Violet knows or is attempting to learn about school laws, policies, rules, and practices. She stated trust and acceptance of the school staff and in their decisions. When asked about her feelings about her son entering school, if she dreaded or feared anything and what she expected, she answered with enthusiasm. Violet went to the registration day of the zoned school in the spring and enjoyed interacting, even filling out all of the paperwork. She is literate in English. Inclusion occurred. Violet's cultural capital includes many successes in educational settings. She can interact appropriately both verbally and in writing. Her micro-culture is compatible with the micro-cultures of the other staff at the school. Her acceptance as and willingness to be on staff demonstrates her comfort level. She has inclusion that includes her son.

Violet's experience with the school system has been somewhat different due to her zoned school's placement on a deficient list. Violet's school choice dilemma, resulting from her neighborhood school being placed on a list of poor schools by the state due to test scores and all of the families being offered transfers including transportation to other schools in the system, was resolved in August. The school offered was several miles away from both Violet's home and Spring's home. They finally decided to stay at the neighborhood school because the offered school was too far from both of them. I believe that the distance affected the decision. However, the family's cultural capital and micro-culture did not match the offered school. The family was familiar with their desired, chosen

schools and knew they would be comfortable there. Violet's initial contact with the zoned school was pleasant for her, helping with the decision. This experience did not seem to cause either Violet or Spring any concern once the decision was made. Both seemed confident that inclusion would occur.

Violet decided to participate in the research at the urging of MaryPoppins, Spring, and Patience. MaryPoppins stated that she hoped I could help her friend comply with attendance issues, and I believe that all four women hoped I would be a good advisor on the school choice issue. I offered Violet one more resource toward achieving inclusion as a kindergarten parent. In order to achieve inclusion and give the student advantage, the parent must be able to understand and comply with the teacher's and school's expectations and remain comfortable. Once Violet made her decision and got her job as a teacher's aide at OurChoiceUrban School, she no longer needed my assistance. The information and advice that I was giving in answer to school questions, she could get at her new job. She achieved inclusion on her own and the research involvement took time that she needed for her family and job. Spring was my main contact after Violet began her new job.

Violet is very clear on what she sees for her children. Violet seems to take the idea of school as a safe place for granted. She expects the school to educate and help her sons with life choices, but she also expects to be a part of that education and those choices. Violet has a great deal of faith that education will help her children attain a place in society that she and they desire (Anderson 1988, Lightfoot 1976, Walker 1996, Spring 2000). She believes in the children's ability to be successful in a world of middle class values, and wants to help them achieve their goals. Perhaps this explains her exclusion at the first daycare. Her acceptance of middle class values and life style may have conflicted with the

daycare staff's and clients' microcultural value system if the two systems differed a great deal. I have no way of checking this possibility.

Violet has been comfortable in educational settings and has experienced inclusion consistently. Her birth family exhibits many middle class values and standards, and appear to have financial and community resources not usually available to working class families. The family appeared comfortable working with me, and expressed many of the same desires for their children that are promoted in the dominant society. Violet is identified as Black and meets the definition of working class according to her income and dependence on government support programs. She did choose to have her children early and outside of a legal marriage. Her family supported and embraced her decision. These are Black family realities and values (Hill 1999, Sudarkasa 1996, Peters 1988). Violet and her family are being educated in and have some values that are compatible with the dominant culture, while retaining some Black family structure and values which differ.

Rose and her Family

A rose is a beautiful flower with many thorns pricking those who dare to touch it.

MaryPoppins was concerned that Rose and her children would be so late that they would miss the ceremony entirely, or that they would not come at all. She continued to talk to me as she worked with the children. She wanted Violet and Rose to be part of the parent involvement study because she thought it might help Violet to take more responsibility and depend less on the older women in her life. She hoped Rose would realize how important she was to her children and their education. Rose was late consistently both in the mornings for breakfast at the daycare and at daycare pick-up. She appeared never to know

anything going on at the daycare or in her children's lives. MaryPoppins warned me that Rose often did not follow through on promises she made to her, to the children, and to Rose's other family members. We were both glad to see her arrive at 9:35.

Rose was beautiful. She would be considered beautiful in any culture, but if she were taller, she could have been a fashion model. She was twenty-one, of medium height, with medium brown skin that glowed, and her face was youthful with beautiful almond shaped, dark eyes. She had long lashes and her hair was coifed with curls framing her face and a scarf that matched her dress holding the curls in place. The ten-month-old baby girl she held had a matching dress and hat, like her mother's, and the same dark eyes. The two boys aged five and three, were dressed in shirts and ties, and looked alike, but not like their mother. She moved slowly and gracefully, and did not speak or smile as she entered, during the ceremony, or during the discussion of the research. She sat quietly and watched the baby. After everyone else had moved away from the table where I was sitting, Rose spoke softly, "I will be part of the project." We completed the short interview and signed the permission. I took out my calendar and we both looked at it while the baby patted the permission papers. We decided on a meeting at the house of Rose's mother the next Tuesday, August 6.

I was supposed to come at 12:00 noon but was delayed in traffic and got to the house about 12:45 p.m. The weathered, gray house looked like a three bedroom, ranch-style, and 1950s model. It sat on a corner lot and had several children's toys littering the large yard and driveway. An older model car sat at the edge of the driveway and looked as if it was being repaired. The brick retaining wall was crumbling and the light on the pole at the end of the driveway was broken. The lawn was mowed but not trimmed, and there were weeds

growing near the house. The wooden door was open and I knocked on the storm door.

A young Black woman answered the door and invited me into the living room. She resembled Rose, and admitted she was a younger sister and baby sitter. She was not as beautiful as her older sister. There was a sofa, two chairs, a television, VCR, and some toys in the large room. The furniture was well worn and there were three windows with the curtains falling from one. There were three baskets of clean children's laundry on the sofa, and the woman appeared to be folding the clothes with several pieces on the back of the sofa. She spoke softly and explained that she was babysitting and that the baby was asleep. I explained who I was and apologized for being late. She said that Rose had left home about 9:00am to take the boys to daycare and had not mentioned me or said when she would return. I felt better about being late. I gave her my card and told her that I would call Rose and reschedule the interview. I thanked her and left quietly.

I interviewed Violet and Spring that evening, and called Rose after I returned home. I learned that I had her cell telephone number. She said that she had forgotten all about the appointment, and wanted to reschedule. We decided on Saturday, August 17 at 11:00am. I arrived at 10:55am. The house looked empty and all of the curtains were closed. The old car was gone and the house was locked up. I knocked several times, and waited for fifteen minutes. No one was home, so I wrote a note that I was there, and asked her please to call if she wanted to reschedule. I left the note on the door.

I received a telephone call from Rose about 7:00 p.m. She was apologetic and wanted to reschedule for the next Saturday, August 24. We were going into the school year, and this would be the last possible week for initial interviews

before children began regular school. I scheduled her for 9:00 a.m. I was hopeful when there were two cars in the driveway. One was the older car, and the other was a new looking sedan. The falling curtain had been re-hung, and the door was ajar. I knocked and a Black man in his forties answered the door. I could hear children crying, and the kindergarten boy ran to the door in his underwear. I spoke to the boy, and explained to the man who I was and that I had an appointment with Rose. When the man called to her, a woman, also about forty, came to the door carrying Rose's baby. Rose's younger son followed her. The man left her standing at the door with the three children. She apologized and said that she was Rose's mother, and that if she had known that I was coming she would have been sure that Rose was there. She complained that Rose had not come home from work last evening and that she did not know where she was or how to get in touch with her. She called the man back to the door and handed him the baby. The smaller boy continued to cling to her leg, but the older boy clung to the man. She gave me Rose's new cell telephone number and told me to call her later in the day. She had tried to call her earlier, and the telephone was turned off. I gave her a card, apologized for coming so early, and thanked her for her time. The man complained that Rose never "took care of the children" and that she usually "shows up around one or two o'clock" when she was out. I again apologized for coming so early and said good bye to the children.

I did not try to contact Rose again for a first interview, and she did not call me after my visit to the house on August 24. I decided to continue to contact her to see if she ever participated. Her lack of follow-up with me was a problem, but the information I already had from the initial interview and her family, made keeping her in the study possible. Her age and living arrangements fit the

original desired research participant characteristics exactly. I could always drop her out of the data later. On November 2, I sent a letter (Appendices 267) to Rose and the other participants reminding them that I would be calling to schedule the next interview. On November 6, I called the telephone number that Rose's mother had given me and did not get an answer. I called again the next evening, and still got no answer. I tried one more evening and Rose answered. She scheduled an interview at her house at 3:45 p.m. on November 18. I left my job early and got to the house at 3:30. No one was home. I waited until 4:10 and left a note. I never heard from Rose and the second interview never happened.

I sent out invitations (Appendices 268) to the group interview on November 23 to all four of the primary participants, including Rose. The interview was to take place on December 7 beginning at 11:00am at a local pizza and video arcade. I included a personal note that I hoped to see Rose and her children. On December 4, I called the new cell telephone number and did not get an answer. However, in fifteen minutes, Rose called me back and talked for a time. (I can only guess that she had caller ID.) She said that she had received the invitation and wanted to attend the pizza interview. She apologized for all of the missed appointments and promised to see me there. She said she had been working but had lost her apartment in the public housing complex and had to move in with her family at the house where I visited. She admitted she had not had time to do anything with the school or attend any meetings, and she was not sure how her son was doing in school, but her mom would know. Rose and her mom were supposed to bring the three children and attend the group meeting. I was hopeful. When they had not arrived at the pizza arcade by 11:45 a.m., I called one last time. The new cell telephone had been disconnected.

I mailed the information that I intended to put in the data to Rose and the

other participants on December 27. I enclosed fast food gift certificates and a stamped return addressed envelope. I added a personal note that said I had really missed having her input in the study, but wanted to give her one final chance to say anything that she would like included in the study. I asked her please to return the questionnaire or to call me at her convenience and talk on the telephone. I never heard from Rose again. I called Terra, Rose's mother, collected the missing data, and confirmed all data that I have put into Rose's Story.

Rose's Story According to Terra, MaryPoppins, and Rose

Rose was sixteen, in high school, and living with her mother and sisters when she found out she was pregnant. She had the baby and continued in school. She finished high school and had her second son. She moved into public housing for a time, and had her daughter. The two boys have the same father, but her daughter has a different father. Recently her family was put out of public housing due to code violations. I never found out which violations. She moved back home with her mother, Terra, mother's boy friend, Stone, and her sisters. I do not know how many sisters she has or how many live at home.

Rose was twenty-one when I met her, and was still receiving WIC and food stamps, health insurance, childcare assistance, and clothing aid. She worked part time in fast food, and sometimes stayed out at night after work, according to her family. I assume that she had a great deal of help from her family from the evidence at her mother's house, and she did have her two sons enrolled at MaryPoppins childcare. I do not have any information on Rose's personal life, the fathers of her children, or her marital status or history. I assume that she has one or more boyfriends from talking with her family. I do not know

what she likes to do, or what she does when she stays away from home at night. She replied that she doesn't do anything for fun when I asked; however, her absence in the mornings and Stone's comments lead me to think that she has a personal life away from her family. I do not know how she feels or what she thinks about in relation to her three children and the future. I do not know about her expectations for her children in school. In November, Rose told me on the telephone that she has not had time to do much with the school. Rose's mother related that she was the primary contact with the school for her grandson. She has high academic expectations for her grandchildren and tries to comply with the expectations from school. She did confide that she has been called about his behavior more than once and that his academic progress is not on expected grade level. Terra was very concerned that her grandson will not do well in school or life.

Rose's Analysis

Rose's Field of Interaction: SuburbanWhite School

SuburbanWhite School is a long bus ride each way from Rose's (and her mother's) house and a longer ride to daycare after school with MaryPoppins, who picks him up. Being only 19.4% Black with 261 students in grades K – 2, Rose and her son are in the minority. The school did have a Black principal, but all of the teachers when I met were White, and all of the staff members that I saw were female. Some of the staff members were parents of students, but Rose did not seem to be interested in working with children.

The teachers discussed the parents at the school, who were described as mostly cooperative with a few exceptions, who were difficult to involve. The teachers agreed that the group of non-involved parents were not all racially the

same, but they were all “poor.” I would guess that Rose would be described as hard to involve, but she does not entirely fit the description given. The description included being usually young, a non-achieving student themselves, and being unmarried, sometimes co-habiting, with poor parenting skills. When I asked for clarification of poor parenting skills, I was given a description of the children and some parent behaviors. Of the seven characteristics listed, Terra admitted she and Stone were not able to fulfill four:

- required school forms and homework almost never returned,
- poor attendance, frequently tardy and not picked up on time
- not answering teacher requests for conferences
- not attending parent meetings

Rose is young and unmarried, and her parenting skills as described by the teachers are not evident. Even though Rose does not fulfill the expected parent role, her family attempts to make sure that the children are well cared for at home and school. Terra, Stone, and Rose’s sisters all fill in at home, and probably fill in at school as much as the system allows. I know that Terra, Stone, and the sisters keep the children when Rose is not home. I know that Terra is the main contact for the school. I know that Rose uses MaryPoppins’s childcare, and she is the contact person for that facility. Is it possible that Terra and Rose are both guardians over the older son and maybe the other children? Considering Rose’s age at the birth of her older son, that is certainly a possibility.

Rose's Cultural Capital

Rose's mother, Terra, provided most of the information, followed by MaryPoppins, Rose, Stone, and Rose's sister. Rose's family accepted the mainstream expectations for the children and wanted to give the children every

privilege possible; however, Rose's expectations are still somewhat vague. She appeared to accept mainstream expectations for the children. She verbalized that she wants her children to do well and finish school, but her actions did not support her words in the estimation of her family and friend.

Rose's social and cultural capital includes a Black, middle class residence. I do not know if her upbringing was middle class or working class. Her mother currently owns her home, but I do not know if Rose grew up in the house. Rose's beauty and her family appear to be her best capital. Terra and Stone formed a nuclear family structure at the time of the research, but like my own situation, they had several generations living with them. I do not know if Stone is father or grandfather to any of Terra's children or grandchildren. How this contributes to Rose's behavior was never addressed.

Rose's strategy/practice is to avoid involvement or interaction and to pass the responsibility of her children to her family. She admitted she had not had time to do anything with the school or attend any meetings, and she is not sure how her son is doing in school, but that her mother would know. Stone stated that Rose never "took care of the children" and that she usually "shows up around one or two o'clock (*the next day*)" when she is out. Certainly when I went for all appointments with Rose I found either an empty house or members of her family babysitting. Terra, Stone, Rose's sisters, and MaryPoppins all fit the category of "kin," "fictive kin," or "other mother" for Rose's children.

MaryPoppins worried that Rose, Terra, and the children would be so late to the graduation that they would miss the ceremony entirely. Rose is late consistently both in the mornings for breakfast at the daycare and at daycare pick-up. She appears never to know anything going on at the daycare or in her children's lives. MaryPoppins warned me that Rose often did not follow through

on promises she made to her, to the children, or to Rose's other family members. We do not know if Rose fears her involvement would produce exclusion; if she is unaware of the expectations for her involvement and the implication that she might be harming her son; or if she does not accept her role in helping her children. Perhaps she believes her mother can serve her children better than she can in school, or perhaps she just does not want to perform the expectations required of her by her family, the school, and society. These behaviors cannot produce inclusion, but could lead to exclusion for the children.

Rose and her family appeared to trust the teacher and school staff. I found no evidence that Rose was attempting to learn the school laws, policies, rules, and procedures. I also heard no complaints from Rose or any family member about the school. I assume that they would defer to the school staff decisions. I also assume that Rose and her family are literate in English. If Rose and the family were not literate, I believe that MaryPoppins would have been concerned and attempted to help or at least mentioned it to me, and the notes that I left on the door would not have gotten any answer.

I do not have any information on Rose's personal life, the fathers of her children, or her marital status or history. I assume that she has one or more boyfriends from talking with her family. I do not know what she likes to do, or what she does when she stays away from home at night. She replied that she did not do anything for fun when I asked; however, her three children, absence in the mornings, and Stone's comments lead me to think that she has a personal life away from her family.

Time appears to be the expectation that Rose exhibits least. Rose does not spend much time with her children or doing things for her children. She did take some time for her children; she attended the graduation ceremony and

found time to acquire the dress up clothing that the children wore and to get them ready. Rose was still receiving WIC and food stamps, health insurance, childcare assistance, and clothing aid. She worked part time in fast food, and she did have her two sons enrolled at MaryPoppins childcare. All of these facts indicate that Rose has experienced some inclusion. It is curious that she chose to withdraw from using her social and cultural capital to assist her son in school. Her beauty and soft-spoken manner would be welcomed by school staff, however someone would have to follow-up on his progress. I would like to know where she went to school, if she attended SuburbanWhite school, if she enjoyed school or did not like school, and if she joined in any extracurricular activities. I would also like to ask her about allowing her mother to take the lead in her children's lives. I could never keep her on the telephone long enough to ask. I could not get that information from Terra.

Rose's reasons for initially joining the research and for continuing to agree to interviews when she never showed for the appointments remain a mystery to me. She answered all questions during the daycare interview and the telephone interviews, she willingly returned calls after I left notes, and she got my number from Caller ID on her cell telephone. MaryPoppins encouraged Rose to be involved because she hoped Rose would realize how important she was to her children and their education. Rose's mother apologized and said that if she had known that I was coming she would have been sure that Rose was there. I am sure Rose controls her own actions, not her family. At points during the data gathering I felt sure that Rose wanted to participate, but then she would not be available for the appointment. Once I wondered if she got a new cell telephone number to avoid my calls, but then she called me.

My teacher/researcher perspective left me feeling disappointed, since

Rose was the only participant meeting the original participant description. My blue-collar, multiethnic response made me feel that perhaps in some way I did not meet the demands of the research and was doomed to failure. My final reaction is that perhaps Rose thought I might be of use to her at some time and wanted to maintain the relationship, but was so busy with her own life she had no time for my research, as she had little time for her children and family. I do not know how Rose felt or what she thought about in relation to her three children and the future. I do not know about her expectations for her children in school. I do not know why she chooses to be absent from her children's lives. Rose is the perfect example of the mother that I wanted for the research. I found Rose elusive as a research participant, as I have found young mothers elusive in my kindergarten classes. I found Rose's family embracing the idea of education, but exhibiting fewer middle class values and behaviors than did Violet's family. This family appeared to live in and interact from its micro-culture.

Tulip and her Family

A tulip is a tall, strong, beautiful, early blooming spring flower.

I was to meet Tulip at 1:00 p.m. on Saturday, August 17. Rose was not home earlier in the day, so I was concerned all through lunch that Tulip might not be home either. I used the extra time to locate the next two apartments, Tulip's and Iris's. I arrived early and parked in front of the older brick apartment buildings. Window air conditioning units hung in columns, one per apartment on each floor of the two story buildings. Each group of eight apartments was separated in the center by an enclosed entry door, and each building contained sixteen units. Older cars and trucks were parked in perpendicular spaces along the curb in front of the buildings. Large trees and play structures on grassy

hillsides separated the buildings. No shrubs or flowers were visible, but the grass was cut and trimmed, and several children of various ethnicities were playing on the play structures with chaperones visible. The group was varied in ages from two or three years old to forty plus years and was dressed in unmatched, somewhat ill-fitting, worn clothes. The apartments, vehicles, and residents painted a stereotypical picture of low-rent, subsidized housing projects. I waited in the car until 12:45 p.m. and decided to see if anyone was home.

I entered the door and saw many muddy footprints in two different sizes going up the stairs directly in front of me. Tulip's apartment was to my right and I knocked on the door. I immediately heard child noises inside. A large, very dark-skinned woman answered the door. Her braids were thick, and she had some extensions. A little girl with the same braids and a smaller boy stood behind her. I introduced myself and she invited me into the apartment. We were in the living room, which opened into the kitchenette and dining area, and the laundry facilities were visible. The apartment was clean and neat; however, a few children's toys and games were visible in the hallway. There was a sofa and love seat in good, but well used condition, and a bench style van seat in the living room. The dining table and chairs were visible, but there were no tables in the living room. There was a new audio and video system and a new washer and dryer visible.

I took an immediate liking to Tulip, and she seemed to respond. The climate in the room was very comfortable. We signed the permission and conducted the interview with multiple interruptions from the children. The little boy was enthralled with the recording equipment and me, so I gave him his own business card and we played briefly. I allowed the children to hear themselves on the tape player near the end of the interview. Tulip related that her daughter

had been invited to a birthday party at 3:00 so we wound up the interview with plans to see each other in early November.

On November 2, I sent letters (Appendices 267) to the four primary participants, and on November 6, I called the telephone number that I had for Tulip. It had been disconnected. I found out that Tulip and Iris had been talking to each other about being participants when I conducted Iris's second interview, so I asked Iris to tell Tulip to call me. I finally received a call from Tulip after I sent out invitations to the group interview on November 23. She left a message on my answering machine that she and her children had been very ill with influenza and could not attend the pizza party. She said that was why she had not called sooner, and she left a new telephone number. I returned her call right away and we planned to talk on the telephone after Christmas.

I called Tulip and we discussed her experience as a parent right before I mailed all of the information that I intended to put in the data to all of the participants on December 27. I enclosed fast food gift certificates and a stamped, return addressed envelope. Tulip corrected and added to the information, and returned the form to me on January 30, 2003. We have spoken on the telephone several times and will probably remain in touch for a further length of time.

Tulip's Story According to Tulip and MotherGoose

Tulip was the mother of the three-year-old boy and five-year-old girl attending MotherGoose daycare and DiverseCity School. I gathered information from Tulip and MotherGoose. Tulip provided most of the information followed by MotherGoose. Tulip was born in a small town in the eastern part of the state. Her dad was in the military, so she lived with her grandmother until she was nine

years old. Tulip had mixed feeling about going to kindergarten:

I don't know. I guess leaving my grandmother, I didn't want to leave—I guess being out on my own and being in a new environment—after I got used to it I liked everything. Um, (*I liked*) learning new stuff, my teachers, I still see my kindergarten teacher. I seen her maybe last year, or maybe the year before. Um, It was interesting, and plus kindergarten is—I mean that's when I met a lot of my friends, and a lot of my friends were still around that I went to school with and it's really strange when I talk to my kindergarten teacher she says that she's teaching like her kids that was with me their kids.

Tulip's parents were not available for her early school experiences. Her grandmother filled the parent roles at home and at school. Tulip did not remember any programs, field trips, or special occasions at school.

I don't remember having any (*special programs*) when I was in kindergarten. That I remember—that was so long ago. I remember she (*Tulip's grandmother*) used to bring my lunch to me sometimes because I was a picky eater, so she would bring me Hardy's and things like that... but other than that...

When Tulip was nine she began to move with her parents to many different places, Ohio, California, and Japan for a time. She finished high school on military bases and returned to her grandmother's house for a time. She worked and moved into an apartment with her cousin. She was twenty-two when she found that she was pregnant.

Umm...actually my cousin—she was like "You're pregnant." —I was like "No, I'm not." She said, "You need to go to the doctor."

And when I found out I was already like eight and a half weeks. I mean I wasn't mad or nothin', I was 22 and I finished high school. My main concern was what were my parents going to think. When I called my mom she was like really silent—I thought she had passed out or something, and she was like "Well, your dad was outside and we'll call you later." But they didn't really say anything, they just said that—um—they'll just support me, you know, throughout the situation, and asked was he (*the father*) gonna be in the picture, and I was like "yeah." Then they met him officially, I think my mom had met him before, but I don't think my dad had met him yet. But, other than that... He's (*the father of both of her children*) still here. She (*the kindergartner*) sees him every now and then. Other than that...I was 23. I had her October the 6th and my birthday was October 11th, so she was a birthday gift I guess. Um—(*his parents*), they were fine with it. Um—she looks like them on their side, like the hair and the eyes and the skin coloring and stuff, but... She sees them like his mother lives in Atlanta so every time they come in they see her. And his sisters see her and stuff. My mom just left like the middle of July, so she tries to come in as often as she can—out of a year she comes about four times or so.

Tulip got her own apartment after her daughter was born, and had her son two years later. The children have the same father, although he has never lived with Tulip and the children. They live in publicly subsidized housing. They receive welfare, food stamps, childcare credits, medical insurance, clothing and shoe assistance. Tulip works in daycare where her children attend, and was taking college courses in hotel management. In addition to working and

attending school, Tulip loves to read books, talk on the telephone, and shop, especially for shoes. Tulip was active in her church and all of its activities for young adults and children. Tulip's grandmother, cousins, and aunt live near her and help with childcare when she needs assistance. Some community agencies assist her with needs from time to time. Her parents reside in Florida and visit occasionally. The children see their father and paternal grandparents sporadically.

Tulip wants to finish school and was considering several possible plans for her future; however, she was positive about her plans for her children's futures.

I really don't even know. I thought of different aspects, because I like to travel and stuff, so I was thinking about like after I get my degree maybe taking the civil service test too and maybe trying to get like on a military base and working through visitors which was like a hotel. That way if I can make money, there's more money that way, it just depends...I just want them (*her children*) to get a good education and to go to college like me. Just to have more opportunities that I didn't have. Which I think I had it pretty good off, anything I wanted to do my parents let me do, so that's basically, just have it better than I had it. Yeah, I wanna. I wanna see her do different activities at schools and see her like do plays and stuff. She—uh—she's interested in a lot of things—I mean—I know there's no gymnastics at school or anything—but I want to see what she wants to do. I think it's gonna get hectic cause she's gonna want to do all kinds of stuff and I'm gonna have to run here and there, that's why I'm trying to hurry up and finish school before she gets involved in stuff.

Tulip has high expectations for her daughter, the school, and school system. Her travels as a child exposed her to many school situations and she wants those for her children as well.

I think (*I have*) about two years left. I hope they go by fast. Yeah, he'll be startin' in kindergarten. She was out going, she likes to talk a lot, and she's very smart. I think she's ready cause see she missed it because the cut off date was October 1st and her birthday was October 6th and she had to wait a whole nother year. So I think she was more than ready to go. I try to teach her a lot at home, um, I get her like flash cards and go over like her numbers and A-B-Cs and she's willing to learn—she hates to give up on stuff like I'll start on something and I'm out of patience and I'll say NO and she wants to keep going until she gets it, but I love her and she's a sweet girl when she wants to be. She has her moments... I don't know, maybe like kids might pick on her or something and hurt her feelings cause she's very sensitive. I just wish that she had—could see different schools and—see I lived in Japan and had an opportunity to see different schools and how they do things. But—I would like (*her*) someday to go abroad to see different cultures so she won' be—I think I'm a different person because of that.

Tulip's experience with her daughter's school began at enrollment, but continued to be positive for Tulip.

I waited until the last minute. I didn't turn in her papers—it was like the week before school was supposed to actually start. But—um—it wasn't that hard—I'm used to filling out a lot of papers anyway, so

it was... At the school the teacher told me they will have a folder and they send it home every day she'll send checkmarks and you can comment, and if they're not feeling good, and they send a calendar to let you know what's going on, and they have that phone talk where you can call and get information.

Tulip's first semester as a public school parent was hectic, but manageable. She planned to do as much with the kindergarten and school as her schedule would allow. She has attended conferences, called and received calls from the teacher, attended student performances and parent meetings, and helped with homework. Her daughter rode the bus to school and was picked up by her daycare, so Tulip did not have to be concerned with timing. She has had to forego the fieldtrips due to her work schedule. She did not join the parent organization, and reported that she did not feel that was important. I did not think about asking her what made her feel this way.

Tulip and both of her children love school. Tulip reported that her daughter was performing very well according to her report cards and the teacher notes and conferences. She had been ill only one day the entire semester. Tulip was very proud of her daughter who met her every expectation.

(Child's name) loves kindergarten. It really hasn't altered our lives at all. Except now my son, *(Child's name)*, wants to go to kindergarten with his big sister.

Tulip's daughter now dances with a church group as well as participates in her school activities. Tulip took a semester off from school and met a new boyfriend during the data gathering period. She reported that she was very happy with her life and future.

DiverseCity School was located within five miles of Tulip's apartment

complex, and just as close to Iris's apartment. Both of their daughters attended DiverseCity kindergartens, and were in the same room.

Tulip's Analysis

Tulip's Field of Interaction: DiverseCity School

DiverseCity Elementary School, Tulip's and Iris's neighborhood school, was 22.8% Black and 15.2% Other meaning that there were 38% non-White or 122 of 322 students were not White. Described as a small urban school, this school had a White principal, and a large number of White staff members. All of the staff members that I met were female, and I met only one Black teacher. The parents were described as ethnically diverse and mostly cooperative by the staff. Tulip was non-White and well traveled outside of the area. She should be comfortable at any school, but she should have had an easy time fitting in at this school.

I was told about the extensive parent involvement program that had won the school an award, and was given literature about that school program. One younger teacher discussed all of the successful strategies, but complained that they were time consuming. She specifically listed evening meetings and telephone calls not during contract hours. The teachers agreed that the parent involvement efforts were sometimes time consuming, but that they seemed to be effective. I asked if there were resistant, non-involved parents at the school. The teachers replied that there were a very few. They described the few as mostly young, poor, and out of the "mainstream value system." It appeared that this group worked together well as a team, and that they desired to be a support structure for the parents in their school according to their White, middle class standards. The program was highly organized and structured to be easy for staff to follow and easy for parents to understand and join. If the student was having

difficulty, the parent was required to come to a conference in order to receive the information about their child. Report cards were not sent; the parent must pick them up. This strategy was probably good for getting face to face meetings with parents, but might also seem an imposition and demanding act by the school to the parents. If a parent had conflicts with timing or was resisting school control, they simply did not get a report card.

Tulip's Cultural Capital

Tulip's social and cultural capital includes a Black, mixed working and middle class upbringing. Her parents, who are still married and living in Florida, left her with her grandmother until she was nine-years-old, and then had her travel with them to military installations inside and outside the U.S. The nuclear family structure of her birth family did not provide her traditional middle-class experiences early in her life because Tulip lived with her grandmother. She had a rough beginning in kindergarten, but grew to like school and still sees her teachers from time to time. She went to high school on the military bases, where she became familiar with White, middle class values and culture. She returned to her grandmother's house after graduation, found work, and moved into an apartment with her cousin. Tulip's varied experiences and early travel (between age 9 and 18) gave her valuable cultural capital consistent with mainstream culture.

Tulip and her family accept the mainstream expectations for her and the children, and want to give the children every middle class advantage possible. Tulip's multicultural experiences while growing up have contributed to her vast cultural capital and ability to bridge her worlds. She is comfortable in White, middle class cultural situations, such as schools, and actually seems to prefer

them. I believe that this comes from her family's military experiences, which probably forced conformity. Her choice of daycare, MotherGoose's, and her enrollment and attendance at the local university demonstrate her lack of intimidation of large institutions operating from the dominant White, middle class societal position (Fordham 1988, Spring 2000).

Tulip also fits into her Black, micro-culture very comfortably. She has ties to family, friends, boyfriend, and church. She has accepted her grandmother, MotherGoose, other family and friends as "kin," "fictive kin," and "other mothers" for her family (Collins 2000, Sudarkasa 1996). She exhibited the micro-culture's value system by having two children while young and unmarried and by speaking in local Black dialect. She can also speak with White pronunciation, and never expressed any internal conflict between the two cultures (Sudarkasa 1996, Mullings 1997). She did allude to family conflict between her cultures when she feared telling her parents about her pregnancy. She believed that her parent's acceptance or fear of the power of White, middle class values would affect their response to her situation. She knew that her grandmother and local Black family and friends would see this as acceptable and be a support system for her. Seeking out and accepting help from community agencies is another value conflict that does not appear to affect Tulip. Tulip appears to be very comfortable in either middle class or Black, working class situations and does not seem to be concerned about value conflicts between the two cultures.

Perhaps Tulip's exposure to other cultures while traveling with her parents helped her to be comfortable with her multicultural position and gives her an advantage in creating inclusion. She referred to Japan and how different the culture was there. Perhaps that made her White and Black American cultures seem somewhat less different. I have a similar background to Tulip. I had one

parent who identified as a White, Appalachian middle class liberal, and one parent who identified as a Native American, Appalachian working class conservative. We also traveled in conjunction with the military when I was a child. My travel experiences made my parents seem closer in their value systems because they were each so different from the cultures that I encountered. I can operate in either culture, speak as if I am a native of both, and respect and appreciate all value systems. Tulip has been able to maneuver within the White, middle class system acquiring the material needs for her family while still working to achieve the personal goals of attaining more advantages through further education.

Tulip accepts her responsibility as a single parent. She lives alone with her children and depends on the daycare to be available during her college class attendance, and when she works (part time when she is not attending classes). Her children remain her focus in all of her life decisions. She dropped out of college for one semester to be more involved with her daughter's school. Tulip appears to be able to create inclusion in both White, middle class and Black, working class situations for herself and her children.

Tulip was taking college courses in hotel management with the help of scholarships and loans, and she worked in MotherGoose's Childcare where her children attended. MotherGoose chose Tulip as a research participant hoping that her participation and relationship with me would help her with her children in public school and in her college classes. MotherGoose is very fond of Tulip. Tulip has a good command of the laws, customs, policies, and expectations of the society. She has been able to successfully attend college and work in the mainstream culture. All are moments of inclusion in White, middle class society that will aid her with her parent involvement activities at her daughter's school. If

her time should be limited later in the child's schooling, the value of time and bettering one's self will help Tulip and her children to maintain their inclusion status.

Tulip is highly literate in English, and is literate in Japanese. She found the kindergarten registration paperwork easy to understand and complete. She had no questions for me about notes or papers from school. Tulip is using her literacy skills to create inclusion by being able to meet and exceed the expectations placed on her.

Tulip and both of her children love school. She had no doubt about trusting the teacher and staff, accepting their decisions, and becoming familiar with/following the school laws, policies, rules, and procedures. Tulip reports that her daughter is performing very well according to her report cards and the teacher notes and conferences. Her daughter was ill only one day the entire semester. Tulip is very proud of her daughter who met her every expectation. "(Child's name) loves kindergarten. It really hasn't altered our lives at all. Except now my son, (Child's name), wants to go to kindergarten with his big sister." Tulip used her support and positive attitude to create happiness with her life, and the illusion that her mother responsibility and kindergarten " . . . hasn't altered our lives at all." The fact is that she felt that she must drop out of college for awhile to meet the demands of school parenting. She does not view this as a change in her life; she feels this is a temporary adjustment period. Tulip has produced inclusion for herself and her children, but at what cost to her own personal goals remains to be seen.

Tulip is willing to give as much time to her children and school as is required. She planned to do as much with the kindergarten and school as her schedule would allow. She has attended conferences, called and received calls

from the teacher, attended student performances and parent meetings, and helped with homework. Tulip uses her academic strengths to assist her children in academic learning. This is inclusion. Questions about the parent organization occurred to me, but Tulip did not give me a reason for not participating. Iris related that at her attendance at the first meeting she felt unimportant. I suspect that the parent organization is a place where these two mothers felt exclusion. Since I did not have contact with the school or this organization, I can not speak to why this exclusion occurred.

I took an immediate liking to Tulip, and she seemed to respond. We have spoken on the telephone several times and will probably remain in touch for a further length of time. She admits that she initially agreed to the interviews because MotherGoose and her aunt wanted her to participate. Both thought that participation could lead to assistance for her in college as well as in kindergarten. Tulip has asked questions about college and kindergarten, and does not hesitate to call when she needs answers. I do not always have answers for her, but I usually know where we can find them. Tulip was able to use her contacts through this research to create moments of inclusion for her daughter and herself by having help in order to find information.

Tulip has high expectations for herself and her daughter, the school, and school system. Her travels as a child exposed her to many school situations and she wants similar ones for her children. Her experience with her daughter's school has continued to be positive, although, Tulip's first semester as a public school parent was hectic. Tulip took a semester off from school and met a new boyfriend. She reported that her daughter is doing very well academically and participates in church programs and other activities. Tulip says she is very happy with her life and future. She has produced inclusion through her vast cultural

capital.

Iris and her Family

An iris is a tall, fragile, flower that bends with the slightest breeze.

I made an appointment with Iris to come to her apartment at 3:00 p.m. on Saturday, August 17. I left Tulip's apartment at 2:40 p.m. and arrived at Iris's building about 2:45. The two apartment complexes were located very close together, which was why the two little girls attended the same daycare, Head Start, and school. The apartments were new looking and remodeled. There were no large trees or shrubs, and no fixed play structures for children. The buildings were similar to the older apartments where Tulip lived, but the stairwells and front doors were located outside. There were several cars parked outside the buildings, some were older and some newer. Each apartment had a patio (upstairs had balconies) and sliding glass doors on the front and back of the buildings. There was a colorful child size picnic table on Iris's patio.

At 2:55 p.m., I knocked at the door. A well dressed, young, Black man answered the door and looked as if I was not who he expected. There was another young Black man on the sofa, some laundry baskets with clothes in them setting in a chair and on the floor, and some unidentified items, a small weight scale, and a small jar of a White substance laying on the coffee table. The young man on the sofa tried to quickly pick up the items on the table while the other young man tried to block my vision into the room. I became very tense, but continued to talk to the young man in the doorway and acted as if I had not noticed the situation. I explained who I was and that I had an appointment with Iris. He replied that she had not returned home from her aunt's house. I considered leaving, feeling that I had intruded on illegal drug activity, but felt that

an exit might feel suspicious to the young men. I did not want to be in danger NOR did I want to offend family members of a research participant. I simply told the young men that I would wait on the stairwell for fifteen minutes to see if she returned. I went to the stairwell outside and sat down.

Almost immediately, an old car pulled into an empty parking place directly in front of me. Two young men, one Black and one Hispanic, got out of the car and walked to Iris's apartment, where one of the young men opened the door without anyone knocking. The door closed quickly. Very shortly the young Black man, who had answered the door for me, came out and told me that he had called Iris and that her grandmother was very ill. She had forgotten about our appointment. I thanked him and asked him to tell her to call me and we would reschedule. I gave him my card, and I extended my arm and we shook hands. I hoped that this gesture would ease the tension and allow the research to continue. I went home, relieved to be in my car and on my way. Iris called me that evening and we rescheduled for the next Thursday evening at 5:30 p.m.

I arrived at the apartment at 5:20 p.m. Nervously, I knocked on the door. There was no answer, so I again sat on the stairs and waited. It was very hot. An old car with the front windows rolled down pulled into a parking space near the end of the building. A young, very tall, thin Black woman rolled up her window and got out of the driver's seat. She went around the front of the car, opened the passenger side front door, and rolled up the window. A little girl climbed over the seat and got out of the car. The mother handed her a diaper bag, and got a car seat with a small baby in it out of the front seat. She struggled with a purse and the car seat, but closed the car door. The trio came toward me.

I got up and asked if the mother was Iris. She smiled and admitted that she was Iris and I introduced myself. She was attractive, but looked tired and her

hair was pinned down in several places. She was wearing sweat pants and a tee shirt with print on it. We went to the front door and I took the key and opened the door for her and the children to enter. She invited me in and we sat in the living room near the sliding glass door. The air conditioning was welcoming.

The living room furniture (a sofa, loveseat, chair, two end tables, and a coffee table) was new and there was a big screen video and audio system. The dining furniture also looked new and a new looking washer and dryer were visible in the kitchenette. A coat tree was overflowing with coats, jackets, and hats in adult and child sizes, and there were several pieces of baby furniture. Everything was neat and very clean. The baby was asleep and Iris put him into a baby swing. I sat on the sofa, set up the recording equipment, and talked to the little girl until Iris came and sat in the chair. We signed the permission and continued with the interview. The little girl interrupted frequently until her mother made her sit in the chair with her. Iris was tired and often appeared confused and undecided. She was frustrated with her new life as a single mother with two children. We agreed to talk again in November and I left about 6:15.

On November 2, I sent letters (Appendices 267) and on November 6, I called Iris. We made an appointment to do the second interview at her apartment on November 25 at 4:00. When I arrived at the apartment, Iris was home with the baby and a young Black man. She introduced the young man as her cousin, and his father, her uncle, picked him up after a few minutes. She explained that her uncle had repaired her car and her cousin had brought it home. The baby had grown, was chubby and cheerful until he got hungry near the end of the interview. Iris said that she had to meet her daughter at daycare for a family dinner, and that she would see Tulip and her children there. I asked Iris to tell Tulip please to call me. She had several forms and letters from her

daughter's teacher and we discussed those before addressing my questions. I left as soon as we had finished all of the questions. We planned to see each other again at the pizza party.

I did not call Iris to confirm that she planned to attend the pizza party since we had talked about it on November 25. When she had not arrived at the pizza arcade by noon, I called her apartment. She said that her daughter had gotten up with a temperature and she could not come. We talked for a short time and I told her I would mail out her information after Christmas. We planned to talk after she received the letter. I mailed all of the information that I intended to put in the data to all of the participants on December 27. I enclosed fast food gift certificates and a stamped return addressed envelope. Iris called me on January 20. We read the form together (I had my copy and she had the copy I had mailed to her.) and she said that there were no corrections and that she did not have anything to add. We talked for a time about her daughter. We have spoken on the telephone two more times and will probably remain in touch for a further length of time.

Iris's Story According to Iris and MotherGoose

Iris was an only child. Her family was working class, and she was her parent's pride and delight. She went to kindergarten and enjoyed attending a mostly Black school. When asked about what she liked and didn't like in school, she replied:

(I liked) My teachers mostly—um. I still see a lot of my teachers. When I got to middle school, I liked home ec. 'cause I like to cook and I never learned to sew, but I always wanted to --- Yeah, I did play baseball and basketball. *(I didn't like)* Probably the

homework.

Iris remembers her mother and father being involved with her school experiences, but valued her father's involvement more than her mothers.

Yeah, my mom pretty much came to everything—the PTA. UM—I don't think I ever really wanted my mom to go with me—you know—I was one of those kids I didn't want my mom. I don't know why, but um, um, when I was in high school I played basketball my dad was involved in that, of course.

Iris graduated from high school and went into business with a friend in a nail salon. She was very young when she married, but her marriage ended.

We were married—we were married for a long time—for six years and when we got a divorce that's when I found out that I was expecting, but we still... We, um, we still have a good relationship.

When Iris's six-year marriage ended and she was pregnant, her world fell apart. Both sets of grandparents were distressed and Iris was left in turmoil.

NO! —(*her parents were*) Not too happy, um, I'm an only child so in the beginning they weren't but, um, my mom and dad they love their grandkids—they're happy now. You know, I really don't know (*how his parents felt*). But I think they're happy now. I don't think they were too pleased about it because of the situation, but...

Due to Iris's pregnancy and distress her business partnership dissolved and she had to find other employment doing nails. She worked and supported herself and her daughter with the help of public housing, medical insurance, food stamps and WIC, childcare credits, and other welfare programs. Iris lives with her two children, and recently with the birth of her son, she has had to change her lifestyle.

It was so hard. It was really hard. I, um, I don't know—I waited until I was 27 to have (*baby's name*) so I thought that I would be mentally prepared, but, I'm still not. Um, (*child noises*) it's difficult, I think, because I'm a single parent, it's harder. But, um, overall it was enjoyable. It's harder right now than it's ever been because of the new baby. I don't know. I don't (*work*) right now. I've always worked—I think she's kind of jealous now 'cause I'm at home all the time and I wasn't before. (*In November Iris followed up on her job status.*) It's probably gonna be after Christmas sometime, no, it's gonna be kinda hard because I spoiled my son and nobody will keep him.

Iris had a great deal of help with childcare. She lived with her two children in the apartment, but had the MotherGoose Childcare, Head Start, her parents, aunt, and grandmother. Iris's daughter visits her father and paternal grandparents, "Some weekends—at least one weekend a month um, she spends time with them." The baby's father helps some with him and occasionally with Iris's daughter. He often keeps the baby for Iris to do things with her daughter. "Yeah, um, his father keeps him—so we're—I just don't want to get married again. I'm not ready. That's come up and he's an active partner and he does some things with (*Child's name*) too, but um--."

When asked what she does for fun for herself Iris replied whatever her daughter wants to do, in spite of the childcare assistance that she has available to her. They had a trip to a local amusement park planned when I visited them in August. When I returned in November and asked if Iris was having any fun she replied, "Sometimes, I—I've gotten a break on a couple of weekends. (*Child's name*) has gone to stay with her grandparents—not this past weekend, but the

weekend before that she stayed the whole weekend with them so I got kind of a little break.”

Iris has not worked since the birth of her son. She had planned to go back to work around Christmas time, but just could not get up the energy to look for a job. I did not ask her how this might affect her Families First assistance program, but the rules state that when her baby was six months old she will have to change either her work or student status in order to continue in the program. Returning to school was her goal for her future, and choosing their own future was Iris’s goal for her children.

--for mine (*future*)? Well, I want to go back to school --- I do want to go back to school. And I did own my own business, but-um—I had a partner and we kinda split so I do want to—um—I do want to open up another (*nail*) salon one day—Um-huh. I wanna do that one-day. But right now my plans were trying’ to go back to school. I want (*Child’s name*) to be able to be successful in whatever she wants to do. I wanted to be a dancer and after I got to college age I lost interest maybe—because I think really because my parents couldn’t afford to send me where I wanted to go and the—I just really couldn’t do what I wanted to do. And, I want her to be able to do whatever she wants to do—do whatever makes her happy. She wants to be a cheerleader when she grows up!

Iris was optimistic for her daughter in school. She had a positive enrollment experience and expected her daughter to do very well academically.

Um-hmm, um, Well, (*Child’s name*) went to Head Start, so I was already familiar with the process of doing all of that—I didn’t actually meet her teacher until she (*the teacher*) started last week.

I cried though. I cried. No, I'm excited because (*Child's name*) was eager to learn. She wants to learn everything. She wants to know everything. I'm really excited, but just nervous because everybody's always babied her, you know, and I'm just nervous about how she's going to act. I like her school. I think her school was a pretty good school.

Iris expected to be involved in all of the planned parent activities of the school. She had even talked to the teacher and found all of the ways she could get information about activities in which her daughter would be involved.

Well, I want to be involved as much as possible. I'm gonna--
(pause) Yeah, all the teacher conferences, any field trips or anything like that that they need me to participate in—I'll try to do that also, any—PTA probably, and homework. I'm gonna take her and pick her up, and, um, that was very, very hard. That was very hard. That's very hard. Cause it's like he's on a schedule and right when we get ready to go to school, he changed his schedule, so he gets up right at the time for me to wake her up, so I either have to wake her up earlier or him up earlier, and neither one of them do that too well. So that's hard. Trying to get both the kids up.

Yeah—it was (*hard*), but it's getting better now. I didn't think it was going to get better and then it started getting cold and I thought now what am I gonna do I've got these kids to drag out, but it kinda works out because sometimes his dad was getting off right when at the time for me to be pulling out of here so he'll come and stay with him so I don't have to be pulling him out in the cold so, it's working.

When I called Iris to schedule her second interview, Iris said that she was

“so glad” that I was coming. At my arrival for the interview, the little girl was not at home, she was now being picked up by MotherGoose childcare, and the baby was cooperative since Iris's cousin, a young man in his early twenties, was visiting and playing with him. Iris appeared distressed, but controlled.

Good—we had some problems but they're gettin' better. (*Child's name*) wasn't adjusting well to kindergarten but she's doin'—she's doin' a lot better. She was happy goin' but it's like she didn't want to participate. It was like—um—I'm not sure—she would learn the things, but the next day she'd be like “Oh, I forgot,” but then she'd get home and I'd ask her and she'd, you know, she'd tell me, and she's in what do you call it? Chapter --- Yeah—Title One—Her teacher (*This was the one Black teacher that I met at this school.*) in there says she does that with her, but because it's a smaller class by the end of the class she can get her to— I sat in on her class last Monday, she seemed to be OK. I—I don't know what the problem was—but—she's having trouble writing her name and I think it's because her name was so long. Because when I look at it I can make out some of the letters, but I'll be like—you've left some letters out! So, I think it's because it's so long.

After her cousin left, Iris produced a stack of school papers including school pictures and a behavior/academic checklist the teacher had sent with the report card. Iris's daughter was not performing as Iris had expected. We began with the pictures and discussed each page in depth. With each explanation, Iris made comments and seemed to become a bit calmer. The pictures were profile and full body poses. The child was dressed beautifully with hair extensions and ribbons, lacy socks and shiny shoes.

I wanted to be taller. *(Child's name)* was not too tall but she was a big girl. She was a big baby. She weighed sixteen and a half pounds at two months. He only weighs that now at five months.

We spoke about the teacher comments and the child's performance as we looked at each page. I held each page so we could both see, and sat near Iris because she was holding the baby. Iris asked many questions, but wanted my answers, and did not make many comments until we had finished the entire stack. I explained the school language, as I understood it from a teacher's perspective.

The baby fell asleep in her arms as we finished the last page of the stack, the behavior checklist. I asked Iris about some of the teacher's written descriptive language on her daughter's work and on the checklist.

No, I need an explanation. I don't really know what some of those are. Don't send all of that stuff home—we have a box and she won't let me throw anything away. *(Child's name)* everyday comes with all of this junk.

Iris had encountered other difficulties in relation to her child's school. She had experienced problems with attendance, tardiness, and dress code. However, the conversation repeatedly returned to the child's behavior and academic performance and Iris's disappointment with her daughter.

No. Well, we did *(have problems with dress code)* right at the very first couple of weeks because I was really confused about their schedule because *(Child's name)* was telling me one thing and they were doing it on a different day. But *(Child's name)* was really a tennis shoe kind of girl, and I try to buy her little shoes that she can play in and everything, she's got some dress shoes that have

rubber soles, so they were OK. No, not really—she wants to wear her dresses and we were arguing a little about that, I say no you all go in the gym and I know you—you don't—shouldn't have your legs open—well, you can put pants under them— yeah we have done that a couple of times and I got her some shorts to put under them so it's working out. I think the only thing—her report card—I was not pleased with it. (pause) She had all Ss except for her—you teach kindergarten too? (*I nodded yes.*) The little section on this side? (*gestured to right, I replied*) Yeah, study skills she had Ns in the whole thing. And I was just—I mean OK (*re-showed me the copy of report card insert behavior checklist*) Yeah, and you know what—I don't understand —she knows all these things. She knew it the whole time I was expecting—those were things we worked on. Her birthday, her address, her phone number—um—her grandmother's name. You know, if you get lost and you can remember your grandmother's name it was in the telephone book—you know that—and when she got to school it's like she doesn't—I don't know—or I don't remember. And like last Tuesday when she was home we worked on a majority of those things and I had no problem with her at home. And I asked her (*Child's name*) why don't you do this at school? I don't know. How come she's not focused. You know, I don't know if it's too many kids, or she needs to be in a smaller setting, I don't know. No, she's learning to tie her shoes. She learning to tie her shoes—she doesn't know how to tie her shoes—She's learning to tie her shoes. I don't know anybody else ask (*Child's name*) when's your birthday—June 20th—she

knows it. But, I don't know why she doesn't know it at school. I don't know. *(I asked if the kindergartner could be afraid of testing or the teacher.)* She's normally not afraid of people—she's a people person more so than I am. I mean—I don't know, and I've asked her teacher. When we go to the teacher meetings, we have the same questions for each other. I'm asking her how can I and she's asking me how. I don't know how! *(agitation was evident)* I asked her what can I do at home to help her and --- they really didn't—except practice, practice and we do those things. *(pause)* We had to cut out the TV a lot—we had to—she'd sneak and turn the TV on and --- she's a TV person— *(pause)* *(Child's name)* has a whole library in there of different—she has learning videos and she's got all these Disney videos and therefore we watched one this morning while we were eating um—I think it was the Muppets counting or something— *(a very long pause)* They have the backpack thing. Where they have different backpacks every week. This past week was the alphabet and I was really surprised that she knew the whole alphabet and I said why don't you know this at school? She knew—like she got b and d mixed up—and um—f and t— *(pause)* Other than that she---that's why I was really confused by this sheet—cause those were things we work on and she doesn't have a problem at home---the only thing we do have a problem with was her name. She cannot write her name. Yeah, she gets confused with her ns and her rs too. *(I asked if anything besides academic performance had surprised Iris.)* Yeah, um---the way *(Child's name)* interacted and plays with the kids has surprised

me a lot. They don't send a note home, but she comes home and tells me she got in trouble. Oh somebody said they were gonna—the other day it was a little girl said she was gonna paint her sweater, so *(Child's name)* painted her face. I said Oh, *(Child's name)* you can't do things like that—Well, she threatened to paint my sweater—it was funny as I thought about it, but you cannot do things like that. And that really surprises me because at first she was very, very shy. As far as the other kids, she'll talk to adults but with other kids, she won't have any — *(pause, Iris tries to rationalize her child's behavior in light of recent experiences at her house.)* A couple of weeks ago they sent a note and said that she was doing well but that she had been mean to her classmates. But, also I kept one of my friends little girls for a weekend and they were real bossy towards *(Child's name)*. They were a year apart—One was six. Then *(Child's name)* was acting like her after they left and I thought — now, *(Child's name)* we don't act like that, we don't—and I think she took that to school with her too, that attitude.

Iris had some indication that her daughter was not performing well before she received the report card and checklist at twelve weeks of school. I asked if she had met with the teacher or attended any parent meetings, and in which school activities she had participated.

Well, I went to one PTA meeting—I think they only had one—I did go to that—um *(pause)* They haven't really had too much—My mother's gone to two little dinners—My mother's gone to that—We try to—if I don't get to go I try to be sure that somebody goes—to anything that involves *(Child's name)*—so she won't feel left out.

She makes sure I help her with her homework. They went on the pumpkin hayride for Halloween and that was really exciting—she got to bring that little pumpkin home. Um—it's—it's been maybe a month or so—about a little over a month since I talked to her (*the teacher*). *I asked, Did she have an official conference with you?* Um-hmm. (pause) *So you got this (I indicated the behavior checklist) with her report card at twelve weeks? She probably had the conference at the end of the first six weeks?* Um-hmm. *So you kind of knew that she wasn't doing too well before you got the report card?* Yeah, but it kinda shocked me because I thought she was doing better. Cause they weren't sending anything home to tell me—or let me know to help her write her name—she seems to do well on the things she brings home to do. *I continued, So on her papers she brings home she seems to do well? (I indicated the child's papers that we had already discussed.)* Yeah, but the last couple of weeks I noticed she wasn't finishing and I asked her what were you supposed to do on this piece of paper? She can tell me; she just didn't finish it. They said that she doesn't —something about work skills. *OK was there anything that the school could do to help you?* Yeah, more notices before the report card comes out to let me know what I can do to help (Child's name). Because I really don't know and I can't remember—I asked my mama Did you used to help me with my homework? She said NO! I'm sure I did (it—did not need help), but (Child's name) and I were different --- she was a lot like her dad—where I can grasp things real quickly, she can too, but it takes her—you have to tell her a couple of times

just like you have to tell her three or four times to sit down and I --- you know you have to repeat yourself she hears you the first time but she doesn't do it. She's a lot different. Our personalities were extremely different. (pause) I have no clue what to do with her—I tried. (nervous laugh) I tried. (pause) *I changed the tone, Do you get a lot of newsletters from school, do they let you know what's going on?* I think they come every month—a monthly calendar. (pause) *You haven't gotten any phone calls—just the one?* Yeah, I haven't really gotten any bad notes, you know, just *(Child's name)* was a little disruptive --- the bad things she tells me herself. They haven't told me, she tells me. That's a good thing about her that she tells me.

I sensed protectiveness toward her daughter that Iris had not exhibited before this discussion. I truly desired to help this mother, and I gave her some suggestions for working with her daughter, particularly things that might be easy for the family to do without too much effort. (In all fairness to the teacher, I must say that I probably knew this family and its circumstance much better than she could have at this point. I knew the families in the study better than I knew my own students' families' circumstances. I was able to make alternate suggestions to Iris from that knowledge.) I also suggested that Iris initiate a conference with the teacher when she needed explanations of anything that came home with her daughter. I volunteered that she could always call me for clarification of any school materials.

Iris had a dinner at the childcare facility that she was planning to attend with her daughter. I did not want to make her late, so we ended our interview and made plans to meet again at the pizza party. Iris's daughter was ill and she

could not attend the pizza group interview; however, I hear from her frequently so that I can interpret written documentation that she does not understand. She thanks me often and says that I have helped her and her daughter a great deal. She is still convinced that her daughter's school, DiverseCity Elementary School, is a good school.

Iris's Analysis

Iris's Field of Interaction: DiverseCity School

DiverseCity Elementary School, Tulip's and Iris's neighborhood school, is 22.8% Black and 15.2% Other meaning that there are 38% non-White or 122 of 322 students are not White. Iris's daughter is one of these students.

Iris's Cultural Capital

Iris was the mother of the baby boy and five-year-old girl attending MotherGoose's Childcare and DiverseCity School. Iris accepted the mainstream expectations for her and the children, but was uncertain about how to achieve any privilege. Iris's social and cultural capital included a Black, working class upbringing. Iris was an only child. Her family was working class, and she was her parent's pride and delight. She went to kindergarten and enjoyed attending a mostly Black school. She said she liked her teachers, home economics, and playing sports. She did not like homework. Iris had inclusion as a student, and desired it for her daughter.

Iris lived with her two children. With the birth of her son in June, she had to change her lifestyle. She had not worked, and had planned to go back to work around Christmas time. She just could not get up the energy to look for a job. Iris stated that she did not want to get married again, so her choice to remain a single parent and depend on government programs and other people to maintain

her family put her in a position of “undeserving poor” in the current White, middle class culture. The “undeserving poor” position makes inclusion difficult to achieve due to the societal belief in the Protestant work ethic. If they are not working and earning money they are lazy or not blessed because of their own actions, so they deserve their position in poverty. Mainstream individuals do not want to contribute to or be exposed to unblessed individuals, so achieving inclusion is nearly impossible (Polakow 1993, Holloway, et al 1997).

Iris certainly took responsibility for parenting. She had gone through pregnancy and childbirth alone twice. She lives alone with her children assuming all of the primary care duties. A major hardship for Iris was that her son was born during the summer just before her daughter began kindergarten. Having a small baby and changing the family's schedule all at once was very difficult. Iris had planned to do a great deal with the school, but had to rely on her family to fill in at school when she had to stay home. She had to request and accept childcare help during this period, so even with good intentions of being involved, time was difficult for Iris. She was tardy several times, adding to her “undeserving poor” image. This image is a contribution to exclusion.

In August, Iris expressed trust in the teacher and school staff. She was somewhat familiar with school laws, policies, and rules. She was excited about seeing what her daughter could do academically, and appeared comfortable with the school. Iris continued to depend on the expertise of the school staff, but was confused when her daughter had problems in school and the teachers and staff did not seem to know how to advise her. Iris was giving as much time and attention to her children as possible and did not understand why her daughter was not performing as she expected. She worked with the little girl at home, but was not be able to recognize the behaviors that cause her daughter problems at

school. When she realized that she needed help, Iris went to school to “watch” and find out how to interact differently. She saw some of the problems but could not figure a way to change her daughter’s performance. She asked the teacher who seemed as clueless as Iris. Iris expected to get an answer and follow the teacher’s instructions, but was confused when the teacher did not have an answer.

African American educational history defines traditional parent involvement differently than current White, middle class society. Black parents traditionally could not help their children with academics, so they did not visit or offer to help with school academics. Parental involvement took the forms of raising funds, providing labor, and contributing materials (Anderson 1988, Lightfoot 1976, Walker 1996, Spring 2000, Urban and Wagoner 2000). Iris’s mother admitted that she did not help Iris with her homework, so Iris could not understand why she must help her daughter, or how she could get the little girl to perform as the school expected. This experience produced exclusion for Iris and her daughter. The child was not able to achieve inclusion on her own, and Iris was bewildered looking for an answer.

Iris was overwhelmed with the amount of paperwork coming home and did not understand the language of education, but she was trying to figure out if she or the school needed to change the situation. She can read the words, but does not understand their meaning in the school setting. This lack of English literacy and confusion led to more moments of exclusion.

Iris expected the school to have all of the answers, and was surprised when the staff could not change the situation for her. This confusion led to my continued involvement with Iris and her family. She showed me the checklist and several papers from school. We spoke about the teacher comments and the

child's performance as we looked at each page. Iris asked many questions, but wanted my answers, and did not make many comments until we had finished the entire stack. I explained the school language, as I understood it from a teacher's perspective.

Iris was frustrated with her daughter when doing homework because the little girl had trouble, but Iris did not recognize her own frustration. By asking questions, I was able to help Iris recognize that she does know and understand what the teachers are saying about her daughter, but she does not know how to help her daughter. This knowledge is distressing to Iris, and creates exclusion in her mind. This was the service MotherGoose and Iris's aunt thought I might be able to offer, and where my assistance became a long-term relationship. I made some simple suggestions and told Iris to call me if she wanted me to make more suggestions, or just to talk about her daughter. She called several times and we continued our relationship until the end of the school year. We were valuable assistants to each other during this time. Our relationship did help Iris's daughter and allowed Iris to create several moments of inclusion.

During the study, Iris was uncertain of her parenting skills and very emotional. Her recent pregnancy probably contributed to the emotion. Her goal for her future is returning to school and later having her own business again. Her goal for her children is being successful at anything they choose. Iris did not seem to understand that children are not happy when they encounter new and unfamiliar information, and often avoid learning due to this distress.

Mother Involvement and My Reflections

The four mothers in this study were all young, Black, working class, single parents receiving public assistance while raising their children. Each mother had

her own beliefs and expectations, social and cultural capital, habitus, and practice affecting her involvement with her children and their school. The family members surrounding each mother and the relationships between the family members were factors in the mother's life and choices, helping to form her social and cultural capital.

Within each family, a desire was expressed for attaining as much power as possible for the children. Success in public school was identified as the chosen route to the advantage for all of the families. Violet, Spring, Terra, Tulip, and Iris all expressed a goal of attaining as much from school for the children as possible. Each family initially believed that the child would do very well in school, and expected good behavior and academic progress.

Within each family one or more members took responsibility for the child and her/his academic progress, and hoped that participating in the research would help their family and kindergartner. Three of the mothers and three grandmothers stepped forward to promote their kindergartner and be sure the child had the best support that the family could give.

Trusting the school, staff, and especially the teacher did not prove to be a problem for this group of family members. No reservations about any child's treatment at school emerged and the majority of the concerns expressed had to do with relationships between children. All of the families had experience with childcare and Head Start and seemed to equate public school kindergarten with these previous experiences. Safety and comfort had been experienced and was expected. The only change occurred when the school staff could not make a difference for Iris's daughter. She was confused, but did not express a loss of trust.

When addressing laws, system policies, and school rules, the families

attempted to familiarize themselves with all laws and abide by the laws. Each family had problems with different school practices and developed their individual way of dealing with the issues. Literacy in English proved to be a problem for Iris, and school language proved to be a problem for Violet's family, Rose's family, and Iris.

All parents were expected to provide the time it takes to care for their children's needs. Only one mother in the study found a way to provide all of the time expected by the system and still maintain her life and other commitments. Violet met the challenge by accepting a job in her son's school allowing her to be available for all functions and activities at the school. Tulip and Iris gave as much time as possible, and had other family members fill in for them when they could not be available. Rose gave no time to her son's school, and left all of the parenting expectations and duties to her mother.

My predictions are that Violet will create a great deal of inclusion for herself and her sons. Violet is comfortable in her neighborhood school, knows many of the employees at the school, and has a great deal of cultural and social capital in common with many of the people at the school. Violet will be a highly involved parent in all aspects of school life. When Violet is unsure about a choice, Spring will come to her assistance and she will continue to create moments of inclusion.

Tulip is very familiar with educational environments and she is not afraid to ask questions or request explanations. She is well educated and traveled, making her comfortable in educated culturally mixed groups, but she had some trouble creating inclusion in the parent organization from her daughter's school. Tulip will create inclusion with school personnel and gain inclusion for her daughter in school, but her daughter will probably experience some social

difficulty due to Tulip's discomfort with the parent group. She will substitute church and other activities for this social exclusion. Tulip is very strong and does not feel a need for assistance; she will find help if she needs it.

Iris is unsure of her position as a parent and feels the weight of her parent responsibility. She fears she is not capable of achieving inclusion for herself, and certainly has guilt when she feels moments of exclusion in school for her daughter. Iris has some literacy difficulties with school documentation, and needs a translator who can advise her in a course of action when she encounters problems. Although Iris's mother attends some school functions and keeps the children, Iris does not have a close relationship with her mother. Her grandmother is ill, and her father and aunt, who advise her, do not have the literacy skills that she requires of a translator. She does not have the benefit of a husband's support due to her reluctance to marry because of her previous experience. Iris feels isolated with her family problems, and her daughter's difficulties with school added to her isolation and created some desperation. During the research I attempted to fill the role as translator creating some moments of inclusion for Iris and her daughter, consequently lifting some of Iris's desperation. If Iris wants me to continue in this role, she will contact me in the future and I will continue to advise her. Otherwise, she will need to find someone else to fill the role as translator.

Rose is the participant fitting the original research design exactly. She was in high school living at home with a parent when she became a mother. She participated minimally in the research and her son's kindergarten year, leaving her mother and other family members to fulfill her parent responsibilities. Rose appeared more interested in participating in her own micro-culture and social life than in providing moments of inclusion in the mainstream culture of the school for

her son. Without Rose's cooperation, her reasons for taking this position cannot be determined. If she is operating from reproduction/resistance or any other theory, that is not apparent. Observing Rose with her children and learning about her life style increased my curiosity about the effect of a mother's age at the birth of her first child on her parenting and ability to create moments of inclusion for her children.

The four families have been introduced. Each family has a young, Black mother, a kindergarten child, at least one younger child, a preschool and Head Start experience, and extended family members who were involved in the care of the children. The chart on page 266 will give a visual organization to the participants in the research. Data were analyzed in Chapters 4 and 5 in order to answer the research questions next in Chapter 6.

Chapter 6: Answering Questions

A Review of the Chapters

Chapter 1 introduced the rationale for this research. My personal interest from classroom experiences as a kindergarten teacher highlighted the questions raised from the stories of the Cousins and Bertha. Maurice, William, Bertha, their families, and many other students and their family members remain with me. I demonstrated the relationship between culture, race, socioeconomic status, gender, family structure, education, and one's power within the society, making the argument for conducting this collective case study of four Black families identified as "undeserving poor." Parent involvement definitions and family structures and their possible relationship to each other were examined. The education system in the U.S. and the purpose of acculturating children into the mainstream culture was discussed. The research questions were posed and design methodology was explained. The limitations of the study were participants located, time, persona of the researcher, and participant commitment.

Chapter 2 examined the related literature for the study. Beginning with a history of African American desire and quest for education from slavery to present day, this chapter included an investigation of parent involvement, preschool, childcare, and public school. Public school theories were explored, including Cultural Deficit (Erickson 1987, Hess and Shipman 1965, Englemann and Bereiter 1966), Cultural Difference (Erickson, et al 1982, Erickson 1984, 1987, Foley 1991, Nel 1995), Cultural Discontinuity (Ogbu 1982, Nel 1995), and Lareau and Horvat (1999) moments of social inclusion and exclusion. Based on the work of Pierre Bourdieu in the area of social and cultural reproduction within

the society, especially within the public school system, the Lareau and Horvat (1999) model was demonstrated as valuable in assessing the mother's societal position. Finally, research on hard-to-reach participants and gaining access to research sites had to be added due to the difficulties encountered locating participants. The issues of hidden participants (Singer 1999, Atkinson and Flint 2001, Vogt 1999) forced the differences between the original and final designs of the study.

Chapter 3 examined the original research design, described the changes occurring during the data gathering, and explained the reasons for the changes in the design. Each stage of the research was described and then the changes in design were explained. The stages of the methodology were finding primary and secondary participants, including the search for sites, how they were located, and the way participants were chosen. Chapter 3 included data collection, analysis, form of write-up, validity, and timeline.

Chapter 4 examined all of the preschool and school data. Each conversation and all paperwork were presented. The preschools were found to be in support of the schools. Six mainstream expectations for parents were derived. Those expectations were:

1. Knowing the expectations of American, Euro-Western culture, including knowing and abiding by the law, school system and school rules and policies, and the teacher's classroom policy
2. Accepting the primary role in caring for their child and the responsibility for providing for all of the needs of the child
3. Trust the teacher to care for the child and to teach everything the child is supposed to learn
4. Trust, defer to, and accept all school staff decisions

5. Literacy in English in spoken and written forms

6. Give as much time as the school requests

Chapter 5 told the stories of the four mothers and their families: Violet, Rose, Tulip, and Iris. Each contact and the information gained from those contacts were woven to tell the four stories. Each mother participant's desires for her child and herself, and her expectations for the school were discussed in relation to the family's expectations for the child and the mainstream expectations for the mother. All four of the families believed that doing well academically and being able to behave according to school expectations was the way their child could access some advantage and power within mainstream society. All four families initially believed their kindergartner was "smart" and would do well in school, and expressed trust in the teacher and school staff. All four families expressed acceptance of and abided by all laws and rules. Violet, Tulip, and Iris took responsibility for their children, but Rose left the responsibility for her children to her family. All four of the mothers had access to other caregivers filling the roles of "kin," "fictive kin," or "other mother." (Collins 2000)

The amount of written correspondence from each school to the parents was tremendous. Legal accountability was the reason given for the huge amount of paperwork. Literacy in spoken and written English was expected, as was an understanding of educational language. The families of Violet, Iris, and Rose all discussed being unfamiliar with educational language. Iris also expressed discomfort with her lack of understanding and her additional contacts with the school and teacher. Tulip was very comfortable with all of the paperwork. Analysis took the form of applying Lareau and Horvat (1999) moments of social inclusion and exclusion. Violet and Tulip were very comfortable and possessed a great deal of cultural capital. Each of their children did well in school and these

two families experienced a great deal of inclusion. Iris worked at producing inclusion for her daughter, but had difficulty knowing what actions would help both of them. She did not have the literacy skills or cultural capital of Violet and/or Tulip. Rose did not pretend to help her children or family with inclusion. In fact, the impression she left was that she did not care how much inclusion or exclusion her son experienced. She left her son to her family, particularly her mother, Terra.

I desired to aid the participants and their child in their new roles in order to repay their valuable assistance to me. The reasons that the mother or the members of her family gave for participating in the research and my perspective of what she/they hoped to gain were explored. What the family actually did gain from their participation revealed a desire to have a "translator" for school documents and contacts on the part of the families of Violet, Tulip, and Iris. Rose never expressed or alluded to any reason for joining as a research participant; however, MaryPoppins urged her to be a part of the research so that I could be a "translator" for her

Chapter 6 will address the research questions. After addressing the research questions, Chapter 6 offers suggestions for other researchers desiring to locate similar participants. I suggest future research questions, options for teachers who have issues with parents and families similar to the research participants, and a personal reflection on the research project highlighting public school's institutional power.

Answering the Research Questions

1. How do young, working class, urban, Black parents and their families define their role in their children's education?

The four families in the study each defined their role differently, and the family members took varied positions. Violet expected to "do everything" with her son at OurChoiceUrban School. She included "... teacher conferences, field trips. Any time I'm off I'm gonna go down there and volunteer -- stuff like that.... He's going to have homework and stuff like that and that is something that is totally new to me." Spring and Violet's father (Spring's husband) were available for pick-up from school, emergencies, and occasional childcare, as was Patience. The school expected Violet (the mother and legal guardian) to take the lead role in supporting her son in school. She did. The other family members took support roles for Violet and the little boy. As the semester continued, Violet became even more involved in her son's schooling by taking a position as a teacher's aide at OurChoiceUrban School.

Rose appeared to take no responsibility for her son or his schooling. She did not enroll him, get him to or from school, or check to see if he had homework. She left the childcare and school contacts to other family members. Terra stepped up to fill the "other mother" (Collins 2000) role from her position as the grandmother. She took the calls from the school, made sure he went to school, and checked on his progress. She did get some help from the other family members and MaryPoppins. Stone expressed frustration at Rose's lack of interest; "(She) never takes care of the children (and) she usually shows up around one or two o'clock (in the afternoon after being absent all night)." As the semester progressed, Rose completely withdrew from her son's school

experience and Terra became the contact person for the child. Rose advised on the telephone to call Terra if I wanted to know “anything” about school and her son.

I was surprised at this withdrawal by Rose. When I first met her, she was at her son’s childcare graduation. I would like to know if losing her apartment and having to move back to her mother’s house had anything to do with her choices. I would also like to know if the school and staff response to Rose affected her parent involvement. This was the kindergarten staff who described their noninvolved parents as “poor parents” who were young, unmarried, sometimes co-habiting, who did not return written documentation and homework, and did not attend parent meetings and conferences. Rose was young, unmarried, had to move back to her mother’s house, and had a history of tardiness. Perhaps the staff assumed Rose to be someone who would not be involved and she accepted the role. The methodology for this study did not allow a return to the schools after the first visit, so these questions could not be answered here.

Tulip took her daughter’s entrance into kindergarten as a personal responsibility. She accepted her legal position and planned to fulfill each expectation the school placed on parents, but knew that her schedule would interfere. “But I’d like to go — when she attended (name of a program) I got to go to dinners and stuff and she really liked when I came to her school. So... evenings are better for me.” As backups, Tulip had her family members and MotherGoose. She tried to do everything herself, and even dropped out of college for a while in order to meet all of her new commitments due to her daughter’s schedule.

Iris took some responsibility for her daughter, but knew that her new baby

would limit how much she could do. "Yeah, all the teacher conferences, any field trips or anything like that that they need me to participate in—I'll try to do that also, any.... Oh, yes, we had homework yesterday." Iris knew she had help in the form of her mother and father, aunt, cousins, and MotherGoose. Iris had difficulty understanding all of the help that her daughter needed. She has had to rely on all of her available help in order to meet her daughter's needs.

Three of the four mothers accepted the role assigned to them by the school and societal expectations as the main contact and advocate for their child with the school. They registered their child, followed the guidelines of the school, provided time and resources when the school requested them, and even helped with homework. These three mothers reflect the support system and desire for education for their children described by Anderson (1988) and Walker (1996). One of the three became an employee of the school system in the school her child attends. One of the mothers refused to act in her son's behalf as an advocate and contact person. The grandmother assumed the role of taking care of the children. The three accepting mothers did not think of themselves as dominated by society, and I do not know if Rose was resisting (Giroux 1983) compliance with the expectations of the new role or just not responsible for some other reason.

2. What do they expect public school to do for the children? What do they believe attending school will provide immediately and in the future to benefit or harm the lives of their young?

Three of the four mothers accepted the societal definition and promise of acceptance and financial reward with a good education. They expected the school to give their children a good education and a promising future. They did

not admit to any fear of harm coming to their children due to school. Violet stated, "Well, he's a very intelligent child, not because he's my baby, but because he's very smart and I would like for him to graduate from high school and I would like for him to go to college, and I would like for him to decide what he wants to do more than what I want." She seemed to believe that success in school would allow her son to do anything he would like to do.

Rose did not answer these questions herself. She avoided all discussion of school for her child, and referred me to her mother as the knowledgeable person about her son's school experience. Terra repeatedly praised the school and stated her faith that her grandson would "...learn a lot." Rose's absence and lack of attention to her children and their education could seriously sabotage all of Terra's efforts to help her grandson. Terra is not the mother and does not have legal standing with the school. She is older and has dealt with school before with her daughters. Her cultural capital is probably better than Rose's due to her prior experience. Hopefully she can successfully represent the little boy and create inclusion for him.

Tulip was well traveled and realized her expectations for her children were inflated. "I know there's no gymnastics at school or anything—but I want to see what she wants to do." Iris had much the same reaction to the question, "I want her to be able to do whatever she wants to do— do whatever makes her happy." All four of the families expressed faith that a "good" education would lead to a financially successful and happy adulthood. Three of the four mothers spoke of doing what the child wants to do as an adult, and the road to the desire was education. All four of the families exhibited the belief about and desire for education that African Americans have historically demonstrated (Lightfoot 1978, Anderson 1988, Walker 1996).

3. What concerns and fears were felt by families as a first born child enters public school for the first time? Were those expectations realized in the family's thinking in the first semester of kindergarten?

Each of three mothers had fears that were specific to her child. Violet worried about her son's behavior, "Um-huh. That's my only worry—I know he's a little hyper and I'm just worried he can't sit. My three-year-old can sit longer than he does. He just gets a little hyper MaryPoppins says he can't sit still a lot." Tulip worried about her daughter's social development and hurt feelings. "I don't know, maybe like kids might pick on her or something and hurt her feelings cause she's very sensitive." Iris, like Violet, worried about her daughter's behavior for the teacher. "No, I'm excited because (child's name) is eager to learn. She wants to learn everything. She wants to know everything. I'm really excited, but just nervous because everybody's always babied her, you know, and I'm just nervous about how she's going to act." Neither Rose nor Terra voiced any worries or fears for Rose's son.

Violet's son and Tulip's daughter did not have any incidents with behavior or socially hurt feelings reported in the first semester of kindergarten. Both did well, found friends, fit in with their peer group, and had no reported acts of "bad" behavior or consequences. Their fears and worries were not realized in the first semester of kindergarten. Both mothers maintained a close relationship with the teacher and school.

Iris's daughter and Rose's son had numerous behavior incidents at school, and both had poor report cards and "bad" notes/calls from school. Iris was very upset and attempted to find the cause of the behavior and to rationalize and justify it. Iris did not want to "blame" or hold the little girl responsible for her own

behavior or her academic progress. Iris was much more willing to blame other children or herself than her daughter.

Terra reported many telephone calls and notes home with her grandson. She was very distressed and had been to school to have a conference about his office visits. Her distress was not expressed as a fear before, but was acknowledged as a worry after the problems began. Terra wanted her grandson to improve both his behavior and his academic performance. She was annoyed with Rose for not helping her solve her grandson's problems. She did not hold her grandson responsible. Perhaps all of the children had experienced similar problems at childcare or Head Start. I did not think to ask this question until much later in the study, after all of the data were gathered.

4. Do the families believe that they can make a positive or negative difference in the educational experience of their child by interacting with school personnel?

All of the participants, except Rose, voiced support for being involved with the children and the school. All believed that the more contacts they had and the better they monitored their child's progress, the better the child would do, in both academics and behavior. I am led to wonder what effect MaryPoppins, MotherGoose, childcare, Head Start, and television had on these beliefs.

I also ponder family structure concerning these choices. Does family involvement with and expectations for young parents have an effect? Would Violet have been part of my research, taken a job at her son's school, or been so wrapped up in her children without her parents, Patience, and the other family being so interested in her life? Would Iris have allowed me into her inner circle and to be her advisor if her mother or another family member had served in the role that I played? Would Tulip be independent and willing to take risks if she did

not know that her parents would stand behind her, and her grandmother will always love her? Would Rose be so willing to avoid involvement in her children's lives if her mother and sisters were not there to fill in for her? Does Rose focus more on her own life, or does she think that her mother can achieve more positive results with the school than can she? These questions will have to be addressed in other research projects.

5. Were the mothers' and families' definitions of parent involvement and their role in their children's education the same as the school's definitions?

In some respects the parents and schools initially agreed on the definition of parent involvement and in some respects they differed. The primary participants, except for Rose, desired to be involved in all activities at the school for the students when first interviewed in August. When asked, "What do you plan to do with your child and the school?" three of the mothers (Violet, Iris, and Tulip) responded much like Violet, "Yes. I always helped out at the daycare.... Any time I'm off I'm gonna go down there and volunteer -- stuff like that."

The differences occurred where the families' perception of helping and the school's perception of helping were not the same. Parents and grandparents are used to being in total control of the children. They are not accustomed to other adults taking charge of their children and telling the children and family members what to do or how to do something. School has an order and structure for the day that children and their family members are not accustomed to following. When parents come in to help, staff usually have a plan for what they are to do and how they are to do it. It may not always be in the area with their own child.

Daycare and Head Start, although they emulate public school, are not as structured. For instance, parents often allow children to run and scream inside of

buildings, and many visiting families make a great deal of noise in hallways. Violet and Spring were concerned that Violet's son would act this way. In daycare or Head Start, parents do not usually follow any rules because of the age of the children. In public school, the staff attempts to teach children to use quiet voices and to walk inside for the safety of everyone. If a kindergartner is in the school with a parent and runs or is loud, a staff person is likely to intervene and tell the child to stop and walk carefully and to use an "inside voice." Terra described her grandson's issues with loudness and running. Sometimes family members are offended that an adult would correct their child with them present. In addition, school personnel are irritated that parents would not control their children inside a building, forcing the staff to intervene.

Caregivers are also accustomed to "taking care" of children rather than allowing the children to struggle in the care taking of themselves. The struggle can appear to a caregiver that the child is not happy. This can create an uncomfortable situation for all adults present. Teachers have a plan for requiring children to care for themselves and perform learning activities. This is how children develop confidence, self esteem, and learn new behaviors. Parents are sometimes quick to rush in and take care of the children, even give them academic answers if they flounder. Caregivers are used to dependency and teachers are trained to expect children to develop independence. Caregivers often feel teachers are neglecting children's needs and teachers often feel having the caregiver present inhibits the student's learning. One example is if a kindergartner cannot snap and zip their pants or tie their shoes. At first, the teacher will show the child as the teacher snaps and zips or ties. Then, after two or so weeks, the teacher will have the student attempt to take care of the problem, and then help if the child is not successful. After two or so more weeks,

the teacher will allow the child to struggle for some time before helping, and finally the teacher will refuse to help and leave the child to solve the problem. Many parents and caregivers will also follow this procedure, but many are upset, particularly if the child expresses negative emotion or refusal.

When children must struggle to learn, it is not a comfortable position. They will exhibit signs of distress and discomfort. Teachers are trained to come to their rescue before frustration totally takes over, but the struggle must happen for learning to occur. Caregivers are accustomed to "caring for" children. They do not want children to ever be uncomfortable or in distress. That is their function in the society! This conflict is unbearable for them and they do not always understand the teacher's position. Teachers may ignore the caregivers help and talk to the child, or they might tell the caregiver to allow the child to take care of him/herself. They may also just stay silent and ignore the situation. This can create an uncomfortable situation for both adults and maybe the child.

These are just two examples of differences in the ways teachers and parents/caregivers expect to interact with children. Parent involvement activities at the school must be negotiated between the adults until an agreed upon definition is reached. Many times this agreement does not happen and the development of parent involvement is damaged. Iris and her daughter's teacher could not negotiate a definition of helping the child to achieve academically. Iris did not understand that she was cueing her daughter instead of the daughter remembering on her own. Cueing is repeating a word, phrase, or action that tells the person you are with how to respond. The person, child in this case, is watching for the cue and is not thinking through the skill. I figured out what Iris was doing by asking questions and role playing with her. First I played her daughter, and then Iris played her daughter. She cued me; I cued her; then I

showed her how to stop cueing. The teacher did not know Iris was cueing, how to find out and let Iris know that she was cueing, or how to help Iris to change her way of helping the little girl at home.

6. Do the families' definitions of parent involvement, expectations, and fears change through initial and first semester school contacts?

All of the families' definitions of parent involvement, their expectations for their kindergartner, and their concerns changed focus over the first semester. Violet became an employee of the school system and adopted the school's vision and focus for herself and her son. She is present to understand and be his advocate all of the time. Terra became worried about her grandson due to his mother's lack of involvement and his poor performance in both behavior and academics. She continued to try to do everything that the teacher asked. The notes and telephone calls have forced her into a more negative relationship with her grandchild and Rose, as well as with the school. Tulip dropped out of school to be available to her daughter and participate more in the kindergarten experience. She adopted a definition more like that of the school, and she no longer fears for her daughter. Iris had become more fearful and did not understand how her daughter could be having so much trouble. As the semester went on, Iris had to depend on other family members to help her meet the demands of her daughter's schedule. Her frustration at the situation was apparent from her language, her stress level, and her change in behavior.

A Summary of What I Have Learned

1) Family structure affects the school's perception of the students and parents. The school staff expect a nuclear family structure, and the law demands that legal guardians control all actions with any child. The parents in a nuclear

family are the designated legal guardians. Many African American families (and others) do not have a nuclear family structure (Billingsley 1974, Mullings 1997), often leaving family members other than the parents take responsibility for childcare (Collins 2000). Children are valued in African American families whether within a legal marriage or born to a single mother (Hill 1999, Sudarkasa 1996). All four of the families participating in my research had extended family structure. Mainstream, middle class values hold only legitimate offspring as valued. This is a major difference between the values of these Black families and school personnel. School personnel will often believe that the child has no family structure to support her/him and will lower their expectations for the student's academic success. This is detrimental for the student's learning. School staff need to maintain the same high expectations for all students.

2) Parent involvement in schools is defined differently by different segments of the society (Baker and Soden 1988). Schools expect parents to be involved by complying with all teacher and school requests and meetings and to be available and in control of their children all of the time. Black parents have traditionally taken a more passive role in parent involvement. They have provided for materials, and support, but have not come to school or helped with academics (Anderson 1988, Walker 1996, Spring 2000). Poor parents take an even more passive role. Three of the four mothers in my study wanted to do "everything;" however, only two were able to succeed. Violet and Tulip did indeed do "everything." Iris experienced a great deal of exclusion and confusion. Rose left parent involvement to her family, especially her mother.

Often school staff respond to family members differently than they would to parents. This stems directly from the White, middle class belief that parents should be the primary caregivers, or at least be the primary person in control of

their children's lives. If a parent is confronted about the behavior of a child, and the parent responds that they are not in control, then the staff are judgmental with the parent, and may make comments such as, "What will you do when she is 15, ten years from now?" If grandparents act in behalf of the student, often school staff will be kind and not completely reveal all of the student's needs. This value of protecting older persons who cannot control or correct the situation actually harms the student, since the behavior will not be addressed at home. In either situation, the relationship between the school and family is harmed and school involvement will decrease.

The school system needs to provide as much inservice for teachers on working with parents and other family members as it does for working with children. Teachers, particularly young teachers with little experience, are uncomfortable telling parents how to work with their own children. Parents, like most of us, are more comfortable following a guideline and knowing they are doing things "correctly." There are many tactics that ease the strain between the two adults, but if teachers are not familiar with the tactics, they cannot use them. Being familiar with the micro-cultures in the school and knowing insulting behaviors and statements are valuable information for teachers. Strategies for talking to a distressed parent are essential. The system and teachers must take the lead here; parents are not the experts. The system needs to develop a parent involvement program, train teachers in the tactics for complying with the program, and make sure parents know they are welcome to interact according to the program guidelines. Incorporated within this program should be demonstrations for parent when assisting with academics.

In addition to dealing with parents, school personnel need to understand the roles extended family may play in the life of the child. A parent could sign

legal forms listing the order for calling various family members or friends when there is a problem. Establishing a hierarchy and plan in writing ahead of time would alleviate many emergency issues.

3) African American families share Euro-Western values and desire for education for their children. All families in the research expressed a belief in the safety of their child, trust and support for the school and staff, and a desire for their children to achieve according to the standards of the school. Only Rose did not state these beliefs. Most working class parents realize that in order for their children to survive as adults, they must have at least a high school diploma. This is a White, middle class value that is shared by the Black, middle class, (and others). Public schools are the government's answer to the demand for education. Historically, public schools have not given every student the same opportunity of attaining some power and privilege in the form of publicly valued benefits. Unequally funded segregated schools, tracking of students, and testing for ranking are some of the practices that have led to unfair advantages for some students and disadvantages for others. Black and poor students are two of the disadvantaged groups within the society (Spring 2000, Urban and Wagoner 2000).

Currently, unlike Lareau and Horvat (1999), I do not see racism and racial tension in the public schools studied as in the past. This decline is probably affected by the increase in the numbers of non-English speaking, multiracial or multiethnic, and "undeserving poor" students and families. The "undeserving poor" is the largest of these three groups because it includes many of the members of the other two groups as well as many Black or other non-White families. All four of the families studied fell into the "undeserving poor," as do many of my own students. Some of the characteristics of these poor families

may include moving frequently, changing telephone companies/numbers frequently, being hard to locate, difficulty with transportation, etc. Lack of income or lack of sufficient income promotes all of these characteristics. The teachers at SuburbanWhite School described the poor as their largest group of non-involved parents. Single parents, women, and Black women are three of the poorest groups in the United States (Sudarkasa 1996 and 1999, Mullings 1997).

The Protestant work ethic promotes a characterization of this group as lazy, not willing to work, taking from those who do work, and not worthy of receiving help from society. The adults in poor families usually have difficulty making sufficient money, probably due to a personal lack of cultural capital and exclusion because of this lack. Children and families should not suffer or be penalized for being poor. School staff can consciously or unconsciously pass judgement on a student or family from this viewpoint. Teachers and other staff need to examine their motives for punitive or other negative actions toward any student or family. Understanding the characteristics of families in poverty and assisting them with issues is much more valuable than criticizing and penalizing them. Children who show force are often trying to be strong within the culture of poverty, and adults use emotion often in the culture of poverty. Sending children to a class in interpersonal relationships and actions, and helping the adults to calm down with care are much more valuable than suspensions and security personnel.

3) Families possess different amounts and forms of cultural capital. The amount of cultural capital a parent or family member can exhibit within the particular school will determine how well the student is received. Cultural capital is learned from the understandings developed while interacting with members of another culture. The more interactions a person has determines the number of

understandings one develops, and the more understandings one has, the more cultural capital one possesses. However, knowing when that understanding is useful (when to exhibit it) is as important as possessing it (Bourdieu 1984, Lareau and Horvat 1999). Cultural capital in public schools can be defined as knowledge of mainstream, middle class values and practices. Depending on the cultural make-up of the staff, a school might require more or less cultural capital. This automatically places all of the families in my study at a disadvantage, but some are less disadvantaged than others are. Each participant in my study exhibited different understandings and ability to use those understandings.

Violet, Spring, and Tulip each had a great deal of cultural capital in their respective public schools. Violet and Spring were able to “choose” a school where the microcultures of the staff most matched their microculture. They understood and accepted the expectations of the public schools, and were literate and able to produce according to the demands of the school. When they had questions, they were able to find someone to answer those questions. Being part of my study was one of those relationships, as well as Violet finding a job at the school her son attended.

Tulip acquired her cultural capital while traveling with her parents who were in the military. She has lived in White, middle class culture while on military installations and in college, has lived in other cultural settings like Japan, and has lived in her own Black microcultural setting with her grandmother. By encountering the different expectations and learning how to explore these expectations in each culture, she was able to make her actions fit the situation. She was literate and had a great command of written language. She experienced inclusion in every school situation, except with the parent group at DiverseCity School. If Tulip had wanted to fit in the parent group, she would

have returned to a meeting or called someone in the group and worked to be accepted as a part of the group. She did not see any advantage to being part of this group. Her perception was that the group did not have power within the school which Tulip and her daughter needed to achieve inclusion; Tulip probably had more cultural inclusion than did the parents in this group.

Iris, on the other hand, had much less cultural capital than Tulip, and would have benefited from being part of the parent group or being Tulip's friend. Iris appeared to rely on her microcultural view and values, and did not exhibit any understanding of the mainstream view of school and parent involvement. She needed my input to explain the functioning of the school, and due to her limited literacy and unfamiliarity with school jargon, she needed me to explain several communications from the school including the wording on the report card. Her school experience had been with mostly African American teachers and peers, and she had limited exposure to mainstream values. When Iris asked her own mother about helping with homework, she was told that she did not receive any help with her homework. She questioned why her daughter needed help. Iris needed a "translator" to achieve the inclusion that she desired.

Rose and Terra exhibited almost no cultural capital in their relationships with the school. Rose did not voice or seem to desire inclusion for herself or her son. She appeared content with her life in her microculture. Terra constantly voiced her desire for inclusion for her grandson. She attempted to act in his favor for the absent Rose, and she seemed to understand that Rose's absence placed her children at a disadvantage, but she did not appear to know how to or be able to restore any advantage for him.

5) Euro-Western societal expectations affect every person living within

the society. That includes persons living according to their microcultural values and beliefs. Black families have differing family structures and values surrounding family and the birth of children and critical views from those who place a legal marriage constraint on reproduction make this population a "hidden population" (Singer 1999, Katz 1983, Schensul, et al 1999, Atkinson and Flint 2001).

I had a great deal of trouble finding and retaining research participants. Violet told the story of being "accused" of teenage pregnancy by hospital staff at her son's birth. The misunderstanding of the nurse and her demands that Spring sign for Violet's medical care precipitated a negative response from Violet, Spring, and other family members. The family understood the negative mainstream opinion of young, unmarried mothers, and they also accepted and supported Violet's pregnancy and choice to become a mother.

Violet called their experience a "hurtful thing". This misunderstanding of different family structures and negative judgement by White, middle class society certainly offends Black families. When this offense happens in schools it harms parental involvement of young, Black parents. No young parent wants "a hurtful thing" to happen to them or their child. If they fear a situation, they may avoid any possible chance of contact. Family structures and sexual moral values have changed a great deal. School employees need to be sure they are respectful of the values and rights of the families of their students, and not judging them.

6) I cannot achieve parent involvement with a parent who does not want to be involved. Rose is the perfect example. She refused to be involved with her son and his kindergarten experience in any way. Terra, MaryPoppins, Stone, and her other family could not convince her. If the people she loves and lives with could not persuade her, the researcher or teacher is not going to make a

difference. This situation may indicate personal reasons for not being an involved parent.

Suggestions for Researchers

Avoid My Errors

I encountered several problems with my original research design. These issues plagued my research until the final draft was accepted by my dissertation committee. The numerous drafts resulted because of changes in the structure of the identification of primary participants. Originally, I wanted to tell the stories from the interviews and words of the young parents. I wanted these parents to be much younger than the parent participants that I found. Final identification of the primary participants was determined by (1) the available parent and family participants, and (2) the amount of data each participant contributed.

Two faulty assumptions resulted in the methodological difficulties encountered. My first faulty assumption was that the Head Start Program would allow me access to the pool of possible participants available. I knew as a teacher that the parents that I desired would have their children in Head Start. In addition, I knew that coming through the Head Start Program, which promotes parent involvement, there would be extra incentive to be a part of the research. This knowledge originated from awareness of the power of educational institutions within the society. I knew that next to public school and college, Head Start would be able to give me the most credibility, and put the most pressure on the mothers to talk to me. When Head Start denied me access to this pool of possible participants, the identification of participants and participant location sites became an issue.

My second faulty assumption was that the parents would choose to talk to

me. I knew that as a teacher I could not achieve a relationship with the parents that I wanted. I even wrote about some of my failures with Bertha and the Cousins. The faulty assumption was that since I was not connected to the school, the parents would not resist giving me information. I did not recognize these parents as a hidden population, although I described them from the beginning as hard-to-reach. This is where my appearance and position are mismatched with my ethnicity and working class background. It did not occur to me that young, unmarried mothers might be embarrassed or uncomfortable discussing their situation. I knew about the differences in Black family structure and the traditional nuclear family structure. I held no judgements about premarital sex or childbirth; however, how would it be possible to relate this information to prospective participants without offending them?

Another decision in the methodology was made from the perspective of my blue-collar upbringing. The belief that persons who are not from the working class cannot understand the language and reasoning of working class individuals affected my choice of the members of the question review group. I believed that a review group from the university would over analyze the wording of the questions and lead to statements that my participants would not understand. I feared a difference in verbal contextual meaning between educated scholars and my desired participants. For this reason, I chose the group that reviewed the questions from young people that I knew outside of the academic community who more closely matched my desired participants. This choice reflects my personal beliefs that poor, uneducated persons can contribute to many educational endeavors in many different ways. The validity of this reasoning remains neither proven nor unproven. My participants understood the questions, and most of the research questions were addressed adequately. The importance

of the reasoning is in the meaning for the reader when analyzing my perspective and findings from the research.

I always intended to describe and discuss the family structure and the support system of the young parents. This structure is instrumental in assisting young parents concerning their children by providing other family members to act in place of the parent. I resisted focusing on the valuable data that I was gathering because it was coming from members of the family other than the mother participants. When I finally recognized the answers were in the data (from the comments of a committee member) I felt very foolish and shortsighted. If as an experienced, multicultural teacher and researcher I could not let go of my own ideas formed within mainstream culture, I could not expect other teachers to understand the issues that I was researching.

My advice to other researchers and myself is to stop and discuss your data with another researcher at specific intervals during the data gathering. I had a very busy schedule and did not visit my committee chair often enough. I had limited access to other researchers due to MY schedule, and could not find the time to search out the feed back that I desperately needed. I had resources on line from other universities (e-mail groups) that I could have asked for help, but I did not think of them as a resource until recently. I hope to continue my parent involvement and other research in the future without repeating these mistakes. I am sure that I will make other errors!

Suggested Future Research Questions

1) I did not reach the population that I originally sought. The four families I researched gave wonderful data, but the mothers were not as young as I wanted. I suggest that a study beginning earlier, perhaps in childcare or daycare

one year before the children are to enter kindergarten, would allow the development of a relationship before the student is to enter kindergarten. This would possibly get the answers and avoid the problems that I encountered with time and participants not continuing. The daycare data would answer the questions about behavior and involvement before kindergarten that is missing from this study.

2) Does family involvement with and expectations for young parents have an effect on young parents? I realize that Rose was the most "unsuccessful" parent in my study according to Euro-Western and school standards. At least the other three mothers were trying to be involved parents. Does the family relationship between the parents and grandparents have an effect on the parent involvement actions of the mother and/or father? Additional research could answer these questions.

3) I did not address the "factors affecting parental involvement" concerning teacher attributes. Since I did not intend to meet any teachers, I could not judge whether these would have an effect on the parents in the study. Those factors may have contributed to issues in the study and to issues of talking to me. These attributes need further study.

Suggestions for Kindergarten or Other Teachers

*What can schools and teachers do
to improve the school climate for poor Black parents/families?*

Explaining my focus on parents when the literature and research were insisting that family structure was more important has been difficult to explain to readers and committee members. This focus remained because I was interested in the intersection between young parents and the law holding them responsible

for the care of their children. The research only glimpsed this interest in answering the research questions. Schools hold a great deal of power in society. Compulsory school laws, attendance laws, and societal support combine to create a great deal of institutional power. Representing a school as a staff person creates a dominant position for an individual, and the higher the position the more power the individual holds. In order to acquire a job in a school, an individual must exhibit White, middle class values and norms, and prove successful within the educational system and the society. I live these values and norms, and teach them every day. The laws governing childcare, schools, and everything the young parents and I do are based on White, middle class values and norms.

Do the family members in my study believe EVERY value and support every norm? Obviously not, nor do I; however, having roots in the non-White, working class gives us an entirely different view of this power. We know this power first hand, and we know what it means not to be able to use any of the power. We have family members and friends who lack education, and we do not wish to live without resources, as they must. We do not want to be forced into breaking the law in order to survive in this society as we know can and does happen, and we do not want our children exposed to the dangerous world of criminal activity in order to survive. My experience at Iris's apartment is one example of criminal activity familiar in today's society. The buying and selling of illegal drugs are common to young, poor individuals. Society, government, law enforcement, and schools oppose this activity, yet it continues.

Non-White, working class views are practical views. How can we use these mainstream values and norms to protect or to gain advantage for ourselves and our children? For me, as a teacher, my focus is how do I get my students

and their parents to understand how to make this environment work for them? What tools can I give them to get them out of poverty and keep them out of danger? I have been in the classroom since I was 5-years-old and entered kindergarten. I know what is expected of children, parents, and teachers; however all of this learned knowledge was processed from my own multiethnic position. I have simply accepted the disadvantage of my students and tried to help them change to meet the expectations. The idea of making the school a more comfortable place for them as they learn was not a priority.

The power of the public school is frightening to poor parents. If they violate any of the laws or procedures, they can experience a number of negative consequences. They can be ordered to court, investigated by government agencies, or lose their children. This can be a frightening or angering position. Events can be misunderstood and children can report untrue or a child's version of family interactions. Some examples of requirements and consequences for those not meeting the expectations of this power are:

- If the child misses more than five days per semester, a note must come from the doctor for any absence. A child with a slight cold, one-day stomach virus, etc. must go to the doctor. If the parent cannot get the child to a doctor for any reason, they can be cited to court. If the parent takes the child to a doctor it can cost a great deal of money for losing work, medical fees, or both.
- If the child is injured and goes to school with physical marks or makes statements that a staff member thinks reflects danger from neglect or abuse, the school is responsible for reporting to government agencies for investigation. The parent will become

suspect, their family privacy will be invaded, and they could lose the child.

- If the child does not meet the dress code requirements they can be sent home until they are redressed appropriately. This may sound simple, but when you depend on hand-me-downs and second hand clothes, it is hard to replace outgrown and damaged clothes and shoes. Clothes always appear to be too small and exposing midriffs and ankles, or too big and sagging to show underwear. Either can cause problems in school. Losing shoe strings, no clean socks, or misplaced coats can all lead to school intervention. If the child misses school the parent can be cited for attendance. If the problem continues the parent will be investigated for neglect.
- All documents are required to be signed, and all notes for any changes in the child's transportation to and from school, notes about absences, or other necessary child responsibility changes must be provided in writing. If a parent is not literate, is not literate in English, the child loses a sent form, the parent cannot locate any paper or a pen/pencil, or any other difficulty arises, the parent is held responsible. A telephone call will not be enough. This is a legal requirement to protect all involved parties, but can lead to a great deal of difficulty for poor parents. The parent could be reported for neglect , investigated, or worse.

I reflect a great deal every school year about the expectations and desires parents have for their children—and for me as the teacher. I have learned a

great deal from my participants about supporting parents in their new role. I know that reading the words does not mean understanding. One can read the words and even have an idea of the meaning of each word, but understanding the context of any written work is dependent on the person's ability to understand the words in the cultural context in which they were written. I intend to request a conference very early in the year with each parent, even if the student is doing well. This will allow a relationship to begin to develop.

I currently offer home visits. I will increase my availability to include weekends by appointment or home visit. I will cut back on notes that go home as much as I can. I am redoing all of my correspondence home with words and clipart or pictures, so that the graphics can help parents who do not read (or who do not understand school jargon) to understand the intent of the correspondence. We must be "translators" for the parents and families, especially for poor and non-White parents, as well as for the children.

I realize that some parents, like Rose, will never take part in their child's schooling. If Rose's family and MaryPoppins could not convince her how important she was to her son, how can I as a teacher? I will invite and be pleasant in all contacts with these parents. I will cooperate with the family members to the extent that the law will allow, and support the student and family as well as I can. The school and teacher cannot make up for an absent parent, but we can help the student and caregivers as much as possible and continue to invite the parent and family. Frequent telephone calls and drop-in home visits to give information or explanations can be helpful for building relationships between the teacher and family. Good advice is to report twice as many positive events as negative events so the family members perceive the teacher as a friend, not an authority.

I hope to found a parent-mentoring program. When we have English Language Learners and students new to our school, we recruit student volunteers to be their peer mentor. The mentor then guides and explains the rules and practices to the mentored student. In this way, there is a period of learning and a new friend. If we recruited parents to be mentors to new families to the school, there would be someone to call to ask questions and a friend with which to attend meetings and school functions. Perhaps the experience as a new school parent would be more pleasant and an easier transition.

In school, we (teachers and staff) are responsible for teaching and promoting White, middle class values. This leads us to judge and criticize the parents and family members from that perspective. We cannot ignore student and parent behavior that places the family in jeopardy of remaining outside of the power structure, but we must allow the families the freedom to be themselves. Delpit (1995) maintains that if we act as if power does not exist we maintain the status quo, and that we should teach the elements of the structure of the power. That does not mean that we believe that the power structure is "better," everyone should learn the codes, and we should retain the status quo. It does mean that we prefer to be honest and state that without the "keys" one cannot open any door of opportunity. I am no less Native or White than the family that I was born into, but I have attained power from learning to use language, literacy, and writing to my "advantage."

We need to stop and take account of the age, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and academic level of both our students and their parents. If we have expectations that parents cannot meet and we do not help them locate the "keys" they need to meet those expectations, we are all doomed from the beginning. If the parent is not literate, or does not have understanding of school

jargon, they cannot be expected to respond the same way as a parent who can understand. Judgmental opinions can only harm the family to school relationship, harming the learning of the student. We must remain respectful, professional, and pleasant in all contacts with families. We must teach the family members how schools operate as well as teach the children. We must help to find the answers to the student's difficulties with the family members, rather than just telling them what the difficulties are and leaving them without answers. We can arm ourselves with research in teaching the poor, Black, or non-English speakers. We are the advocates for our students and their families, and we must continue to request that our school systems supply all teaching/learning needs for our students and training for us that is necessary. We, the staff in the schools, must struggle to bridge the gap between our students' learning, their parents and families, and the school.

Conclusion

Public schools in the United States were founded on the principles of democracy, justice, and equal opportunity. As I stated in Chapter 1, "Justice, for me, is the existence of or struggle for the ideal state where all people have an "equal opportunity to" and the "fair distribution of" the elements of life, liberty, and happiness. Public schools in the U.S. are promoted as the social equalizer providing an opportunity for upward mobility within the social structure." That being said, we acknowledge that the society and the public schools are governed by the values and norms of the EuroWestern, White, middle class. The laws and regulations controlling the lives and public school experiences of poor families are decided according to these values. Teachers and other staff are hired according to these values. Passing these values onto the young is a mandate

and primary focus of the schools in the society. In public spaces, the only way to coexist is to abide by agreed upon behaviors and possess certain knowledge and understandings. For everyone in the U.S. these EuroWestern, White, middle class values govern our public space.

Public schools are public spaces. However, justice and equal opportunity demand that the process of teaching these values be respectful of the student's home culture. Each student has a home culture, and few home cultures are strictly based on the mainstream values. The more unlike mainstream culture a student's home culture is indicates how comfortable the school environment will be for the entire family. Feeling safe and a part of your surroundings is crucial for a learning environment, and for students, parental comfort often transfers to student cooperation. For these reasons, teachers and school staff, administrators, state and federal education departments, and legislators and political leaders at every level, should be sensitive and listening to the poor in our country. If we really intend to change or allow them to change their social position from "undeserving poor" to productive citizen, then we must pay attention to their perceived needs and meet those needs, as we are able.

I have discovered areas in need of changes in my teaching and researching career. These areas unfairly disadvantage poor families and students in the school setting. I do not claim that all of these areas apply to all of the "undeserving poor," but I do contend that we should pay attention that we do not disadvantage any family with these or in other areas. One area is in the new Temporary Assistance for Needy Families regulations. One example is that single mothers are forced to go back to school or/and to work within certain timelines, but the availability of training and jobs is not addressed. If we require people to make changes, then we should provide a means for them to be able to

comply. Passing a law and cutting off basic needs such as housing and food appears inhumane to me. If you are going to require training, why not have vocational opportunities available. Getting a Graduate Equivalency Diploma is often a prerequisite and is important, but will not feed those children. If we need to train these young women for employment, let us research and provide training that will benefit the families and the society.

In public housing, many of the regulations violate the values of the poor families living there, causing a fracture in the structure of childcare and other options. As I demonstrated in Chapter 1, most family structures in the U.S. do not follow the nuclear family structure. Many poor families reside in larger groups in order to conserve money and pool services, such as childcare. Many Black families may have a matrifocal structure. I have four generations and seven members in my own house. If I lived in public housing, I could not have my family live with me. The regulations determine that extended family and non-family members cannot reside in the apartments. Perhaps each case should be determined individually, rather than blanket regulations. We do not want to have children on the street because their cousins had to stay with them while they got their own apartment. We also do not want to have public housing contribute to illegal activity or undermining the intent of that housing. This is only one example.

When we do provide services to the poor, we do not treat them with respect. They must wait in long lines for basic needs such as food cards and medical care. We do not protect their time or consider their possible transportation difficulties. We do not consider their school or job times. They are commanded to appear to be sure that they are worthy to continue receiving help. I am sure that checking is a good idea, but what about the workers going to the

recipients? A stationary office for applying for the service is a great idea, but after one is approved, a worker could go to the recipient. In fact, that is one job that some single mothers could be trained to do!

Public schools follow these procedures in doling out services to the poor. Lisa Delpit (1995, 167) says, "The clash between school culture and home culture is actualized in at least two ways. ...teachers can easily misread students' aptitudes, intent, or abilities as a result of the difference in styles of language use and interactional patterns. ...teachers may utilize styles of instruction and/or discipline that are at odds with community norms." I maintain that schools, staff, and teachers clash with parents/families in the same and other ways. The expectations often violate the home culture, and result in more difficulties for the parents and families. If we examine each of the expectations discovered by my research, some light may be shed on this problem.

1. Knowing the expectations of American, Euro-Western culture, including knowing and abiding by the law, school system and school rules and policies, and the teacher's classroom policy.

Most poor people are aware of the general laws governing the country, state, county, and city. Exceptions may be immigrants, but most know the law. The school law, school system, school, and the teacher's classroom rules and policies are new to new parents and sometimes to older parents. Most teachers and school staff are patient at first with parents and children who violate one of these expectations. If a rule or policy is a problem for a family and is violated many times, the families' reception at the school may become cool. Mainstream values demand correction of violations immediately or at least within two or three violations.

One example of a clash of family culture and mainstream culture is attendance and punctuality. If the family is frequently absent or tardy (sometimes both), the school staff becomes agitated with the parent/s. The social worker will be called to intervene, and eventually the parent will be cited to court. This can be and usually is viewed negatively by everyone. In defense of the school, it is very difficult to begin classes and have children entering late and losing a great deal of learning. Another example of clash is dress codes. Many times poor families depend on "hand-me-downs" and other free clothing. Sometimes young parents will unknowingly buy their children clothes that violate the dress code. In addition, children grow quickly, and sometimes the outgrown clothing or the replacement clothing can violate the dress code by exposing body parts. When the school staff enforces the dress code (usually adopted by the school board) the families are often offended.

2. Accepting the primary role in caring for their children and the responsibility for providing for all of the needs of the child

As I have demonstrated with the Cousins and Rose, many times poor families must depend on a great deal of help with childcare. Transportation and supervision are not always done by the parent/s due to work, school, and other demands on their time, or the unavailability of funds. If you live a distance from the school and the school does not provide transportation for the children, how do you get them to and from school? Who will get you to the conferences or meetings at the school? Schools and systems could certainly address these problems in a humane way. Adding buses when kindergarten is dismissed would help a great deal. Providing space within the buildings for after school care aids families. Many times the problems are addressed, as in the childcare credits provided to poor mothers, but others are not addressed, as in attending

conferences and meetings. The school staff are placed in a position of childcare or finding transportation for the children or parents, and getting it approved by the family. This creates hardship on the staff and on the families, sometimes resulting in conflict between the two. In this time of cutbacks, some areas need to be expanded.

Another result of the parent being absent is the legal aspect. If a legal parent/guardian is not present, no special services or other legal documents can be signed. Terra cannot sign any legal documents for her grandson in Rose's absence; just as Maurice's aunt could not sign for him to get medical care in his mother's absence. This situation needs to be addressed by the law and public policy for the schools. The children need to be protected and provided for in spite of the parents' availability. Perhaps grandparents or someone else could be protected from prosecution for acting in the child's behalf when the legal parent or guardian is absent. In many instances needed services, such as hearing or vision testing is not provided because of the inability of the school to get legal signed documentation. These instances need to be addressed individually, and dealt with in the best interest of the student.

3. Trust the teacher to care for the child and to teach everything the child is supposed to learn

4. Trust, defer to, and accept all school staff decisions

These two expectations are related, and are related to number two above, although they are different. In my study, all of the families did trust the school, teacher, and staff. In fact, Iris trusted them so much that she was shaken by the teacher's inability to give her an answer to her child's academic difficulties. I find most poor parents, especially poor Black parents, trust school personnel to care for the child. Problems occur when the law or system does not give us

permission to act for the parent in the child's behalf, or teachers/staff do not have the answer to a problem. The parent trusts school personnel to do all of the things family members and childcare representatives have done, and do it with expert knowledge. If the school/staff is not allowed to follow through or does not have the answer, the parent is confused and does not understand the inability to act. If the child is harmed or perceived as harmed, the parent becomes angry and conflict results. This conflict can result in mistrust, such as Bertha's grandmother exhibited. These conflicts come from misunderstanding between families and schools. The misunderstanding and possibly the policies must be addressed.

5. Literacy in English in spoken and written forms

We all know that non-English speakers have trouble with communication and forms, so we usually provide help for them in schools. What we do not address is the number of poor parents who have low literacy skills. They may or may not understand the context of a word in the school setting. They may or may not be able to understand written communication, or to communicate with writing. When we provide meetings for explanations, they may be embarrassed to admit that they need help from us, especially in the presence of other parents. We need to be careful in our planning of registration and other meetings that we allow for privacy in the completion of paperwork or requests for explanations. We also need to be careful that we do not take literacy for granted. Among young, poor parents, literacy is questionable. Conferences are a necessity between teachers and parents! If you go to their homes, the comfort may allow the information exchange that is needed. Remember, when Violet and Spring had a choice of higher test scores farther from Violet's home and lower test

scores closer to her home, they chose close to home in spite of the test scores. I believe this to be a choice of cultural comfort for the family and the child.

6. Give as much time as the school requests

This expectation is a problem for all modern parents. Most parents work or attend school, and have other demands on their time. The poor may have transportation issues, younger children, night shifts, or multiple jobs. We have to help them address their problems if we are to help the families. We also have to remember that family culture may define parent involvement differently from mainstream culture, so we must work with the family to provide the level of contact best benefiting the student. Perhaps we should change our definition and expectation for parent involvement time. Parents in the school should have input into the development of a parent involvement program, helping to set expectations for contributions from all of the parents. Perhaps we could have groups of families living close to each other grouped for passing information so that only one in four could attend meetings and pass along to the other three families. In this way, the families are invested in the program and the mainstream expectations are voluntarily shared, accepted, or made tolerable for the families in the school. In the same way, schools should have teachers grouped to be able to represent their group. Each grade level, section of a building, or department could have someone available to speak to any family member needing assistance. In that way, a teacher would always be available to any family during their accessible time.

One current issue not discussed in the research data are the Elementary and Secondary Education Act; "No Child Left Behind," law. My area of focus is elementary school, where staff and children are being held to a time table for making up for differences in the children. This law does not take into

consideration that within each grade level children can be a year older or younger than others in the grade. In addition, some students' disadvantage of being unfamiliar with mainstream values and their right to be an individual are not respected by this law. Two groups of students, poor and non-White, often do not share many mainstream values and practices, and have difficulty "catching up." The mainstream values must be taught, accepted, and used in order to continue the student's education. Sometimes no matter how hard school staff struggle to understand home culture and help the family to understand mainstream culture, the family and/or child are unable to or will not accept the knowledge and skills taught. When this occurs, there seems to be no alternative to allowing the child and family to fail. The failure may or may not continue past the level where it begins, but the school and staff are not in control of the situation. Legislators, laws, school boards, school administrators, adopted curriculum, the parents, and the children all have more control over the actions of the school staff than do the teachers and staff members themselves.

One of the reactions of school staff to this law is very detrimental to poor students. No one wants to teach poor, non-White, or non-English speaking students if the teachers are to be penalized according to standardized test scores of the students. In spite of the caring and desire to help the children and families that the staff possesses, the fear of professional failure outweighs the desire to help. Dread of criticism leading to a loss of self-esteem, confidence, and possibly one's teaching job are not worth the risk of teaching in an urban or rural poor school. This situation was encountered in this study at OurChoiceUrban School. The teachers were questioning themselves and their practice when the state put the school on a failure list. In all honesty, I must admit that I am considering leaving working in urban schools after fifteen years of experience

and research on helping poor and/or non-White families. I desired this Ph.D. degree to help me learn how to help these students and their families. In light of the ESEA law, I may be forced to give up my goals. I have my family to support and I work long hours as well as put a considerable amount of my own money into my job. With the federal government blaming teachers and staff for undeserved perceived failures with parents and children that we so desperately work to help based on one yearly test, I cannot afford to sacrifice my income and personal life while jeopardizing my reputation as an educator. This law forces teachers to risk the loss of their career because of its unrealistic timelines for non-mainstream culture groups and others. The goals of the legislation are wonderful, but unrealistic. If all citizens were identical, we would not need laws to protect various groups. The "No Child Left Behind" law in its current form will negatively and permanently affect public education in the U.S. The drafters of this law left no room for individuality among children, demonstrating the government's lack of understanding, respect, and caring for many of its citizens.

I cannot stress enough the feeling of powerlessness felt by some poor family members when entering some public school buildings. Families accept compulsory school laws and enroll their children, even if they are not comfortable with school. If the parent has poor or no literacy skills, the feeling is intensified. For each area where a poor parent perceives they are inadequate by academic and social standards, the lack of power increases. This is the point where racial tension can amplify the powerlessness. This feeling of powerlessness can result in withdrawal from the unpleasant situation and resentment of the loss of the child to the system. When this withdrawal is perceived in students it is called resistance, so I will use the term for parents as well. If schools show respect to resistant parents, asking their opinion about involvement and other issues,

helping to understand and maneuver paper work and regulations, and involving them in the working of the school, some of the powerlessness is diminished, taking with it some of the resistance. When parents are less resistant, their children are less resistant. Two of my participants, Violet and Tulip, were very comfortable with the school their child attended. Iris began comfortable, but began to feel helpless and lost as her daughter experienced problems. Rose withdrew from her son's school for reasons not known to us, and Terra felt he was lost to the system. She did not know how to help him.

School policies and laws concerning the poor need to be based on research involving the poor as informants. Researchers should take the opinions of the poor seriously, and be sure to report the concerns and needs of the poor from their perspective as well as the researchers' perspective. When considering the passage of legislation or current laws, legislators and courts should consider research or fund studies for answers before deciding on laws or policy. When social workers are dealing with the poor, they need to be respectful and ask about issues as well as relate how the system works. When schools plan and deal with poor parents, they should be treated with respect and their input should be considered in decisions. Knowledge of school procedures and understanding of the reasons for laws should be explained and input from poor parents should be gathered on these issues. Poor parents should be welcomed into each school. If we truly want to change the face of poverty in this country, we must recruit poor families into the re-sculpting.

As I work with families in poverty, I will continue to work toward many of these suggestions in my own class and the urban schools. I will certainly share my research with my teacher education students and fellow teachers. I truly want to continue to teach the children who really need teachers: the poor, the

non-mainstream, the non-English speakers, etc. I will contact legislators and those in charge to help them to understand the powerless position of the parents and children. I will work with my colleagues to discover ways of assisting the students and their parents with learning. With our hard work perhaps someday, all of our "public schools" will be democratic, a fair and just, "welcoming place" for all students and their parents, even the "undeserving poor." Until then, we must all work in the struggle for equal educational opportunities for everyone.

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APPENDICES

Judith C. Hiscock
Graduate Student
The University of Tennessee

c/o Barbara J. Thayer-Bacon, Ph.D.
1914 Andy Holt Avenue, HPER 335
Knoxville, TN 37996-2700

U. T. Phone 865-974-9505
Email jhiscock@utk.edu

Date

"Name," Head Start Director (Preschool Director)
Street Address
City, State Zip

Dear "Name,"

As a graduate student in education at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, I am currently in the planning stage of a dissertation researching parental decisions to become or not become involved with their kindergarten child's school. My focus is on urban schools, and I hope to locate my parent participants from local preschool programs. After locating willing research participants who have a child entering kindergarten in the Fall of 2002, I plan to visit the elementary school(s) that the children will enter in order to write a description for contextual understanding. I will interview each parent this Spring, again in early September, and have a group interview in early December. None of the interviews will take place on preschool property. The research will explore which school practices (notes home, School to Parent programs, teacher conferences, etc.) have made a positive impact on the parents toward being involved with the school and their child, and which practices have not promoted parent involvement.

I will visit preschool centers, which serve students residing in public housing, since one of the characteristics of the research participants is to reside in public housing. I will not contact any preschool personnel after the participants are located, and no interviews will take place on preschool property. This research does not involve any students directly. All data will come from the participant search at the preschool centers, the one-school(s) visit, participant interviews, and the school documents sent home with the students. I am attempting to construct the experience from the parent's perspective, and will keep the identity of my participants, the preschool centers, and the schools confidential.

I need your permission to visit in your preschool program in order to ask for permission to conduct the research from The University of Tennessee IRB Committee. After receiving permission from you, ? Schools, and the committee, I will contact your site directors and work toward locating the participants.

I appreciate any assistance you can give me with this research project. I have included a copy of my proposal Abstract. I will be happy to send you a copy of the chapter on findings at the conclusion of the study.

Sincerely,

Judy Hiscock

Judith C. Hiscock
Graduate Student
The University of Tennessee

c/o Barbara J. Thayer-Bacon, Ph.D.
1914 Andy Holt Avenue, HPER 335
Knoxville, TN 37996-2700

U. T. Phone 865-974-9505
Email jhiscock@utk.edu

Date

"Name," Preschool Site Director
Street Address
City, State Zip

Dear "Name,"

As a graduate student in education at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, I am currently in the planning stage of a dissertation researching parental decisions to become or not become involved with their kindergarten child's school. My focus is on urban schools, and I hope to locate my parent participants from local preschool programs. After locating willing research participants who have a child entering kindergarten in the Fall of 2002, I plan to visit the elementary school(s) that the children will enter in order to write a description for contextual understanding. I will interview each parent this Spring, again in early September, and have a group interview in early December. None of the interviews will take place on preschool property. The research will explore which school practices (notes home, School to Parent programs, teacher conferences, etc.) have made a positive impact on the parents toward being involved with the school and their child, and which practices have not promoted parent involvement.

I have permission from "Name", your director of preschool to contact you for permission to come to your program in search of research participants. I need your assistance in finding parents meeting the research participants description. I have included a description of potential research participants so that you can check to see if you have any parents fitting the research participant criteria.

I appreciate any assistance you can give me with this research project. Please feel free to contact me if you need further clarification or information. I will contact you by telephone next week to arrange a visit.

Sincerely,

Judy Hiscock

Judith C. Hiscock
Graduate Student
The University of Tennessee

c/o Barbara J. Thayer-Bacon, Ph.D.
1914 Andy Holt Avenue, HPER 335
Knoxville, TN 37996-2700

U. T. Phone 865-974-9505
Email jhiscock@utk.edu

Description of Desired Research Participants:

- 1. Parent whose first child is in preschool**
- 2. Parent's first child in preschool
will enter public school kindergarten in August, 2002.**
- 3. Parent is African American (Black)**
- 4. The family resides in Public Housing
or receives other public assistance**
- 5. Parent is age 23 or younger**

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U. T. Phone 865-974-9505
Email jhiscock@utk.edu

Date

"Name", Superintendent or Designee
"Name" School System
Street Address
City, State Zip

Dear "Name,"

As a graduate student in education at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, I am currently in the planning stage of a dissertation researching parental decisions to become or not become involved with their kindergarten child's school. My focus is on urban schools, and I hope to locate my parent participants from local preschool programs. After locating willing research participants who have a child entering kindergarten in the Fall of 2002, I plan to visit the elementary school(s) that the children will enter in order to write a description for contextual understanding. I will interview each parent this Spring, again in early September, and have a group interview in early December. None of the interviews will take place on school property. The research will explore which school practices (notes home, School to Parent programs, teacher conferences, etc.) have made a positive impact on the parents toward being involved with the school and their child, and which practices have not promoted parent involvement.

I will visit each school only once in late May or early August in order to see the facilities and ask about the school's planned parent involvement activities for new kindergarten parents. I will not contact school employees, teachers, or other school personnel after these visits. This research does not involve any students directly. All data will come from the one school(s) visit, participant interviews, and the documents sent home with the students. I am attempting to construct the experience from the parent's perspective, and will keep the identity of my participants and the schools confidential.

I need your permission to visit in "Name" Schools in order to ask for permission to conduct the research from The University of Tennessee IRB Committee. After receiving permission from you, preschool, and the committee, I will locate the participants. Only then will I be able to identify which schools and ask permission from the principals at those schools.

I appreciate any assistance you can give me with this research project. I have included a copy of my proposal Abstract. I will be happy to send you a copy of the chapter on findings at the conclusion of the study.

Sincerely,

Judy Hiscock

Judith C. Hiscock
Graduate Student
The University of Tennessee

c/o Barbara J. Thayer-Bacon, Ph.D.
1914 Andy Holt Avenue, HPER 335
Knoxville, TN 37996-2700

U. T. Phone 865-974-9505
Email jhiscock@utk.edu

Date

"Name", Principal
"Name" Elementary School
Street Address
City, State Zip

Dear "Name,"

As a graduate student in education at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, I am currently in the planning stage of a dissertation researching parental decisions to become or not become involved with their kindergarten child's school. My focus is on urban schools, and I have located my parent participants from local preschool programs. I plan to visit the elementary school(s) that the children will enter in order to write a description for contextual understanding. I will interview each parent this Summer, again in early September, and have a group interview in early December. None of the interviews will take place on school property. The research will explore which school practices (notes home, School to Parent programs, teacher conferences, etc.) have made a positive impact on the parents toward being involved with the school and their child, and which practices have not promoted parent involvement.

I have received "Name"'s permission to visit certain "Name" elementary schools where my research participants will attend. I would like to visit your school in early August in order to see the facilities and ask about your school's planned parent involvement activities for new kindergarten parents. I will not contact school employees, teachers, or other personnel after this visit. This research does not involve any students directly. All data will come from the one school visit, participant interviews, and the documents sent home with the students. I am attempting to construct the experience from the parent's perspective, and will keep the identity of my participants and the schools confidential.

I need your permission to visit in your school and talk to your staff, and I have included a list of school information documents for new parents that I would like to copy if you have them or others available. You may contact me at any time for further information. I will contact you by telephone next week to follow up on this correspondence.

I appreciate any assistance you can give me with this research project. I will be happy to share the findings of the project at its conclusion.

Sincerely,

Judy Hiscock

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Desired Types of Parent Information Literature:

- 1. Welcome or introduction to Kindergarten**
- 2. Invitation to PTA (or similar parent organization)**
- 3. Invitations to work in structured school programs**
(School-to-Parent program, go on field trips, room mother, etc.)
- 4. School rules, dress codes, procedures list, etc.**
- 5. Any parent information document**
(from Kindergarten Round-up, etc.)

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RESEARCH PARTICIPANT AGREEMENT FORM

You are agreeing to participate in a research project. Your participation is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time during the study with no penalty. There should be little or no risk to you, your child, or the preschool and school as a result of your participation. Your name, your child's name, the preschool's name, and the school's name will not appear in the research write up, and all tapes will be destroyed, and records will be kept locked for three years after which they will be destroyed. The purpose of the research is to explore the experience of young, Black, urban parents as their first child enters public school kindergarten. Your involvement will begin when you sign this form and will end by December 15, 2002.

You will be asked to:

1. Meet with Judy Hiscock privately two times.
The meetings will occur at a time and place you arrange with Judy.
Each meeting will last about two hours.
The first meeting will be during July or August of 2002.
The second meeting will be during September or October of 2002.
You will be audio taped as you are interviewed.
You are asked to bring any papers you have received from your child's public school that you wish to discuss.
The discussion will be about:
 - 1) your feelings, attitudes, expectations, and experiences as the parent of a public school kindergartner
 - 2) how the school communicates with you as a parent
 - 3) how you communicate with the school
 - 4) what kinds of things you plan do at, for, or with the school
 - 5) any other topic you wish to discuss or tell about your experience as a public school parent
2. Call Judy Hiscock at 974-9505 at any time if you have any questions or concerns.
3. Review the data gathered from your interviews and check for researcher accuracy.
4. Attend a reception in early December with all of the other parents who have participated in the research. The discussion of your similar and different experiences as a first time parent of public school kindergartners will be audio taped as part of the research. The date, time, and place will be arranged later in the year.

You will be assisting in identifying ways to improve the school experience for kindergarten children and their parents and teachers. You will also have the opportunity to meet other parents and discuss your experiences as your children entered public school kindergarten. **By signing the back of this form you agree to participate in the research project, and certify that you have been given a copy of this form for your own records.**

I have read and understand that I am volunteering to participate in a research project exploring my experiences as a parent of a kindergarten student. I can withdraw from the project at any time with no penalty, and understand that there is little or no risk to me, my child, my child's preschool, or my child's school. I understand that Judy Hiscock will keep all names confidential; however, by attending the group reception at the end of the study, my participation in the study will be revealed to the other participants.

Signature _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

Your child's elementary school _____

FIRST INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

- I. Tell me about your life now.
 1. Married or living with someone?
 2. Job?
 3. School?
 4. What do you do for fun?
 5. Who lives in your apartment?
 6. Who helps with childcare besides your daycare?
 7. What are your plans for your future?
 8. What do you want for your child in her/his future?
- II. Tell me about your school experiences (K-12+).
 1. How far have you gone in public school (K-12)?
 2. What did you like best about public school?
 3. What did you not like about public school?
 4. Did you go to Kindergarten? How did you feel about K?
 5. What did your mother/father do with you and the school when you were in K?
- III. Tell me about being a parent.
 1. Describe your child.
 2. Tell me about when s/he was born.
 - Parent's age at birth:
 - Were you a student?
 - Describe the other parent and your relationship.
 - How did you feel about becoming parents?
 - What is each parent's relationship with the child now?
 3. How did your family feel about your becoming a parent?
 4. How did the other parent's family feel?
 5. Does your family have a relationship with your child now?
 6. Does the other parent's family see the child now?
- IV. Tell me about enrolling your child in school.
 1. Tell me about filling out the forms and meeting the school staff.
 2. How do you feel about sending your child to school?
 3. Are you looking forward to anything?
 4. Are you dreading anything?
 5. Are you afraid of anything?
 6. What do you plan to do with your child and the school?
 - Attend teacher conferences?
 - Go on Field Trips and School Visits?
 - Attend student performances?
 - Attend PTA and other meetings?
 - Help with homework and other home academic activities?
 - Take your child to school?
 - Pick up your child at 1:00pm?
 - Other:
- V. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me?

SECOND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

- I. Tell me how your life has changed since we spoke last.
 1. Married or cohabiting?
 2. Job?
 3. School?
 4. What do you do for fun?
 5. Who lives in your apartment?
 6. Who helps with childcare besides your daycare?
 7. What are your plans for your future?
 8. What do you want for your child in her/his future?
 - II. Tell me about how your child's life has changed.
 - III. Tell me about the public school kindergarten's involvement in these changes.
 1. What has surprised you?
 2. What has pleased you?
 3. What has saddened you?
 4. What has frightened you?
 5. What has angered you?
 - IV. What have you done with your child and the school?
 - Attend teacher conferences?
 - Go on Field Trips and School Visits?
 - Attend student performances?
 - Attend PTA and other meetings?
 - Help with homework and other home academic activities?
 - Take your child to school?
 - Pick up your child at 1:00pm?
 - Other:
 - IV. Tell me about you, your child, and school.
 1. Tell me about calls, forms, notices, and notes home.
 - May I see any that you brought?
 2. Tell me about contact with school staff.
 3. How do you feel about sending your child to school?
 4. Are you doing or do you plan to do these:
 - Attend teacher conferences?
 - Go on Field Trips and School Visits?
 - Attend student performances?
 - Attend PTA and other meetings?
 - Help with homework and other home academic activities?
 - Take your child to school?
 - Pick up your child at 1:00pm?
 - Other:
- Is there anything else that you would like to tell me?

GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

- I. Tell me how your life has changed since we spoke last.
- II. Tell me about how your child's life has changed.
- III. Tell me about the public school kindergarten's involvement in these changes.
 1. What has surprised you?
 2. What has pleased you?
 3. What has saddened you?
 4. What has frightened you?
 5. What has angered you?
- IV. Tell me about you, your child, and school.
 - Are you doing or do you plan to do these:
 - Attend teacher conferences?
 - Go on Field Trips and School Visits?
 - Attend student performances?
 - Attend PTA and other meetings?
 - Help with homework and other home academic activities?
 - Take your child to school?
 - Pick up your child at 1:00pm?
 - Other:
- V. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me?

Participants and Data Gathered

Mothers	Violet	Rose	Tulip	Iris
Target Age <25	25	21	28	27
Marital Status	Single	Single	Single	Divorced
Children	B5, B3	B5, B3, Ginf	G5, B3	G5, Binf
Public Assistance	Childcare, food, medical	Childcare, food, medical, WIC, shoe/clothing	Childcare, food, medical, WIC, shoe/clothing, housing, cash	Childcare, food, medical, WIC, housing, cash
Job/School	Job	Part-time Job	Job and School	None
Daycare	MaryPoppins	MaryPoppins	MotherGoose	MotherGoose
Daycare Contacts	MaryPoppins	MaryPoppins	MotherGoose, her assistant	MotherGoose, her assistant
Head Start	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Public School	OurChoiceUrban	SuburbanWhite	DiverseCity	DiverseCity
School Contacts	Principal, 2 Kindergarten teachers, 1 Kindergarten teacher	Principal, 3 Kindergarten teachers	Principal, 4 Kindergarten teachers and 1 Title I teacher	Principal, 4 Kindergarten teachers and 1 Title I teacher
School Ethnicity	82.5% Black	19.4% Black	22.8% Black	22.8% Black
Initial Interview	Yes (Violet)	Yes (Rose)	Yes (Tulip)	Yes (Iris)
First Interview	Yes (Violet)	No	Yes (Tulip)	Yes (Iris)
Second Interview	Telephone (Spring)	Telephone (Rose)	Telephone (Tulip)	Yes (Iris)
Group Interview	No	No	No	No
Telephone Contacts	4	4	5+	5+
Information Approval	Telephone with Spring	Home Visit with Terra	Returned by mail	Telephone with Iris
Family Contacts	Violet, Spring (her mother), her father, Patience (Older Son's paternal grandmother)	Rose, Terra (her mother), Stone (her mother's male friend), her sister	Tulip	Iris, her boy friend, her aunt, her cousin
Primary Participants	Violet, Spring, MaryPoppins	Rose, Terra, Stone, MaryPoppins	Tulip	Iris

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Date

«First» «Last»
«Address»
City, State «Zip»

Dear «First» ,

I hope your first year as a mother of a kindergartner is going well. It is time for my second interview, and I sincerely hope that you have a great deal to tell me. I would like to schedule the interview sometime during the weeks of November 11 - 22, and I will call you this week at:

«Phone»

If this is NOT your correct telephone number, please try to call me at home at 555-5555 after 6:00PM one evening this week so that we can schedule our meeting. The best times for me are in the evenings and on weekends since I teach kindergarten.

In preparing for our second interview, please gather any correspondence from the school that you wish to discuss. Reflect on your experience as a parent so far this year, and try to remember any experiences that made you glad that your child is in school, and also any experiences that have made you wish your child never had to go to school. Especially think about times you have gone to school as an involved or concerned parent.

So that you can be planning, we will have our group meeting from 11:00 AM until 1:00 PM on Saturday, December 7 at "Name of Pizza Parlor and Arcade;" Address. Please plan to attend if you are available. **ALL** of your children are invited, and please bring **one** other adult or a teenager to watch the children while we meet. There will be two pieces of pizza, soda drinks, and ten tokens provided for everyone. Please come and join us and let your children have a fun time!

Sincerely,

Judy Hiscock

Notes included in the invitations to the pizza party.

Rose,

We never got to do an interview. If you would like to be interviewed, I can meet any day this week after school. Please call if you want to meet. You and your children are still invited to the pizza party on Saturday if you can come and talk to me then! Hope to see you soon.

Judy Hiscock

555-5555 after 5:00pm

Violet,

I have spoken to your Dad and your Mom, but I have not been able to reach you. If you would like to be interviewed, I can meet any day this week after school. Please call me to set up your second interview this week. You and your children are still invited to the pizza party on Saturday if you can come and talk to me then! Hope to see you soon.

Judy Hiscock

555-5555 after 5:00pm

Tulip,

I do not have your current telephone number. If you would like to be interviewed, I can meet any day this week after school. Please call me to set up your second interview this week. You and your children are still invited to the pizza party on Saturday if you can come and talk to me then! Hope to see you soon.

Judy Hiscock

555-5555 after 5:00pm

Iris was constantly in touch by telephone, so no extra note was included with her invitation.

December 28, 2002

Dear «First» ,

Thank you so very much for participating in my research project. Your information is invaluable to my data collection. I have finished all of the interviews and now wish you to approve or correct any data that I have attributed to you.

Enclosed with this letter is all information that I am including about you and your new experience as a parent of a public school kindergartner. Please read over the data and correct any errors that I have made. Also, if you wish to answer any of the unanswered questions, please write in any additional information that you would like included in the research. I have provided a self-addressed, stamped envelope for you to send back your information to me. Please send your information back as soon as possible!

Also included are some "Name of Fast Food" gift certificates. Since you were not able to attend the pizza party in your honor, I wanted to thank you and your children for helping me! Please enjoy this small token of my appreciation!

I sincerely hope that you and your family are enjoying your time away from school. If I can ever be of any help to you or your children, please call me!

Thank you,

Judy Hiscock

Telephone: 865-555-5555

Vita

Judith Ann Collins was born in Kentucky and grew up traveling throughout the South Eastern United States. She attended elementary and junior high school in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, and moving during high school, she graduated from Clinton High School in 1969. She became Judith Collins Hiscock in 1971 and finished her B.S. in Elementary Education with a minor in Child Development in 1973 at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville. After teaching kindergarten for a time and having two sons, she returned to UTK and completed her M.S. in Curriculum Planning in 1986.

Judy is currently a full time kindergarten teacher with the Knox County School System and will receive her Ph.D. in Education at UTK in August 2004.