An Investigation of Parental Calls Regarding Schooling to District Offices within Bourdieu’s Framework of Cultural Reproduction

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ABSTRACT

Shirley Mote Stipe-Zendle: An Investigation of Parental Calls Regarding Schooling to District Offices within Bourdieu’s Framework of Cultural Reproduction
(Under the direction of Dr. Fenwick English)

This mixed methods, empirical, comprehensive research in education guided by concepts of social scientist Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of cultural reproduction identifies parent calls to urban school district office staff in the Southeastern region of the United States as resistance to claims that schools are culturally neutral. Quantitative investigation through correlation study identifies relationships between frequency and topics of 5,369 calls and school characteristics such as size, free/reduced lunch percentages, student achievement proficiency levels, teacher experience, crime and suspension rates and time of year. Qualitative analysis of some calls provides perspective on differing socioeconomic status parents’ complaints and distinctions in ability to advocate for students with cultural capital and persuasive tools. Referencing Lareau and Auerbach, content analysis of discipline, personnel, transportation, safety, and other concerns by higher and lower income parents and identification of symbolic violence, habitus, social class divisions, misrecognition, sense of entitlement and powerlessness and need are accomplished.
DEDICATION

Everything good I ever do, I do because of and for my mother,

Nancy Lowrey Stipe.

This is for you, nls. Thank you.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Growing up on a 600-acre farm in South Georgia in a house with what seemed like 2,000 books, my mother and father created a life-long student in me. My father typed stories, asking my mother how to spell words while she sang and talked with the articulation of the Bronxville daughter of a psychiatrist she was. From the assigned reading of *Journeys through Bookland* with my father’s requirement that all poems be read out loud to discussions of hymns and sermons driving home from church with my mother, my parents fostered the reader, writer, student and analyst in me. Thank you.

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An Investigation of Parental Calls Regarding Schooling to District Offices within Bourdieu’s Framework of Cultural Reproduction

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Bourdieu (1977) thus argued that the educational system, which appears to be meritocratic on the surface, actually perpetuates and exacerbates existing inequalities because it has a hidden value system that privileges individuals from higher status backgrounds and because lower status individuals may self-select themselves out of the educational hierarchy due to their habitus (Dumais, 2006, p. 86).

Overview

Parental involvement in the education of children is of overriding importance to students’ academic success (Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991; Epstein, 1991; Epstein, 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Valdez, 1996). Research is clear in indicating that as parental involvement in schools increases, student achievement increases (Flaxman & Inger, 1992; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Ramirez, 2001). A positive association has been made between parental involvement and children’s educational achievement (Barnard, 2004; Fan & Chen, 2001; Feuerstein, 2000; Jeynes, 2003; Jimerson, Egeland, & Teo, 1999; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Fantatuzzo, Hampton, & McWayne, 2004); yet, there are different types of parent involvement in children’s educations (Desimone, 1999; Epstein & Salinas, 2004; Fan & Chen, 2001; Feuerstein, 2000; Lee & Bowen, 2006). Parental involvement has been identified as taking place in two of children’s “primary microsystems, the home and the
school” (Lee & Bowen, 2006, p. 196). Race has been shown to be a factor of influence on the effect of some types of parental involvement on students (Jeynes, 2003) and “research has consistently found that certain demographic factors affect parent involvement in their children’s education” (Zhang, Hsu, Kwok, Benz, & Bowman-Penott, 2011, p. 29). Demographics including socioeconomic, ethnic, and educational attainment level have been found to affect parent involvement (Trivette & Anderson, 1995). This study explores how the demographic make-up and various characteristics of schools may influence the number and nature of parent calls to district offices.

The literature on the importance of parental connections to schools is rich and is explored in depth in a later chapter. At this juncture, it should be noted that many responsibilities and various roles present themselves in the development of school-family collaborative relationships (Chrispeels, 1988; Chrispeels, Fernandez, & Preston, 1990, Epstein, 1987; Gordon & Breivogel, 1976; Swap, 1993). Some of these roles and responsibilities reveal themselves in the findings of this study. In addition, the literature states that while adult family members are concerned about the academic success of their children, most of them would be better able to be positively involved in their children’s education if they had a greater amount of better information from schools (Epstein, 2001). Developing communication with parents with a knowledge of what parents do and do not know would be more efficient and effective than attempting to communicate with parents without understanding what their questions and concerns may be. This examination and analysis of parent calls to district offices completed through the lens of an educator aware of the events, circumstances, characteristics, calendars and goals of schools and cast in the perspective of social science offers findings and conclusions which will help mitigate
potential misunderstandings about schools by parents. The questions asked and the answers discovered regarding parent calls to district offices are available to both inform school communication with parents and benefit educators in their work with students and families. The conceptual framework of the study reflects French social scientist Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of cultural reproduction. Guiding the study is Bourdieu’s argument that “the educational system, which appears to be meritocratic on the surface, actually perpetuates and exacerbates existing inequalities because it has a hidden value system” (Dumais, 2006, p. 86). Parent calls in this study are looked at as possible resistance to the notion that schools are culturally neutral.

Within the school setting, parents who are poor have been shown to interact with administrators with discomfort stemming from fear (Lareau, 2002). The intimidation that poor parents have been seen to exhibit may stem from “strategizing practices” (Schubert, 2002, p. 1091) of subordination and exclusion accomplished through symbolic manipulation (Schubert, 2002). This manipulation or “symbolic violence” (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977/1990, p. 8) coaxes those on whom the violence is practiced into participating in their own subjugation through “the construction and reconstruction of social categories” (Schubert, 2002, p. 1092) and “increasing degrees of conformity,” (Schubert, 2002, p. 1097). The “inequality in access to relationships and resources of interest” due to discrepancies in the “fit between” the culture of parents and “the culture of the larger society” (Lee and Bowen, 2006, p. 197) contributes to the state within schools leading Pierre Bourdieu to argue “that the educational system not only reproduces inequality, but it also heightens it” (Schubert, 2002, p. 1093).
The “voices of protest about the stigmatization and prejudice that persists in schools” is “muted and their silence ensured” (English, 2002, p. 307). In fact, in some studies, parents who are poor have shared that they do not have confidence when involved in exchanges with school officials and in their navigation through the educational system; and, consequently, they often simply go along with the advice of the professional educators (Lee & Brown, 2006). Relevant to this phenomenon is the fact that “parent involvement at school and high educational expectations, which were most common among parents from dominant groups,” show “strong associations with achievement” (Lee & Brown, 2006, p. 213). “When faced with problems, middle class parents also appeared better equipped to exert influence over other adults compared with working-class and poor parents” (Lareau, 2002, p. 766). The discrepancy in ability to advocate for children that can be argued falls along socio-economic lines could be attributed to Bourdieu’s concept “habitus,” which is “the internalization of the social structure” and “forms one’s worldview and serves as a guide throughout an individual’s life” (Dumais, 2006, p. 85). “Habitus reproduces inequality because people in privileged positions act in ways to secure privilege for their children while those who are poor see only a limited set of opportunities for their future” (Dumais, 2006, p. 84), contributing to the inequality of educational systems.

Sometimes parents reach out for assistance from the district offices of their children’s school systems, and most professional educators probably have anecdotes to share about someone’s call of complaint to a district level office or the local school board. An examination of the calls from parents that come into the district offices of a large urban school system offers more than anecdotes. This study provides accurate, empirical evidence regarding the timing and the content of calls to district offices. Informed decisions at both
the district office and the school level could be made based on this in-depth knowledge of parent concerns expressed through calls made by parents to school district officials. The analysis of these calls in relation to characteristics of the schools the calls are about offers insight into how the socio-economic make-up of schools’ student bodies and the achievement levels of the schools correlate with the number, timing, topics, and content of the calls.

This research study examines the nature and frequency of parent calls to a school system’s district offices along with a closer look at the content of some of those calls. The study is introduced through an exploration of the background, identification of the problem, a description of study and the study’s conceptual framework, recognition of the professional significance of the study, explanation of the research questions, definitions of terms key to the study, and an examination of the delimitations of the study.

The Problem Statement

While the number of studies and discussions regarding numerous aspects of schools is remarkable, an analysis of the nature, frequency and content of parent calls to district offices of school systems has not been identified in the literature. While it would be remarkable if parents did not call district offices, in fact parents do call school system offices; however, discussion of these calls seems to have been kept confidentially within the confines of the schools and school systems in which the calls occur. The frequency and nature of these calls has not been explored as part of the public discussion of education. While relationships between school staff and parents are important for student achievement (Flaxman & Inger, 1992; Ramirez, 2001), it would be beyond imagining that all conflicts could be solved and all questions of substance answered in every school without any assistance from others outside the school; yet, it appears discussion of parent
calls to district offices within the literature is only anecdotal, if present at all. The problem this study addresses is that of determining the nature and frequency of calls to district office staff by parents and guardians of students. While there may be short, cursory calls received by district office staff seeking factual answers to questions regarding the functioning of schools, such as schedules, snow days, and attendance zones, the particular calls examined in this study are calls in which the parent has something to say, whether a complaint or a compliment.

The Study of Parent Calls

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of the nature of parent calls to district office staff in an urban school district in the Southeastern region of the United States. The study identifies relationships between the frequency and nature of parent calls to district offices and the characteristics of schools, the time in the calendar year, and other internal and external events and circumstances. Calls and patterns in calls are examined in relation to the characteristics of the schools about which the calls are made.

Over the past ten and a half years in an urban school district in the Southeastern United States, parent calls to district offices in which the parent has had something to say, such as a complaint or concern, have been recorded in a database. In addition, narrative documentation of these calls has been kept in notebooks. Five and a half years ago, the school district was divided into five regions. The narrative documentation of the calls from the year before regionalization was divided into notebooks for each region. These calls also remained in a central electronic database. Over the last five and a half years, the calls that have come into the regional offices of the school district have been recorded in the same central database which was begun over ten years ago; although, after four years
of regionalization, the five regions were collapsed into four regions. Additionally, collected in notebooks within each region and organized by school, are pages of narrative documentation for each year’s parent calls of substance, calls during which parents have expressed a concern or compliment rather than or along with any more simple questions they may have asked.

The study of parent calls to district offices is a mixed methods study. Quantitative data are analyzed in order to compare characteristics of schools based on student data with the number of parent calls regarding particular topics made to district office staff throughout the course of a five year period, the school year before regionalization and the first four school years after regionalization (leading up to the year when the five regions were collapsed into four). This five year period is analyzed in the study because the narrative data for approximately a fourth of the schools in the district is secure for this period and this five year period yields 5,369 calls to district offices, a more manageable number than the more cumbersome number of calls from the entire ten years covered by the database. This quantitative analysis is linked to a qualitative content analysis of parental complaints of a selected sample of the calls made to the district selected through maximum variation sampling (Marshall & Rossman, 1999) focusing on cases that offer a variety of calls from parents with various concerns stemming from situations in different schools to the extent that the convenience and the quality of the data allow.

The study identifies characteristics of the schools parents call district offices about and looks at those characteristics in relation to the topics parents are calling about, when they are calling, what they are saying, and why.
The urban school district in Southeastern United States in the study is only an example of the many school districts which serve students; however, due to a dearth of research on this topic, analysis of one district becomes a revealing case (Van Maanen, 1988), one that illustrates visible aspects of the kinds of calls parents make when they want to talk to someone in the school system above or beyond the realm of their child’s school.

Another guiding principle of the conceptual framework is the identification of different types of parental involvement (Epstein & Jansorn, 2004; Muller, 1995). The analysis of district office calls includes classifying types of calls in a similar fashion to the identification of different types of parent involvement in education (Epstein, 1996). The relationship between types of parent calls and school characteristics is examined as the relationship between types of parental involvement and student achievement have been examined (Auerbach, 2007; Epstein, 1996; Lee & Bowen, 2006).

**Importance of the Study**

Because of the lack of empirical research on parent calls to district offices of school systems, the literature providing the basis for this study are from two bodies of literature: (1) family-school partnership research and (2) social science research regarding the structure of society and the perpetuation of that structure, focusing specifically on the work of Pierre Bourdieu. The family-school partnership literature provides a background for the study and is particularly useful for understanding the importance of parent involvement in education and for identifying types of parental involvement. The intersection of social science literature, particularly that of Bourdieu, regarding the role of education in the self-supporting structure of culture and the information we have regarding parents, their importance in students’ academic achievement and their interactions with schools provides a rich background for this
The purpose of this study is to provide a detailed understanding of the frequency, nature and content of parent calls to district offices in an urban school district in the Southeastern region of the United States and to determine how the nature of the calls is correlated to demographic and achievement characteristics of the schools about which the parents have concerns or compliments.

One aspect of the study is the analysis of how relationships between schools or circumstances within schools align with the number of calls to district office staff in an urban school district in the Southeastern region of the United States, along with a discussion of these calls as evidence of the role Bourdieu proposes schools play in perpetuating inequalities within society (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Dumais, 2006; Schubert, 2002; Webb, Schirato, & Danaher, 2002). The examination of the nature of calls in relation to the characteristics of schools and the time in the calendar year occurs along with consideration of the patterns in the calls as evidence of resistance to or support of the structure of society and the roles Bourdieu argues schools play in upholding that structure (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Dumais, 2006; Schubert, 2002; Webb, et. al., 2002). The understanding of parent calls offered by this study informs district level leadership with regard to public relations, parent education and communication, professional development of educational leadership both at the school and the district level, as well as potentially inspiring reflection and discussion of issues of equity within schools and society.

**The Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for the study is based on Bourdieu’s theory of cultural reproduction and the concepts inherent in his terms *habitus, doxa, hysteresis, social class, cultural capital, and symbolic violence*. These terms are defined, and the parent calls in this
study are examined as possible examples of the concepts these terms represent and as possible evidence of Bourdieu’s theory that “education tends to reproduce social divisions” (Webb, Schirato, and Danaher, 2002, p. 107).

The conceptual framework guides the exploration of the roles of parents in education and the examination of the construction of both the roles of parents who have cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977) and those who do not, parents who in their advocacy for their children’s educations are supporting structure of culture and those who are creating resistance against that structure on the margins of society (Auerbach, 2007). In addition, the calls are considered not as “a social fact on neutral terrain,” but as a “phenomenon on the contested terrain of schooling” and as “a reflection of broader social inequalities that affect students” (Auerbach, 2007, p. 251). The quantitative analysis of the calls and the investigation of the narrative documentation of the calls are conducted with consideration of the possibility that the calls are a source of resistance to the assumption that schools are culturally neutral. This exploration is also based on theories of social interactions and social capital (Auerbach, 2007; Bourdieu, 1977, 1979/1987; Lareau & Horvat, 1999). In addition, the study seeks to identify evidence that some parents are more likely than others to bring a sense of discomfort or suspicion with them when they approach schools and are also more likely than others to find a lack of concern or acts of dismissal in their interactions with educators (Auerbach, 2007; Fine, 1991; Forham, 1996; Gandara, 1995; Lareau & Horvat, 1999).

The Methodology

The study is both primarily and initially quantitative. The researcher begins with a quantitative approach as the primary method and follows the evaluation and interpretation of the quantitative results with the examination of narrative documentation of some of the calls.
with qualitative methods (Glatthorn & Joyner, 2005). The quantitative aspects of the study are a correlation study. The researcher analyzes variables and looks for relationships between them through the use of correlation coefficients. A database of calls expressing concerns, compliments, or complaints to the district offices of an urban school district in the Southeastern United States over a five year period is examined through a quantitative approach, and documents regarding the calls are analyzed through a qualitative approach.

The documents analyzed in the study are narrative accounts of the same calls in the database. The qualitative follow-up to the quantitative study allows for exploration into the complex aspects of the calls as expressed by the callers themselves. The qualitative approach to the study is a narrative analysis completed by examining the stories that some callers tell when they call the district offices of a particular school district. Rather than focus on the sociolinguistic techniques inherent in the narratives, the study focuses on life events and the narrator’s approach to those events (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

**Professional Significance and Purpose**

A greater understanding of parent calls can inform district level leadership with regard to public relations, parent education and communication, and professional development of educational leadership both at the school and the district level by anticipating possible parent misunderstandings and questions based on the patterns of concerns expressed by parents over the period of this study. This in-depth study of calls to district offices is a lens into parent calls as a source of resistance to the assumption that schools are culturally neutral, and as such, offers insight into the need for change in social interactions within schools and with parents within educational systems. This research provides evidence that education, despite efforts to the contrary, does “reproduce social divisions” (Webb, et al.,
2002, p. 107); and the study will hopefully offer understanding of the perspectives of parents and of similarities and differences in problems for parents and students that are not resolved at the school level in schools with varying characteristics while providing information for educators as changes are considered, especially with regard to inclusion, treatment of, and communication with parents.

**Major Research Questions**

The hypotheses and questions guiding this study explore the ideas that parent calls are cyclical in nature, that the concerns parents express to district office administrators in a school district provide evidence that schools reflect Bourdieu’s theoretical framework of cultural reproduction and that parent calls to district offices are both evidence of and a thrust against social class divisions. The hypotheses follow:

*H.1. Parent calls are cyclical in nature and can be an indicator of patterns of parent concerns which might be anticipated.*

*H.2a Parent calls to district offices follow patterns in their nature and frequency as stipulated within Bourdieu’s theory of cultural reproduction in that they follow patterns in relationship to the characteristics of social class (as indicated by the percentage of student participation in the free and reduced lunch programs in the schools parents call about).*

*H.2b Parent calls to district offices generate evidence that education continues social structure division.*

*H.2c Parent calls are a source of resistance to the assumption that schools are culturally neutral.*

The study includes both quantitative and qualitative research questions seeking understanding of the nature and timing of parent calls and exploring connections between
parent calls to district offices and Bourdieu’s theory of cultural reproduction and related concepts. Research questions follow:

**Quantitative Research Questions**

R.1. What is the nature of the calls parents make to school district offices?

R.1.1 To what extent do external influences such as the time of year affect the nature of calls made to district offices by parents; are the calls cyclical in nature and how are any cycles in the calls related to the months of the school year?

R.2. To what extent do characteristics of schools influence the nature of calls parents make to district offices?

R.2.1 Is there evidence in either the quantitative or qualitative documentation of parent calls that the structure of schools reproduces the structure of society?

R.2.2 How does a child’s capital, that is either the economic capital of the family as determined by the free and reduced lunch program participation at the school the student of concern attends or the cultural capital of the student as determined by the number of higher level courses offered at the school and/or the academic performance at the school, affect the nature of the issues their parents take to district offices?

R.2.3 Are some types of calls exempt from the effects of social class?

**Qualitative Research Questions**

R.3. Is there evidence of a discrepancy in ability to advocate for children between parents associated with higher socioeconomic status and those associated with schools with lower socioeconomic status?

R.3.1 Is there evidence in the data regarding the calls that parents vary in “their skills at using the cultural capital to gain advantages in particular situations” (Dumais, 2006, p. 87)?
R.4. Do calls provide evidence or examples aligned with Bourdieu’s concepts of interest, doxa, hysteresis, social class, cultural capital, misrecognition, and/or symbolic violence, either through the number and general types of calls associated with schools fitting specific profiles or in the narrative documentation of calls?

R.4.1 Is there evidence of a tension between parental habitus and the practices of school personnel as communicated by callers from lower income schools?

R.4.2. Do middle class parent calls illustrate a sense of entitlement (Lareau, 2002)?

R.4.3 Do working class parent calls show a resistance to authority and/or a sense of powerlessness or fear (Lareau, 2002)?

R.5. Do parent calls have the patterns associated with a middle class practice of “concerted cultivation” or working class/poor parents’ view of children’s development as an “accomplishment of natural growth” within them (Lareau, 2003, p. 3)?

R.5.1 Do working class parents ask for students to be able to do less and middle class parents ask for children to be able to do more (Lareau, 2002)?

R.5.2 Do children’s wishes propel middle class parent calls (Lareau, 2002)?

**Definition of Key Terms**

For purposes of this study, the term *parent calls* refers to calls and contacts, sometimes in the form of a letter or an email but most often actual phone calls, made to district offices by parents, guardians, or others concerned with the welfare of children which express a complaint, concern, or compliment more substantial than a factual question.

The term *district offices* refers to any offices within a school system which are outside of the school and within the network of personnel associated with the educators who manage and lead the school system. The term may refer to one office that is centrally located or a
number of offices that are within a district, such as regional offices. Personnel in these offices have been trained in taking parent calls, in categorizing the calls and in the system, and in taking narrative notes on the calls.

The term *crime* refers to the criminal offenses occurring on school campuses that are required by state law to be reported to both the state department of public instruction and to law enforcement within the state in which the study takes place.

The terms *crime rate* and *suspension rate* refer to the number of crimes per 100 students enrolled in a school or the number of suspensions per 100 students enrolled in a school.

The terms *interest, habitus, doxa, hysteresis, social class, cultural capital,* and *symbolic violence* are used in the sense and according to the concepts developed by Pierre Bourdieu.

*Interest*: the position of an individual in having something to gain even if that is to have customs, practice, and social positions remain the same;

*Habitus*: an individual’s way of seeing the world and interacting in in as a result of their experiences, education, and reflection;

*Doxa*: accepted standards and values within a field, society, or group that are generally accepted (or *misrecognized*) as being essential or natural but which are artificial, developed, and serve the interests of those in positions of power within the group;

*Hysteresis*: a tension or ill-fit between an individual’s habitus (worldview, customs, dress, behavior, values, and practices) and what is valued and accepted within a social structure or institution;
**Social class:** position within society based on rules, spoken and unspoken, capital (tangible and intangible), distinction, history (individual, familial, and within society);

**Cultural capital:** intangible, but socially powerful attributes such as culturally accepted and applauded habits, customs, practices, abilities, and achievements (such as education);

**Misrecognition:** an assumption that social rules, customs, divisions are based on truth and are basic and factual rather than arbitrary and developed to protect the investments and positions of groups or individuals in positions of power;

**Symbolic violence:** practices, acts, customs, and communication that perpetuates dominance and submission through action or lack of action that is often socially accepted, sometimes passive, and generally described as occurring due to laws of nature.

**Assumptions of the Study**

The key assumptions of the study are as follows:

1. **Parallelism between parental complaints/concerns and social class.**
   It is assumed that parental complaints emanate from a particular social class perspective and that parental concerns will mirror such class distinctions.

2. **Schooling and cultural neutrality.**
   It is assumed that schools are not culturally neutral social places and that they favor children from some social classes over others through their routines, grouping and curricular practices and selections.

3. **Parallelism between parent complaints/concerns and the school calendar.**
   It is assumed that the number and nature of parent complaints or concerns will be related to the timing of academic and social events in schools according to the school calendar.

It is assumed that examples of Pierre Bourdieu’s concepts related to his theory regarding the role schools play in cultural reproduction will be identified in the parental complaints/concerns made to district offices.

**Limitations of the Study**

As in any study, there are limits to this study:

1. The calls examined are the calls that have come into the district offices of one school district; and while many of these calls may represent similar calls that might be made in similar districts, there could be concerns that parents might make that are particular to a specific district.

2. The quantitative database contains limited information.

3. The categorizing of the types of calls into the database and the creating of the narrative documents for the calls were produced by a number of individuals who may have been influenced by their own sense of what the call was mainly about and what might be important to record; so there may be inconsistencies in what was recorded in the database and in the contents and quality of the notes taken; however, the individuals taking the calls were given similar, although short, training in using the database and taking notes on the calls.

4. The perceptions of schools that the district personnel taking the calls may have had could have influenced the perceptions district staff had of the calls, influencing the notes they took and the categories they may choose for particular calls.
5. The response of district office to parent calls may not be consistent from region to region within the district, and variation in response to calls may affect the number and nature of calls from one region to another.

6. Particular events in the local or national news, such as a school shooting, for example, may affect the number and nature of calls at a particular time.

7. The free and reduced lunch make-up of the schools parents call about are utilized as the indicator of the social class of the majority of the students in those particular schools and of the parents who call about those schools because there is no other indicator of the wealth or lack of wealth of these individuals.

8. A call from a school designated as higher or lower income may not be from a parent who is aligned with the socioeconomic status of the majority of parents at a particular school; but for purposes of this study, calls from parents of students at schools are considered to be representative of the socioeconomic status as identified by the free and reduced lunch program percentages for the schools, with some being considered higher income and some considered lower income.

9. No claims can be made about the inclusivity of the calls in the study because the call data analyzed are from calls to district offices, and it has to be assumed that some complaints were resolved at the school level. The complaints reaching district offices represent unresolved concerns of the most serious problems from the perspectives of the parents and are not random; therefore, the database itself may contain a skew, but the skew represents the most serious and sustained complaints from the parents’ point of view and the framework of Bourdieu’s cultural reproduction are applied to the most serious concerns.
The Role of the Investigator

The researcher, while now in a role as a principal in one of the district’s schools, was for a period of time one of the district office employees who took calls, entered data into the electronic database, and took narrative notes on calls, as well as reaching out to district school supervisors and school principals in attempts to resolve parents’ concerns. In this role, the researcher was a participant in the producing of some of the data, sometimes taking the calls and entering basic information into the electronic database, usually talking with parents and taking narrative notes on the calls during the time she was in this district office role. The researcher was in a position to potentially work with parents of students in approximately a fifth of the schools for four of the five years of the study, possibly involved with up to about 15% of the calls during the five year period of the study. Strengths of the role of the investigator include an understanding of the system for documenting and responding to parent calls to district offices and awareness of the database and the narrative data. While the researcher is no longer in the district office role, the relationships and trust established while in the role facilitate access to the call data.
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review presents a brief overview of the literature regarding parent involvement in schools, the social and cultural capital of the parents, and the relationship of parental involvement to student achievement. In addition, this literature review establishes the theoretical framework of social and cultural capital, habitus, and symbolic violence by Pierre Bourdieu in relation to the persistent problem of the perpetuation of societal stratification by schools. Following the introduction, the first section provides a brief introduction to the literature and theories of Pierre Bourdieu. The second section focuses on the literature regarding parents, schools and the effect their interaction has on student achievement. The third and final section provides a more thorough review of Bourdieu’s theoretical framework of social and cultural capital, habitus and symbolic violence, along with related literature, including a brief discussion of schools as reproducers of class divisions in American society.

Introduction

In the United States, people disagree about the importance of social class in daily life. Many Americans believe that this country is fundamentally open to opportunity for everyone and may assume that society is best understood as a collection of individuals. This
commonly held and discussed philosophy found on the streets and in the homes and institutions of America includes a belief that people who demonstrate effort and talent are likely to achieve upward mobility. Put differently, many Americans believe in what is commonly known as and called the American Dream. In this view, children should have roughly equal life chances, and the extent to which life chances vary can be traced to differences in aspirations, talent, and hard work on the part of individuals. This perspective rejects the notion that location systematically shapes children’s life experiences and outcomes. Instead, outcomes are seen as resting more in the hands of individuals. In a distinctly different but still related vein, some social scientists acknowledge that there are systemic forms of inequality, including, for example, differences in parents’ educational levels and experiences, occupational prestige, and income, as well as in their child-rearing practices (Lareau, 2003, p. 235).

Introduction to Bourdieu

Pierre Bourdieu was a French philosopher who focused on social phenomenon, particularly with regard to the actions and interactions of people in social space. Bourdieu was a prolific writer who based his sociological theories on his own empirical studies, as well as those of others. Bourdieu’s early work was anthropological. Over time, he was drawn to question education and its value and served on government committees focused on educational reform. He developed concepts and terms to communicate his theories regarding the meaning in human actions and how human actions can be both insidiously violent and responsible for perpetuating society’s class distinctions. A concept important to the work of Bourdieu is the idea that educational institutions contribute to the upholding of social class divisions by rewarding skills, tastes and practices that are not communicated or taught in the
institutions themselves. Bourdieu’s major publications include *The Inheritors*, written with Jean-Claude Passeron and published in France in 1964. In this work Bourdieu and Passeron analyze the access to higher education and enrollment into particular areas of study by individuals, looking at the livelihood of the university students’ parents and the students’ social origin, as well as gender, to examine correlations and patterns. Another major work of Bourdieu’s is *Distinction* (1979) in which Bourdieu explored the link between cultural tastes and educational level through an analysis of a survey of more than 1,200 people regarding their cultural tastes. *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, written with Jean-Claude Passeron, is another important contribution to the discussion of how society self-supports its structures and how education contributes to those structures by rewarding and valuing as academic what is not taught. Important concepts and subsequent terms found in the philosophy and work of Bourdieu or Bourdieu and Passeron are habitus, the ways one behave and thinks and believes one should behave and think based on self-identity; symbolic violence, the subtle damage one does to another, often in educational settings, by withholding resources or discouraging aspirations; cultural capital, established practices, behaviors, values and attributes accepted and respected within a social space; hysteresis, the phenomenon of a person being out of synch with the society around him or her; doxa, values that are actually arbitrary but are accepted as natural and meaningful within a social situation, structure or network; and misrecognition, the treating of artificial and socially created values as if they are authentic, natural and meaningful.

**Social Class and Parental Involvement**

Analysis of the meritocracy of America based on the theoretical framework of Pierre Bourdieu drives the longitudinal study of 12 children and their families, which is the basis for
Lareau’s book *Unequal Childhoods*. Her study focuses on the home lives of children and the interactions those children’s parents have with school staff. Her questions regarding the influence of social class in the reproduction of society are based on the work of Bourdieu, and her work serves as both a model and an example of the intersection of the literature regarding parental involvement in schools and the literature regarding social class and perpetuation of the stratification of society.

**Parent Involvement Theoretical Literature**

**Early Definitions of Parent Involvement**

In his 1991 article in *The Phi Delta Kappan*, J. Chrispeels states that educators want parents to be more involved in their children’s educations and points to the involvement of middle class parents which she describes as normal. Chrispeels goes on to refer to the positive effect of parent involvement on student achievement and the fact that there have been many attempts to get all parents to be involved in the same ways middle class parents are. She states that most of these efforts have been to no avail; however, she notes that parent involvement does increase student achievement. Chrispeels’ theory is that if educators have low expectations of poor parents and a negative attitude toward them, they do not develop effective programs for involving them.

Chrispeels says that fundraising and advisory councils are often the only activities that are considered parent involvement by administrators and that getting students to school on time, helping children with homework, meeting with teachers in conferences and doing what teachers ask are the only actions teachers consider to be parent involvement. Parents want schools to communicate with them about how their children are progressing in school,
want to be invited into the school and the classroom more often, and want to know how to assist their children in being successful in school as school activities and the needs of their students change, concludes Chrispeels.

Chrispeels discusses the parent involvement and parent communication initiatives by The San Diego County Office of Education including workshops and publications for assisting educators in communicating with and involving parents, asking whether or not these initiatives will result in change since it has been established that the attitudes teachers have dramatically affect parent involvement. Beginning to involve parents in their children’s educations while children are young is important, says Chrispeels as she discusses the need for teachers to be willing to learn from parents about the educational backgrounds of the parents and their expectations for their children. She states that most activities by the district and the schools have been focused on changing the behavior of the parents rather than on changing the schools and their systems and practices.

In a 1993 article in Teachers College Record, Jacquelynne Eccles and Rena Harold acknowledge previous research regarding the important role of parents in children’s academic achievement and the idea that parental involvement in children’s schools is linked to characteristics of families, such as income and family dynamics. The authors build on these concepts to explore theoretically the idea that community make-up also affects parental involvement. The authors suggest that families in neighborhoods with limited resources put forth effort to protect their children from danger while families in wealthier neighborhoods want to promote their children’s special abilities. Additionally, the gender and age of children influence the involvement of their parents and, in particular, the authors note, decline in parental involvement as students reach adolescence. One reason, they explain, may
be that secondary schools are more departmentalized and less personal, resulting in less contact between teachers and students and their families. The authors discuss the concept that schools, programs at schools, and teacher behaviors are strong predictors of parental involvement. According to Eccles and Harold, indicators that predict more parental involvement in school include a sense that teachers are able to influence parental involvement, intentional strategies for increasing involvement, involving parents in school decision-making, keeping parents informed and providing opportunities for parents to become involved.

Don Davies acknowledges in 1997, in an article in *Early Childhood Education Journal*, that when parents attempt to have an effect on their children’s education, they move into the world of the professional teacher, crossing boundaries. He states that when teachers give advice to parents, they cross boundaries. Davies argues the merit of crossing boundaries and makes specific recommendations for developing school and home partnerships. His recommendations include improving communication, making schools and programs more inviting, and reaching out to those parents who are not involved. He concludes that children’s opportunities for academic success will improve with home/school collaboration and that schools will benefit from an increase in trust and acceptance of changes in education. He says that a wide range of chances for parental involvement will result in more participation.

Davies suggests in an article published in *Principal* in 2000, that the focus on raising standards and heightened accountability may increase the achievement gap, but argues that developing collaborative relationships between schools and families can create opportunities for fostering student achievement. Davies says that reciprocal relationships and democracy are vital components of school.
The importance of school in the lives of children is a point of focus for Joyce Epstein in a 2001 article. She says that for parents to be linked to their children’s lives they need to share meaningful information with schools and that more equitable plans and practices need to be in place for school and family collaboration. She discusses the fact that while students are influenced by their classmates with regard to social behavior, they remain influenced by their parents academically; and she argues that connections between schools and families must be purposeful in design.

Building on the idea that a school/home connection is important in his 2003 article, T. Whitaker establishes that principals are challenged by dealing with angry parents. The author then advises principals regarding how to interact with parents in order to have a positive outcome. The first advice is for the principal not to attempt to prove to the parents that he or she is in charge (because parents already know that). He also tells principals not to argue with parents because they will not win and explains that professional principals behave in a positive way at all times. Whitaker goes on to state that teachers need professional development regarding how to interact with parents and explains that one way to resolve concerns is to acknowledge being sorry that whatever brought on this parent’s behavior happened.

Joyce Epstein and Natalie Rodriguez Janson continue the dialogue regarding school and family relationships in a 2004 article in *Principal*, saying that new approaches are needed because research shows that most parents who are not involved with schools would like to be and that almost all students who succeed in schools are supported by their families. They argue that educators can no longer let parents figure out how they can be involved. They identify six types of parental involvement: “parenting,” “communicating,” “volunteering,”
“learning at home,” “decision making,” and “collaborating with the community” (p. 21).

Epstein and Janson suggest next steps; among these are for the principal to use the authority of the position of principal to communicate to school staff and community how important parents are, to let students know how important their families are, and to budget for activities to develop school and family partnerships.

**Parent Involvement and Student Achievement**

In 2005, Christopher Spera reviews the literature regarding parental involvement in schools in order to examine what the literature says about a link between parent involvement and student achievement in secondary schools. Spera points out that many studies have looked at families and schools and various parenting styles and behaviors. He explains that definitions of parenting practices have included ways that parents socialize their children, like socializing their children to take school seriously or to do their homework. He discusses emotional parenting styles (Darling & Steinberg, 1993), as well, and explains that parenting styles include the way that parents make responses or demands.

Spera examines the distinction between parent involvement in schools that is initiated by schools and parent/school involvement initiated by parents, themselves (Epstein, 1996). According to Spera, researchers indicate that the type of parental involvement which has been associated with academic achievement is involvement that parents initiate themselves (Epstein & Sanders, 2002). He points out that parent involvement initiated by the parents themselves is associated with academic achievement by elementary school students (Becker & Epstein, 1982). He says there is less involvement by parents when students are in middle school than there is when they are in elementary school and explains that there is evidence
that parental involvement declines as students become teenagers. Spera notes that there is a correlation between higher student test scores and parents’ knowledge of their children’s friends.

The goals that children set, according to Spera, are influenced by the goals their parents have for them. He says that even though minority parents value education, they may not always have experiences in education to guide them in assisting their children in pursuing educational achievement.

Regarding parenting styles and discipline, Spera discusses a distinction between a love-oriented style of parental discipline and an object-oriented disciplinary style of parents. He says that the love-oriented style of parenting has been defined as involving positive interactions with students and the holding back of these interactions as a means of discipline, while object-oriented parenting involves the giving and taking away of items such as toys or particular activities as a disciplinary technique. He explains that the children of parents who interact with their children in a love-oriented style of parenting take on the values of their parents more often than the children of parents who use object-oriented parenting do. He explains that parenting styles have been categorized two ways, as demandingness or responsiveness (Baumrind, 1991). Demanding parents are those who make demands on their children and supervise and discipline them. Responsive parents are those who encourage the individual natures of their children, support their children in monitoring their own behavior, are in tune with their children and support them in their endeavors. Spera states that authoritative parenting is associated positively with student achievement and points to emotional security, explanations which offer insight into the values of the parents and two-way communication as suggested reasons why authoritative parents and student achievement
have been linked (Durkin, 1995). He explains, however, that authoritative parenting is not associated with high student achievement in families from all ethnic groups (Baumrind, 1991) and explores the idea that there are various differences in the associations between particular parenting styles and academic achievement in adolescents. Differences in socioeconomic status may explain the differences in the correlation between particular parenting styles and academic achievement in adolescents, he says, explaining that research has shown that the association between parenting styles and academic achievement is affected by culture (Leung, et al., 1998). From this foundation created through looking at the literature on parenting styles, Spera moves on to look at empirical evidence in support of the idea of the contextual model of parenting.

Spera states that based on research he reviewed, the goals parents have for their children do not differ greatly based on ethnicity; however, he asks if SES has an effect on the socialization goals parents have for their children. He states that if parental socialization goals are similar across SES boundaries, then it could be that poorer parents may not have the resources or time to take the actions that are associated with particular socialization goals. He says that this has not been tested, but that there has been research to indicate that SES has an effect on parenting. He further explains that low SES has been linked to lower parent involvement in schools. He argues that future research should seek to determine whether SES changes the relationship between parental practices and parental socialization goals, and he says that information from such a study would offer information regarding how the socioeconomic background affects parental socialization regarding student academic achievement.
Based on his review of the literature, Spera concludes that parents have an effect on
their children’s academic achievement, that parental involvement lessens when students
become teenagers and that there should be more research into this phenomenon. He says that
parents are less involved in the education of their adolescents because they are encouraging
autonomy for their children; however, he suggests that whether or not parents can offer
students autonomy while still being involved in their children’s educational attainment is not
clear. He reiterates that research suggests that the goals, values and aspirations parents have
for their children’s academic achievement do not differ a great deal along racial lines;
however, he states that it could be SES that affects the relationship between parental
socialization goals for children and the actions of parents. Saying that the contextual model
needs to embrace the cultural and economic settings in which parents and children live and
that the need for more research in this area is needed, he suggests that the academic
achievement of adolescents and the effect of parenting practices on that achievement may be
affected by parenting styles, parenting styles being the emotional climate in which parents
raise their children and parenting practices being the specific behaviors of parents. He
concludes that the contextual model of parenting might be useful in determining the lack of
cohesiveness in research on the correlation of parenting styles and adolescent educational
success, but he argues that there is need for further study regarding how the context of
parenting has a moderating effect on the relationship between parenting styles and the
educational achievement of students in secondary school.

Summary of Theoretical Literature Regarding Parent Involvement

The theoretical literature regarding parent involvement and schools lays a solid
foundation for empirical studies by acknowledging the evolution of what is meant by parent
involvement and looking at early assumptions suggesting that the ways in which middle class parents are involved in their children’s educations are the only or best way for parents to be involved. Misrecognition of middle class parent involvement in students’ educations as the definitive parent involvement and attempts to force all parents to be involved in this same way have not led to increases in parent involvement (Epstein & Jenson, 2004).

Discussion of a link to student achievement and parent involvement and the importance of high teacher expectations of parents (Chrispeels, 1991), along with broader definitions of parent involvement, including various activities at home that are school-related (Davies, 1997) are themes in theoretical parent involvement literature. The need for teachers to be willing to learn from parents about families and the educational experiences of these families (Davies, 1997; Epstein, 2001) and the need for schools to consider changing to accommodate parents rather than attempting to force parents to change in order to meet the needs of schools (Epstein & Janson, 2004), also develop as themes in the literature.

The effect of neighborhoods on the potential for parent involvement (Eccles & Harold, 1993), the need for intentional efforts to increase parent involvement, and the importance of school and home partnerships and collaborative efforts (Davies, 1997; Whitaker, 2003) are points of discussion in the parent involvement theoretical literature, as well. The literature also explains that while peers influence students socially, parents may influence students academically (Epstein, 2001) and that parent involvement in students’ educations is too important for schools to wait for parents to decide how to be involved (Spera, 2005). The literature identifies and defines various types of parent involvement, discussing possible differences along cultural and/or socioeconomic lines, looking at both differences in parenting styles and the potential differences in outcome these differences may
predict, and emphasizing that it is important for principals to let staff, parents and students know how important parents are and that it is important to embrace a wider range of parent involvement possibilities, including those parents initiate themselves (Davies, 1997; Epstein & Janson, 2004; Spera, 2005).

Parent Involvement Empirical Literature

Parent Expectations

C. Rubie-Davies writes about his studies of expectations of student achievement from the perspectives of students, parents, and teachers within the same school communities and the inter-relationship of these stakeholders with regard to these expectations and writes about his findings in a 2010 article. Rubie-Davies builds on the concept of self-fulfilling prophecy (Merton, 1948) which had long been applied to teaching (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968) and takes the exploration of how expectations affect student achievement further to look at the expectations of parents and of the students, themselves. While establishing that less emphasis has been placed on the expectations of parents than those of teachers, Rubie-Davies points out that it has been argued that parent expectations have a powerful effect on students’ academic endeavors and that parents’ expectations influence adolescent academic achievement (Ma, 2001). There is a dearth of discussion regarding information on teachers’ expectations of parents, Rubie-Davies says, but explains that there is discussion of how the expectations teachers have of students when teachers believe their own values regarding education differ from those of students’ parents.

Rubie-Davie discusses barriers to student achievement expectations and focuses on impediments to academic expectations for students, such as the absence of support by
parents, as well as looking at secondary school tracking as being an obstacle to the fulfillment of expectations for students follow. Utilizing focus groups, Rubie-Davies explores parent, student, and teacher expectations, influences on them, and barriers to their fulfillment. With regard to parents’ expectations, he concludes that most of the parents in their focus groups wanted their children to go to the university, yet wanted their children to follow their interests. He says some parents felt teachers had high expectations and said that parents shared their belief that teachers who had low expectations lowered the expectations students had for themselves.

Rubie-Davies says that parents, students, and teachers expressed in focus groups that they believed that parents’ expectations for students were based on their wish for their children to accomplish more than they did themselves. Parents indicated that they believed their expectations did not influence students; however, according to Rubie-Davies, the belief the parents expressed was contrary to findings in previous studies that showed that parental expectations affect student achievement and that the expectations of parents have an effect on the expectations of teachers. Rubie-Davis discusses the idea that parents may not know their own influence and emphasizes that the expectations for students held by parents, students, and teachers influence and affect each other.

**Types of Parent Involvement**

In 1995, Muller explores the interaction of employment by mothers, parental involvement in schools, and the achievement of eighth graders in mathematics, building on the idea that studies have resulted in evidence that many different types of parental involvement exist (Epstein, 1991; Lareau, 1989). Based on her review of the literature,
Muller explains that studies suggest that the involvement of parents differ depending on resources the parents have available to them. She states that the effect of parents’ involvement differs for individual children and that children’s ages have an effect on the specific types of parental involvement that children need. She explains that the resources a parent has available are not always an indicator of the resources that a student will actually be able to access. Muller focuses on the idea that the resources a parent has may differ from those available to a student and explores one factor that may block a student from access to all resources a parent may have, that is employment by female parents. She studies how female parents’ employment influences the involvement of children’s mothers and children’s achievement. Muller identifies 11 forms of involvement by parents, explaining that seven forms of parent involvement take place in the home, including helping with homework and discussing school. According to Muller, four types of parent involvement are identified by interactions with people who are not members of the family. These people include parents of other children, others they interact with in their involvement in parent teacher organizations, contacts at the school, and people they meet while volunteering at the school. Muller does not identify calls to district offices as a type of parent involvement.

In her findings, Muller notes that the parents of children who perform better on tests are not as likely as other parents to contact their child’s school about academic matters or go over their children’s homework. She also notes that when mothers work part-time, they are more involved than mothers who work full-time, except for in parent teacher organizations.

Regarding the interaction of parents and schools, J. Chrispeels argues in 1996 that there is a lack of research regarding how teachers are evaluated on their interactions with parents. She discusses the fact that parental involvement has been given a lot of focus and
that policies have been developed at the national and state level. Chrispeels states that the
dismissal of teachers due to complaints of parents has been upheld by the courts and refers to
family-school partnership research which identified types of involvement of parents

**Marginalized Parents**

In a 2001 article, G. Lopez, J. Scribner, and K Mahitivanichcha examine the parent
involvement of migrant families. Their literature review is founded on an extensive
examination of the literature exploring the link between parental involvement and student
academic achievement. They state that parental involvement and student academic
achievement are linked (Eccles & Harold, 1996; Epstein, 1986; Henderson, 1987) and that
research confirms a connection between parental involvement in children’s schooling and
students’ eventual success in school. Specifically, they state that research supports the
concept that the creation of a school community that invites and encourages parental
involvement has been correlated with high student achievement (Scribners, Young, and
Pedroza, 1999). The researchers point out that the institutionalization of schooling might
dissuade parental complaints and expression of their concerns. The authors go on to state
that research indicates that parents are called on when problems occur and are often met by a
deficit model and that interaction between parents and students are often the surface of
communication and problems. The researchers explain that schools sometimes only involve
parents in formal activities that do not address the cultures of some students.

Lopez, Scribner, and Mahitivanichcha’s study examines parent involvement among
migrant families using qualitative data gathered through interviews. They determine that
essential to a successful migrant program is a dedication to fulfilling all of the various needs of the families because unmet needs keep parents from being able to participate in school involvement. School leaders need an awareness of each family’s needs and knowledge of the resources within the community, the authors state, emphasizing that learning about each family and their history is an important part of successful migrant parent involvement programs, as well. Addressing the multiple needs of migrant workers provides for the families, offers insight into migrant families and creates a connection between the parents and the schools in a significant way, explain the authors. In schools with successful programs, the researchers find that migrant students are treated like permanent students who were sometimes away from the community, a practice and perspective creating a climate of trust.

In the schools in the study, the staff addresses all the needs of the migrant families, often making sacrifices themselves. The parents are then able to feel that they are not facing challenges alone, making it easier to concentrate on their children’s educations. The researchers conclude that by moving past traditional practices and creating an invitational environment, the school districts are able to get migrant parents involved in their children’s schools, and they explain that parent involvement in these schools is much broader in perspective with parents receiving affirmation for the many parenting practices, no matter how small. In these schools, the researchers find that staff believe that every child can be successful in school even though they have difficult lives day to day, and that these schools also offer programs for self-improvement opportunities, such as GED classes, citizenship classes, etc.
Lopez, Scribner and Mahitivanichcha point out the presence of the idea in previous parent involvement literature that marginalized parents don’t have what they need to provide for their children and provide their educations. They say that rather than approaching parent involvement from a deficit model, the schools that are successful in involving migrant parents identify and support the strengths of all parents while also working to assist parents in meeting all the needs of their children. These programs consist of collaboration both within the school community and between the school and community agencies and programs. Additionally these schools offer professional development for teachers and educational programs for parents bringing the researchers to conclude that when physical and emotional needs are met, parents can focus on their children’s educations.

In a 2001 article, Chrispeels and Rivero establish the importance of involvement of parents in students’ education in a literature review (Epstein, 1991). In discussing the effect of parental involvement on academic achievement, the authors point out that parents can affect their children’s academic success in specific subjects like reading (Toomey, 1989). They explain that involvement with students such as emphasizing education with their students and communicating with the school can lessen the effects of poverty; however, they say poverty can have an effect on types and frequency of parental involvement in schools. They also note that Latino parents have difficulty in establishing communication with schools that will assist them in making a difference for their children in school. Chrispeels and Rivero establish that Latino parents care about their children’s education and that the perception of teachers’ beliefs that Latino families do not care about education affects children negatively. Further, they explore the concept that ideas regarding the degree and the way that parents should be involved in their children’s lives and their schooling can be
dissimilar in differing cultures and in various socio-economic settings (Lareau, 1989; Lightfoot, 1978).

In developing a conceptual framework, Chrispeels and Rivero focus on Chrispeels’ own 1996 identification of five categories of parent involvement: 1) communication between school and home, 2) support of the school and the child (including through attendance by parents at school events), 3) becoming familiar with each other, 4) sharing responsibility for teaching children (including through parents volunteering in the classroom), and 5) working together to decide and work for what is best for children (Hoover-Dempsey and Jones, 1996; Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1997). They state that there are three motivating factors behind parental involvement in schools: how parents visualize their roles, the effect parents feel their involvement will have, and whether or not they feel invited by the school to participate. In studying parents’ sense of their role in schools, Chrispeels and Rivero conclude that Latino parents do not always see their role as being at the school or in classrooms.

Giving Minority Parents a Voice

Susan Auerbach also looks at the view that Latino parents have of their role in their children’s educations. In a 2002 article, she shares the stories of Latino parents, their own experiences with schools and their perceptions of their experiences with the schools of their children. In her qualitative research for this article, Auerbach describes the stories of Latino parents as examples of the habitus or options, possibilities and expected behaviors they see as being related to possibilities. She states that previous research indicates that minority parents are generally not heard in schools or focused on in educational research. She says that
understanding minority cultures would assist in responding to inequalities in the educational setting. She shares stories as a means of doing this. She identifies the stories as belonging to three categories: a) the experiences of the parents when they were in school themselves, b) unwelcoming experiences the parents have had with school staff as parents of children in school, and c) stories that differ from descriptions of interactions shared by the schools themselves. Auerbach argues that school events are usually a time for school authorities and teachers to speak and not a time for minority voices to be heard. She says that asking parents to tell us their stories rather than dominating speaking opportunities would help to build a bridge between home and school for families. She says that parents’ stories carry meaning and emotion and moral understanding and that disappointment in education as well as a sense of the role parents want to play in their children’s education can be heard within them. She says that the stories reveal a perception of school employees as keepers of the key to educational opportunities. She describes encounters that Black and Latino parents had with school officials. The parents felt shut out or ignored and excluded socially from the school setting. She says that it is important for parents to have the opportunity to share experiences and describe difficulties they have with schools and that when minority parents have the opportunity to actually speak about their experiences instead of listening to school officials, they begin to develop control and responsibility for their interactions within the educational community and become empowered. Auerbach says speaking about what has happened to them and their families in schools gives parents tools for working with the schools (Eccles & Harold, 1993; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

Auerbach encourages educators to learn about families of students, offer parents opportunities to speak about their experiences and change counseling centers in high schools
to interactive and communicative places of support. She says school personnel need to work
to understand and lessen possible conflict between minority families and schools and
suggests that narrative research can create change in education and its interactions with
minority families.

**Varied Parent Involvement at Varied Schools**

In 2005, C. Hawes and L. Plourde, were inconclusive in their attempt to determine if
parental involvement specifically affects 6th grade reading scores. The researchers built their
argument for the value of their study on the established importance of school/parent
partnerships and discuss the idea that parent involvement in schools is not valued equally by
all people. The researchers determine that involving some parents is challenging because of
the parents may not feel comfortable and may have difficulty communicating. The
researchers establish the importance of parent involvement at the elementary school level has
been established and that a link between parent involvement and student success with reading
has been discussed in the literature.

**Families, Social Capital and Student Achievement**

In a 2005 study, N. Jacobs and D. Harvey explore differences in characteristics of
families and how they affect student achievement. The researchers focus on students’ homes
as being an important factor in academic success. The schools in the study are ranked and
categorized into three groups based on student achievement scores; and using a questionnaire
as a research instrument, the researchers look at parents of students at each of the three types
of schools. They establish the existence of a great deal of research regarding the greater
academic success of children from high socio-economic homes and state that parents with
education themselves are said to develop environments better suited for student academic achievement and are also more involved in their children’s educations. Jacobs and Harvey establish that a link has been found between parental expectations and student achievement and that the visions parents have for their children’s academic achievement mitigate other negative factors, such as low income and lack of involvement by parents.

The results of this study regarding how family factors influence student academic achievement indicate that parents of students in lower achieving schools have more satisfaction with their students’ education than those in higher achieving schools. The results of the study also indicate that parents of students in higher achieving schools feel that there is pressure on students to achieve. Parents of students in schools with medium or low levels of achievement did not express a sense of academic pressure. Jacobs and Harvey also find that parents of students in higher achieving schools have both higher wishes and expectations for academic achievement for their students than do the parents of students in middle or lower achieving schools. The findings regarding parent expectations are similar for lower and medium achieving schools. In this study of parents, Jacobs and Harvey find that more parents of students in high achieving schools had pursued postgraduate studies. In this study, none of the parents of students in schools with low or medium achievement places a priority on academic achievement, and parents of students in higher achieving schools not only have higher expectations for their students, but also are aware of the history of test scores in their children’s schools and have ideas about how students score as well as they did. The researchers state that parents of students in low achieving schools who are involved in their students’ educations can counteract the negative effects of low income on academic achievement. Overall, the parents at each of the schools are determined to be fairly satisfied
with their children’s schooling and the researchers establish that parent attitudes and expectations are correlated with school’s overall performance.

J. Lee and N. Bowen look at five types of involvement by parents in elementary school children’s educations in their 2006 article. They examine these types of involvement by looking at the involvement with consideration of the race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and educational level of the parents. The authors utilize the concept of Bourdieu’s cultural capital theory, seeking to determine if parents with different demographics are involved in their children’s educations in different ways. The researchers determine that the involvement by the parents does differ according to the demographics of the parents. They find that the types of involvement by the parents with higher socioeconomic status were types of involvement that are associated with academic success and that in America, education is seen as a way to combat poverty, but that inequality exists in the education system. As Lee and Bowen build the foundation for the need for their study, they express that there is an achievement gap among students that falls along socioeconomic lines and that poverty of parents has been linked to low academic achievement and that a lack of educational attainment is associated with low academic achievement in students.

Lee and Bowen establish that parental involvement has a positive effect on students’ academic achievement and state that parental involvement has been shown to be effective in mitigating the effects of poverty on academic achievement. They conclude that parental involvement has been recommended as a possible means for reducing the achievement gap and list the types of parent involvement that can take place at school. These types of involvement include attending programs, conferences with teachers, and volunteering. Lee and Bowen explain that types of parent involvement that can take place at home include
talking about school work and activities at school, homework help, and planning activities at home. They explain, however, that efforts to lessen the achievement gap through parent involvement do not always work because sometimes the parents of students who have lower academic achievement sometimes are impeded in involvement. The authors also say that the effectiveness of parent involvement on lessening the achievement gap may be affected by the fact that the positive influence of parent involvement may be less for some families than for others.

The researchers discuss the measurement of parent involvement, stating that the effects of parent involvement on student achievement vary based on the measurement of the involvement and that the involvement of parents at school has been linked to academic achievement in many studies. They say that the link between parent involvement at home and academic achievement is not as well established and point out that many home activities are not associated with students’ academic achievement. They do say that teacher’s assessments of children’s reading and math abilities have been linked with reports from parents that they are involved with their children at home in academic activities and that the expectations and aspirations that parents have for their children have an effect on students’ academic achievement.

The authors establish that parent involvement has a positive effect on the academic achievement of all children; however, they go on to state that the impact is affected by demographics, saying that involvement in parent-teacher organizations and monitoring of academic activities and practices for supporting education have a greater effect on academic achievement for European American students than for African American, Hispanic, or American students, students with a low socioeconomic status, or students from single parent
homes. They explain that there are differences in how different types of parent involvement are linked to student achievement in reading and math for students with different racial and socioeconomic demographic make-ups and explain that it has been found that the cultural capital of European American parents amplifies the effect of their involvement on their children’s academic achievement and that parental communication with the school, going over homework, supporting outside reading, and involvement in school activities boosted the academic achievement of African American and Latino students more than that of Asian American students. They argue that while it has been shown that parent involvement is linked positively to student academic achievement, a greater knowledge of how different types of involvement by parents of different demographic profiles affect student achievement could assist educators in knowing how to utilize parent involvement to address the achievement gap.

The fact that parent involvement in education presents a connection between two contexts that are important to a child and the concept of microsystems in which children live and learn are both explored by Lee and Bowen. They argue that parental involvement in school encourages a mutual respect and a situation in which the values and practices at home and school may be aligned and state that parent involvement at school has been discussed more in the literature than parent involvement at home, but they argue that both may be related to the achievement gap. The theories of social and cultural capital, Lee and Bowen say, applied to home-school relationships may offer knowledge of the intractability of the achievement gap and assist in determining ways to address that gap. They explain that social and cultural capital theories focus on the relationships and connections that individuals have and the ways that social networks make resources available. Bourdieu, they argue, looks at
the inequality in cultural capital that individuals possess, focusing, for example, on the discrepancies between the culture of an individual and the culture of a society or the institutions, such as schools, within a society. They delineate Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus and field. Habitus, they explain, being the attitudes and practices of an individual that stem from one’s own upbringing. A field, the authors say, is a network of relationships both at an intimate level and in the larger society. Cultural capital for parents, they argue, in relation to the education of their students consists of individual practices, points-of-view, and experiential knowledge, individuals’ relationships with tangible items related to education such as books and computers, and affiliations with educational establishments such as libraries, universities, and schools. Habitus, they explain, is related to an individual. They state that cultural capital and habitus can be difficult to distinguish and argue that while cultural capital may be identified with individuals or families, cultural capital within the educational setting is the manifestation of the connection between the habitus, that is the characteristics of behaviors, practices, and beliefs of an individual, and the educational system in which a family finds itself interacting. They explain that if a family possesses cultural capital, it is easier for them to acquire more cultural capital. They state that some families have cultural capital that is related to the habitus that they formed in their families, giving them an advantage when they interact in the field of educational systems. On the other hand, the authors state that those who have less cultural capital meet barriers that end in uneven access to resources.

Parents whose habitus, that is proclivity for particular practices and beliefs, differs from others may practice different types of parent involvement. These differences in habitus, the authors explain may stem from different socioeconomic standings, varied educational
experiences and knowledge. The authors explain what the different types of parent involvement may look like along varied types of habitus. A parent who did not obtain a high level of education may not feel at ease with school staff. Some parents may place a higher value on involvement with their children’s schoolwork at home rather than at school, but the researchers state that parents from all socioeconomic backgrounds place a high value on education. The authors suggest that Bourdieu’s theory that individuals from less dominant groups possess less social capital is supported by a determination that involvement in their children’s education by parents from less dominant groups has less of an effect on academic achievement than involvement by parents from dominant groups.

Building on Bourdieu’s concept of social capital and the idea that individuals from different socioeconomic backgrounds and demographic make-ups have different cultural capital and are different in their habitus in relation to education, the researchers determine that their study will be to look at five types of parent involvement and seek to determine whether the effects of the parent involvement was different between families with different social status. They explain that socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, and the level of education obtained by the parents would be used as measures of social status, and they clarify that varied levels of parent involvement might represent differences in the educational habitus of parents, and that varied effect of parent involvement might illustrate differences in cultural capital. The hypothesis that the researchers present is that parents from different social classes would be involved in their children’s educations in different ways and that the involvement of parents of European American origin, parents who are not poor, and parents who have greater levels of educational attainment would have a stronger association with their children’s academic achievement. They also seek to determine if involvement by
parents who are African American or Hispanic, parents who have less income, and parents with less education achieve less benefit for their children through their involvement in their children’s educations than European American parents, parents with more education, and parent who are not poor.

The researchers work with students who are African American, Latino, or European American and have complete data on the variables assessed. The variables are race/ethnicity, participation or lack of participation in the free or reduced-price lunch program, and level of their parents’ education. Lee and Bowen look at five categories of parent educational involvement. These categories include various components. Three aspects of parent involvement at school are related to the parent visiting the school for conferences, volunteering, or events. These components are looked at as one category of parent involvement. Lee and Bowen state that parent involvement at the school has been the traditional measure of parent involvement in their children’s education and that parent involvement at the school is positively associated with student academic achievement. They look at three types of parent involvement at home. These categories are talking about topics related to education with the student, assisting with homework, and structuring the child’s time with activities related to literacy. The fifth category of parent involvement consists of the parents’ educational goals for their children with regard to the educational level that they want their children to achieve. Lee and Bowen state that the educational goals parents have for their children predict student academic achievement use Chi-square statistics and t tests to look at parent involvement and student achievement by demographic characteristics. They use hierarchical regression to analyze the effects of demographics and types of parent involvement on student academic achievement.
The researchers find that levels of parent involvement and student achievement differ according to demographic groups with the gaps in achievement between students from different racial/ethnic groups, socioeconomic status, and educational levels of their parents. They state that European American students have higher achievement and that the achievement of students who were not poor is higher than that of students who are. The researchers find that race/ethnicity is associated with differences in parent involvement, that European American parents are more involved more frequently through activities at the school and managed their children’s time at home less than African American or Latino parents and that European American parents discuss education with their children more than African American or Latino parents do.

Free or reduced lunch program participation status is linked to different levels of four of the categories of parent involvement in the study. Compared to the parents of children who do not receive free or reduced-price lunch, the parents of children who participate in the program are less involved in activities at the school, have fewer conversations about education at home, and lower educational aspirations for their children in the findings of the study. The parents of children who participate in the program express more instances of attempting to manage their children’s time after school and focusing on reading; and there is no difference between the two groups with regard to assisting their children with homework. The researchers find that parents with two or more years of college (or who live with someone else who helps care for the children who has two or more years of college) are more involved at the school, have more conversations about education with their children at home, have higher educational aspirations for their children than the parents who do not have two
years of college. They find that the level of education of parents does not have a relationship with the amount of homework help or attempts to manage their children’s time.

The researchers find evidence of the achievement gap in their study. They find that children of parents with higher socioeconomic status have greater academic achievement than students who live in poverty and that children of European American descent have greater academic achievement than students who are African American or Latino. They state that the variables of race and socioeconomic status have more of a relationship to student achievement than parent involvement does; however, the researchers find that the achievement gap is also related to differences in parent involvement and the relationship of demographics to parent involvement.

The involvement of parents in their children’s education is evident among parents of all racial/ethnic backgrounds, levels of education, and socioeconomic status; yet some parents are not involved with their children’s educations at school. The researchers find differences in levels of parent involvement along socioeconomic and racial lines and they associate these differences to Bourdieu’s concept of habitus. They state that the differences in parent involvement by groups may be due to different beliefs about involvement. They discuss that a lack of resources and the inability to acquire access to the school is aligned with Bourdieu’s theories regarding cultural capital. The researchers find that involvement at their children’s schools is common among parents who were the most like their children’s teachers, such as parents who are of European American descent, whose children do not participate in the free or reduced-price lunch program, and who have achieved a level of education equal to that of the teachers. The researchers seek to explain this fact by saying that some parents may not be involved at their children’s schools for psychological reasons.
They say perceived racism results in less parent involvement at school and more parent involvement at home and state that parents of lower socioeconomic status have indicated they are not confident in dealing with their children’s teachers and consider the teachers to be the experts in education. The authors discuss the possible disadvantage children may have if their parents are not involved at school and the importance of home-school connections for student achievement.

Lee and Bowen do not find clear differences in parent educational involvement at home by group and they do not find that educational aspirations for children differ by race; however, they do find that the educational expectations of parents who whose children do not participate in the free and reduced-price lunch program are higher than those of parents whose children do. The authors explain that differences in parent involvement can be made less definitive by the fact that parents may be involved in their children’s education as a response to their children’s poor academic performance, but they suggest that the differences may be explained by Bourdieu’s habitus. They explain that groups have different beliefs and practices regarding how parents should be involved in their children’s educations. Specifically, they say some groups, in particular, are more inclined to think it is important to help children with homework and manage their time at home than it is to visit the school. They suggest that if schools respect the importance of these practices to some families, that the achievement gap could be addressed.

The researchers find a link between the demographic aspects of families and the academic achievement of students. They find that race/ethnicity and lunch program participation are more strongly associated with student achievement than parent involvement is; however, they find that the positive influence of a high level of educational attainment by
parents can be affected by levels of parent involvement. The authors explain this fact by turning to social capital theory which they say includes the argument that the capital of parents only has a positive effect on children’s academic achievement if the parents focus that capital on their children, as in parent involvement. When demographic characteristics of parents are not considered, parent involvement at school and educational aspirations parents hold for their children have the greatest positive relationship to student achievement. Parent involvement at school is linked to higher academic achievement for all students in the study. The researchers state that disadvantages stemming from demographics seem to affect whether or not parents can or do go to their children’s schools, but do not lessen the positive effect of the parents’ presence on their children’s academic achievement once they are there.

Higher parental educational aspirations for children are linked with higher academic achievement by students regardless of demographic characteristics, the researchers say, explaining; however, that the effect of parents’ educational expectations for their children is less for those who participate in free or reduced price lunch programs, possibly due to a difference in human, social, and cultural capital in these families. They say that poverty’s effects on benefits of parental educational expectations on student achievement is aligned with Bourdieu’s views regarding unequal access to capital.

The authors conclude that Bourdieu’s concepts were applicable as a conceptual framework for their study of the amount and the effect of parent involvement on student achievement. They say their findings offer support of Bourdieu’s theory of habitus and social capital and that the differences in levels of parent involvement from parents with different socioeconomic status are aligned with Bourdieu’s ideas regarding habitus. The fact that parent involvement at school and high educational aspirations have the greatest positive
relationship to student achievement and were found most among parents from the dominant groups, is reflective of Bourdieu’s argument that some individuals have a habitus that is in synch with a particular institution, in this case the field of education. They go on to state that their finding regarding the effect of parent involvement does not offer support of Bourdieu’s concepts because there was a positive effect from some types of parent involvement on all students, regardless of demographic characteristics, and there are dissimilar effects from other types of parent involvement.

The researchers suggest that schools need to appreciate and incorporate all kinds of involvement by parent and argue that most parents involve themselves in their children’s educations in some way, seeing school as a valuable resource. They say schools need to be aware of the effect of cultural capital on relationships between schools and parents and say that schools need to promote parent involvement by building on the special assets of each family. They identify more similarities than dissimilarities in beliefs school staff and parents have regarding parent involvement and say it would not take a lot of change on the part of either parents or schools to address student achievement through parent involvement, suggesting that schools recognize the similarities instead of focusing on differences, adjusting opportunities for parent involvement and offering resources for parent involvement both at home and at school.

**Parent Involvement as a Social Construct**

Susan Auerbach begins her 2006 article by stating that the fact that Latino parents give their children moral support for education and the fact that parent involvement has an effect on student achievement and on whether or not students go to college have both been
well established. She then asks how Latino immigrant parents who do not have a lot of formal education or knowledge of college themselves support their children in their pursuit of college. She says that social location affects the support that low SES Latino immigrant parents can give their children with regard to their educations. She says that their class and racial or ethnic backgrounds give them more challenges to overcome in attempting to support their children in education. For example, they may not be fluent in English or they may not have an understanding of the school system.

She says that Latino parents often support their children’s educations through stories that teach and through advice and she goes on to explain that the Latino parents in her study placed a priority on moral and emotional support for their children as a means for supporting their children’s pursuit of college. She concludes that educators need to recognize the fact that Latino parents support their children’s education in many ways, such as offering moral support or facing challenges in their personal lives and the lives of their families to make pursuing an education possible for their children.

In a 2007 study and resulting article, Susan Auerbach seeks to determine how parents who have been marginalized by society develop their roles in promoting their children’s opportunities in education. In establishing the need for her study, Auerbach points to the influence parents have on their children’s pursuit of college, the fact that minorities are underrepresented in college and the need for more parent involvement.

Auerbach states that the traditional perspective of family-school partnerships and the studies about this type of parent involvement do not explore whether or not parents have access to involvement. She explains that in most studies of parent involvement, there is an
assumption that schools are neutral, that there is cooperation between the schools and parents and that parent involvement is natural; however, Auerbach argues that parent involvement is a concept that has been created, not a natural impulse. She points out that schools are not neutral. She explains that when parent involvement is conceived of as a school-family partnership, the inequalities in society are ignored and the ways that the roles of parents and school-home relationship mirror society are not acknowledged.

She says that the inequality in social, cultural, and economic capital and the fact that schools do not value what families with low socioeconomic status bring to schools limit the opportunities that families have for involvement in their children’s schools. She points out that minority parents are ostracized by differences in culture and by racism and explains that minority parents have more mistrust of schools than parents of dominant cultures do because of the fact that schools have let their communities down.

Auerbach’s study relies on ethnographic data. She seeks to share information on a different description of roles parents might take as they work to promote their children’s educational opportunities. She asks what parents who have never been to college do when they want their children to go to college. She says that minority parents of lower income are possibly pushed by specific concerns related to their own positions in society, such as their desire to help their children get through school or a desire for opportunities for changing the social position of their family.

Auerbach states that the efforts of these marginalized parents are often not noticed by school staff and argues for developing new concepts regarding the roles of parents in education, stating that a different perspective on parent roles will include more parents and
families in education and will contribute to equity. Auerbach points out that rather than being a natural phenomenon, parent involvement in schools has been developed by society as a privilege of white middle-class parent and as something expected by grandparents. She says that parent involvement belongs to the privileged and only includes particular behaviors, like homework assistance and special activities at the school. She says that teachers often believe that minority parents and parents with lower socioeconomic status do not care about their children’s educations.

Auerbach shares the argument against the stance that minority and low socio-economic parents are apathetic regarding their children’s educations and says that educators are just not aware of the effort that lower income parents are making to support their children’s educations. She explains that for a long period discussion of parent involvement has been founded on early work regarding parent involvement and the concept of partnerships between family and school and says that this discussion has centered on the idea that children have systems they participate in that overlap each other and that these are school, home, and community. Auerbach moves on to identify types of parent involvement described in early parent involvement literature which she says has been argued that schools should encourage. She describes these as daily care-taking, communicating with the school, working with the child academically at home, assisting in making decisions at school, and fostering connections between the school and the community (Epstein, 1991, 1995).

Auerbach counters theories that include definitions of parent involvement focused on school and home connections over emphasize the school and parent involvement at the school and for the school and that these perspectives on school involvement seek to fulfill the goals of educators rather than those of parents. She explains that the perspective of parent
involvement as a partnership between the school and the home does not address the fact that some parents feel like they are excluded from schools and work to take care of their children within what they may consider to be unaware of their needs.

Auerbach argues that most parent involvement literature has emphasized involvement at or for the school instead of family and home-oriented activities that support families and may be practiced in diverse communities. She says that qualitative research would bring out information about non-school-centered parent involvement and that parents with a higher socioeconomic status often are involved in anticipating their children’s academic needs and advocating for their children, while lower income parents are more likely to be involved in ways that are more often behind the scenes in their support of their children’s education. She points out that parents who do not have low socioeconomic status are more likely to advocate for their children, put pressure on the schools and attempt to affect the decisions that are made regarding their educations while parents with lower SES do not have as much influence or power and have less clarity with regard to their relationships with their children’s schools.

Auerbach explains that these differences in ability, opportunity, and motivation to advocate for these children result in higher SES children having educations aligned with their specific needs while lower SES children have a more general education. She says that race, too, has an effect on parents’ influence on their children’s educations and that minority parents do not have as much communication with their children’s schools and are more inclined to be uncomfortable and lack trust. She says these parents also experience lack of interest from school staff in the infrequent contact they do have with them.
Auerbach has a theory that the roles parents play in their students’ educations are created by social class and race, cultural themes and practices and by psychosocial resources and relationships. She says that the construction of parents’ roles is created where these aspects of socialization overlap. She delineates that minority parents with less economic resources who want their children to go to college have more institutional obstacles to cross and fewer resources, including knowledge regarding the institution of education. She says that the beliefs and values of individuals offer them particular points-of-view or themes as a result of processing the worlds and making sense of what they see and experience. She further explains that the ability that people have to change their circumstances is usually recognized by individuals rather than groups. The ability of parents to speak up for their children and take action to make pursuing college possible is dependent on the capacity of family.

She explains the four-part model, arguing that examining the roles of parents is a reliable way to predict whether or not parents will become involved in their children’s educations. She says the second most important factor influencing parent involvement is the parents’ sense of whether or not they will be effective if they put forth the effort. The third most influential factor consists of whether or not the child encourages the parent to be involved, and the fourth factor is the level of invitations and encouragement by the school and the teachers.

In Auerbach’s study, parents who are considered working class, show a lot of diversity in the way they develop their roles. Their involvement in their children’s education is not always directly connected to the school, but includes other ways of supporting their children, like giving their children approval for pursuing college educations.
Auerbach examines many ways that parents contribute and sees her perspective as being in direct contrast to early ideas regarding parent involvement due to the way the difficulties faced by some parents and her identification of some parents as protectors and advocates. Auerbach argues that the narrow perspective of the family-school partnership model excludes many parents, and she establishes a spectrum of support that parents offer in various ways and in varying degrees. She explains that some parents are involved in very tangible ways at school and other parents are not as directly involved and says that demographic make-up of parents is aligned with parent roles.

Auerbach finds that parents who are protectors are similar to the minority parents who have been identified in studies as working to give their children self-confidence and resilience as a part of their minority population familial social training in order to provide children the ability to withstand negative experiences that they may encounter due to racism or poverty. She said that these same parents shared a lack of trust for establishment and hesitancy in interacting with school staff.

Auerbach points out that minorities who did not choose to be minorities, such as African American and Latinos who were born in the United States, are more likely to have more conflicting feelings about the value of participation in formal school activities than minorities who have actually made a choice to be minorities, such as first generation immigrant families. Auerbach concludes that these families utilize their emotional resources to be sensitive to their children’s needs and build their children’s self-confidence. She said that the closeness between parent and child can interfere with goals for college attainment for the children.
Auerbach concludes that differences in social position have an effect on the roles the parents develop for themselves with regard to schools. She discusses the fact that some parents have an advantage because they are more familiar with the educational arena. She explains that some parents have more connections and more understanding of college. She explains that the personal school experience parents have had influences their attitudes toward school. Some parents talked about the barriers they encountered in their own educations. If the parents of these individuals were not involved in their educations, developing a role as an involved parent is especially difficult for them.

The parents in Auerbach’s study from all socioeconomic backgrounds look to their children for invitations to be involved. Some parents believe their children have enough academic ability to make it possible for the students to make their own way to college. Some parents believe their children need extra assistance. While yet another type of parent lets their children take the lead in letting them know what the parents know what they might need.

The interactions that parents have with school staff have an effect on the roles that parents develop. If parents feel rejected by school staff, they may respond by reacting in particular ways and they may develop roles according to the behaviors they develop as a result. If school staff welcomes parents, the reactions that parents have contribute to their role development. The roles that parents develop affect their children’s experience in school and help to determine if the students will experience conflict. Some parents simply send their children off in the right direction to achieve college aspirations; while other parents advocate and utilize their connections. Yet another group of parents delight in their
children’s college ambitions but discourage them from leaving at the same time, giving the children mixed messages.

Auerbach argues that parents have complicated identities and bring various strengths and abilities to schools. She says that schools need to accommodate minority parents just as they strive to accommodate their children. She says that schools need to look at the development of parents’ roles. She explains that parent involvement has traditionally been considered a partnership between the school and home with an emphasis on school-centered goals. She argues that the many other roles that parents take on with regard to their children are equally valuable and should be explored and accepted. With her study, Auerbach establishes that school personnel need to have a larger views of what parent involvement is and appreciate a wider spectrum of parent involvement roles and practices. Auerbach explains that educators need to be taught that there are many ways parents contribute to the school environment and their children’s educations. She also states that valuable outcomes for parent support include not only raising student achievement but assisting children in moving through the educational system and developing opportunity. She says that schools need to reduce obstacles to home and school relationships, increase communication and utilize the passion with which parents care for their children. In conclusion, she argues that educators need to look at how parents really feel and directly examine the ways that race and socioeconomics affect relationships between schools and homes.

In a 2007 article, Auerbach continues the discussion, first establishing an emphasis on involving families and the community in schools. She discusses the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and makes reference to the positive relationship between parent involvement and student academic achievement. In this article, Auerbach writes about a qualitative study of
12 urban administrators known for their commitment to engaging parents in their children’s educations. She argues that in order for parents to involve parents in education in a way that will make a difference, data are needed regarding the work of educational leaders that are able to successfully engage parents.

Auerbach establishes the link between student achievement and parent involvement and states that parents, especially those with a low income or who are minorities, are more frequently involved in their children’s educations when they are asked to participate, when there are a variety of different opportunities for participation, when they feel their voices are heard, and when they are approached in ways that are aligned with their particular cultural values. She argues that nearly all parents feel that education is important, but minority parents and parents living in poverty are often involved in their children’s educations in ways that are not necessarily recognized by schools. She points to the dissension between students’ homes and schools and the argument that the dissension might be caused by differing orientation and priorities between parents and schools and the fact that parents may feel excluded from school and have a sense that they have no authority there. She says that when school leaders say they want to work with parents, they look at parents as something to manage and do not want to share their authority with them.

The researcher’s study is based conceptually on the ideas of shared responsibility and leadership, social capital theory, opportunities-to-lead concepts and psychosocial role theory. She discusses the restraint school leaders often exhibit in sharing their leadership with parents. She says there is a dearth of literature regarding empirical studies of school leaders sharing their leadership with parents, but there is a great deal of literature regarding the resistance of school leaders to sharing their power. She focuses on the tension between the
literature that encourages the involvement of parents in education and the fact that school leaders express concern when parents speak up regarding what they want for their children and their children’s schools. She explains that parents who speak up regarding their children’s educations do not accept the power structure of schools and do not always follow the roles that may have been set for them.

Auerbach explains that urban school leaders who really want to share the leadership of their schools with parents must develop the social capital of families who live in poverty. She defines social capital as active social networks through which practices and expectations, dependability and respect, and mutuality are shared. She says that urban schools usually have a dearth of positive relationships between parents and educators and that families need connections with individuals in the educational system if they are to be successful in pursuing goals of social mobility. She suggests that this need of families is similar to the need for high school students to have connections within the school in order to be successful in accomplishing their goals for social mobility. She says that urban schools need to appreciate more of the social capital that students do bring to schools and that they should stimulate the social capital of students living in poverty through school-family partnerships.

Auerbach asks why some school leaders have a proclivity for encouraging parent involvement and others do not. She says that four characteristics that lead to school-community partnerships have been identified. These are 1) the vision that the principal has of leadership and his or her role, 2) the actual work that must be done to create school-community connections, 3) the ability of the principal, and 4) the environment in which the school exists (Honig, 1998). Auerbach extrapolates this concept regarding school-community partnerships to argue that for school leaders to be able to develop authentic
engagement of the parents of the children in their schools these four characteristics must be present: a vision of parent involvement on the part of the principal, the role of the principal in making it happen, the principal’s ability and the context in which the school exists. She explains that roles are developed by socialization and by following models within a context. She says that the way that parents develop their roles in their children’s educations based on what they believe their role should be regarding how much involvement they should have and how well they are able to express that role will determine how much they are involved.

Auerbach’s studies the vision school leaders have of parent involvement and their role in developing parent engagement. Her study takes place in four school zones within the Los Angeles Unified School district. Her article focuses on two zones. These two zones were selected due to recognition for their involvement of parents in schools and because they create a context conducive to parent involvement such as a district staff to handle parent complaints, individuals to work with parent advisory groups, newsletters for parents and conferences for parents with workshops on topics of interest to parents. One of the zones had parent centers in almost every school along with parent liaisons.

Auerbach collect data through interviews and then codes the data for themes that were repeated and were of interest to the study. She seeks to determine how school leaders view parent involvement and finds that many of the school leaders who participated in her study use language she associates with early definitions of parent involvement, including Epstein’s model of six types of parent involvement. These types include 1) parents in caring for their children, 2) communicating with the school, 3) volunteering at the school, 4) focus on learning in the home, 5) helping make decisions at the school, and 6) partnerships within the community (Epstein, 1995). Auerbach finds that the school leaders in her study express
that the first four of Epstein’s types of parent involvement as being supportive of student achievement. The school leaders in the study barely mention participation in decision-making by parents as being beneficial to student achievement. In the study, the example of initiatives the schools make to encourage parent involvement that mentioned most often is training the parents on topics related to education. The school leaders participating in the study explain that Latino parents are involved in activities and training at the school that focus on assisting students with their work. The school leaders share that they knew other educators who discounted the positive influence that parents who may have limited English can make on student achievement. Auerbach points out that the leaders in her study state that encouraging parent involvement is a way to raise test scores and not just the right thing to do for the parents themselves; however, Auerbach notes that the school leaders did not share any a view of empowering parents or developing parents as school leaders or as school decision-makers, with the exception of one principal who involved parents in making decisions even though it made school decision-making more complicated.

In conclusion, Auerbach is able to identify several categories of leaders with regard to their visions of parent involvement, those with vision, those who model, leaders who garner and focus resources, leaders who listen and facilitate, and leaders who manage parent concerns in a more traditional way. She determines that only a few leaders used language associated with shared or distributive leadership, concepts related to developing the social capital of parents, or connecting parent involvement with concepts of social justice and equity. She states that more respondents use language related to developing trust and nurturing relationships and creating a school culture that encouraged family involvement
instead of language that promotes shared leadership and parent participation in school decision-making or a broader and more inclusive approach.

Auerbach finds that school leaders in the study have differing perceptions regarding how many opportunities they actually have for developing parent involvement through their leadership and also differ in the degree to which they take action when they did see these opportunities to different degrees. The leaders in her study that Auerbach identifies as having vision were aware of opportunities for developing parent engagement but they feel constrained by barriers outside their control. She also finds that the school leaders who have opportunities to communicate and work together begin to have similar positive practices and leadership behaviors in the area of developing parent engagement.

Auerbach determines that her study focuses attention on benefits of parent involvement that are larger than those that are usually discussed. She said that the majority of the leaders in her study look at parent involvement as a means of increasing student achievement. Auerbach establishes that most studies have focused on examining the effects of parent involvement on student achievement instead of on the more theoretical benefits of parent engagement. She argues that seeing parent involvement only as a method for increasing student achievement shows disregard of the real needs of families and says that visionary leaders see parent engagement as being important for social justice, for lifting up communities and as valuable for families rather than as only a means of increasing student achievement.

As Auerbach discusses the results of her study, she states that there must be assurance that programs that prepare school leaders have a direct focus on developing the abilities of
those leaders to cultivate parent engagement. She recommends that educational leadership programs create partnerships with communities for giving school leaders community experience, place school leaders in short internships or give them opportunities for experience with community leaders, introduce school leaders to strong parent leaders and to educational leaders who are strong in parent engagement development and community involvement, give educational leadership students assignments that necessitate their pushing beyond their usual practices and offer school leaders opportunities to participate in simulations and role-playing as a method for developing their skills and abilities for developing parent engagement.

**Parent Involvement as a Recursive Phenomenon**

In a 2011 article, C. Ice and K. Hoover-Dempsey article delineate the results of a longitudinal study of parent motivation for involvement in their children’s educations. They look at parents of children who are home-schooled and parents of children who are in public school. They explain that they chose these two distinct groups because they believe that parents who homeschool their children may have different community and family experiences and influences than those who send their children to public school, and they suggest that those differences might create differences in the motivation for parent involvement.

They state that parents of children who are homeschooled have strong individualized motivation for involvement and look at the link between the motivation for parent involvement and a child’s invitation to a parent to become involved. They suggest that this
may be different for parents who homeschool their children and parents who have their children in public school.

The researchers suggest that motivations for parent involvement may predict student achievement. They propose that beliefs held by parents and the societal context in which they find themselves may have an effect on the decisions parents make about being involved with their children’s education. They argue that there are three main factors behind the motivation for parental involvement. These are 1) the parents’ belief regarding their role in their children’s education and their sense of their ability to have an effect if they do become involved, 2) invitations to become involved either from the school in general, the teachers specifically, or their child, and 3) their own individual lives with regard to their skill, knowledge, and time (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997, 2005).

In their study, the researchers focus on the parents’ beliefs and children’s invitations to parents to be involved. They also focus on the social networks and social support available to parents because these might have an effect on the decision parents make regarding becoming involved and may affect the types of involvement parents choose, as well. They also look at the involvement of these parents with their children at home.

Ice and Hoover-Dempsey state that studies of elementary and middle school students promote the idea that the belief of parents regarding the roles they should take in their involvement in their children’s education influences what they will do. They argue that parents’ level of belief in their ability to help their children be successful in school has an influence on their commitment regarding involvement in their children’s education. They say that how effective a person thinks they will be in pursuing a goal influences the actions
they will take toward achieving that goal and they apply this self-efficacy theory to parent involvement based on previous research (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997, 2005).

Ice and Hoover-Dempsey look at parents’ perspectives on requests for their involvement from their children and other motivating factors from the context of the school, family, and community. They state that it has been established that invitations to parents asking them to be involved have the strongest positive link to involvement in educational activities both at home and at school for public school parents (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1995, 1997, and 2005). Ice and Hoover-Dempsey state that if parents have a good understanding of school expectations due to ties to teachers and other school families, they have more opportunities to be involved.

They explain that parent involvement has been defined as the focus of a range of parent resources on their children’s education (Epstein, 1986). They go on to explain that student achievement as seen in grades and standardized achievement data has been linked with parent involvement (Epstein, 1991; Jeynes, 2003, 2007) while others have found either no correlation or a negative relationship between parent involvement and student achievement (Fan & Chen, 2001; Natriello & McDill, 1989). They explain that the contradictory findings may be because parent involvement does increase student achievement; but some parent involvement occurs because students are doing poorly in school and while parent involvement makes a positive difference, the achievement of these students is still behind.

Much of the research on parent involvement has found that the aspect of children’s education most affected by parent involvement is not data points measuring student
achievement, but on other student characteristics, according to the authors (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001); however, these characteristics lead to achievement. The researchers point out that in 2005, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler found four such characteristics that are affected by parent involvement. The researchers include three of these characteristics in their study. They are academic self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation to learn, and the ability of the student to regulate him or herself. They did not include Hoover-Dempsey’s fourth characteristic because it is social self-efficacy for interacting with teachers, and home-schooled students and students in public school would have very different contexts.

The researchers state that if a person believes he will be successful that he will behave in ways that are aligned with success. They go on to say that regarding academics, self-efficacy includes the belief in one’s ability to complete school work with success. Students with high self-efficacy usually do better at academic tasks then students with low self-efficacy.

Regarding students’ motivation to learn, the researchers explain that intrinsic motivation to learn refers to children learning because they are interested and want to learn rather than to please others or because of outside consequences or rewards, that intrinsic motivation to learn is developed through the influence of students’ parents’ behavior and that differences in students’ intrinsic motivation to learn have been linked to differences in students’ achievement. As it relates to children in school, they define self-regulation as the ability to act in ways that promote learning and the ability to monitor one’s self, schedule time to study and choose a place to study, and the ability to ask for help when needed. They explain that parent involvement has been associated positively with students’ self-regulation (Hoover-Dempsey, 2006).
The relationship between parents’ motivations for involvement in their children’s education and their involvement in activities at home, and children’s achievement was the subject of Ice and Hoover-Dempsey’s research, along with determining differences between home-school and public-school parents with regard to their beliefs and behaviors concerning parent involvement in education. The researchers found that both home-school and public-school parents had high motivation for involvement in their children’s education. The researchers determined that parents’ reporting that their children asked them to be involved was the greatest predictor of parent involvement at home according to both parents and students. In addition, they found a positive relationship between parents’ social support networks and social support and parents’ beliefs about their role in their children’s education; however, they found that there was not a positive relationship between parent-reported home-based parent involvement and student-reported achievement. They say that when children specifically asked their parents to be involved, there was an increase in at-home involvement in children’s educations by both home-school parents and public-school parents.

Through this study, the researchers established that there was a significant relationship between parent involvement reported by either the parents or the students and student characteristics for achievement. After controlling for prior student achievement; however, there was not a significant relationship between parents’ involvement and students’ achievement.

The researchers argue that parents’ involvement can be increased in public school settings simply by having children ask their parents to be involved because students’ invitations increase parent involvement. Additionally, working to increase parents’ sense of effectiveness will also increase parent involvement since the study established that parents
are more involved when they feel that their involvement will make a difference. The researchers also concluded that parents’ beliefs about the roles they should take regarding involvement in their children’s education and their sense of their social support and social networks had less effect on whether or not parents are involved than parents’ sense of their efficacy and the invitations they receive from their children.

In 2011, D. Zhang, H. Hsien-Yuan, K. Oi-man, M. Benz, M., and L. Bowman-Perrott state that empirical evidence has shown a relationship between parent involvement in education and student academic achievement. They explain that the purpose of their study is to look at how parent involvement affects the academic achievement of students with disabilities. They also look at the effects of race/ethnicity. The authors delineate that parent involvement has been identified in varied ways. They explain that one description of parent involvement is that it involves activities at schools. They suggest that parent involvement is parent-teacher communication regarding students’ academic achievement, such as homework assistance, parent involvement in activities as school, and parent involvement in mentally challenging activities at home. They explain that in their study, they will look at parent involvement at school and at home, specifically parent involvement in activities at school, parent/child discussions about children’s experiences at school, and parents’ goal for their children to graduate from high school.

The researchers write about prior research regarding parent involvement and students’ academic achievement and say that it indicated that the learning environment at school and educational programs sponsored by schools for low-income families improved student achievement. They state that involvement by parents had a positive influence on students’ achievement in elementary, middle, and high schools.
The authors argue that demographic characteristics influence parent involvement in students’ educations, and they identify the most well-known of such demographic characteristics to be ethnicity, educational achievement level of the parents themselves, and socioeconomic status. They state that the ethnicity of parents has a relationship with students’ GPAs, while parent involvement had a positive effect on the GPAs of students of every ethnicity. They point out that minority parents saw helping their children with homework as a way to make a difference in their children’s educations and that racial/ethnic status has an effect on the influence of parent involvement on student achievement. The authors share that some researchers found that parents with high socioeconomic status are more likely to be involved in their students’ school.

Student characteristics, say the authors, have an effect on parent involvement and they state specifically that when a family’s resources are limited they lower their support of their male children rather than for the female children because males are seen as more independent. The authors say that it has been established that the effect of parent involvement on students’ grades was the same for boys and girls and that the grade levels of students had no influence on the effect of parental involvement on student achievement. They agree that there is a need for a study of the effect of parent involvement on the academic achievement of students with disabilities, and they found that parents in lower socioeconomic status families had less involvement in their children’s schools. They found that Caucasian parents were more involved in activities at school than families of other races or ethnicities. The researchers suggest that minority parents with the same socioeconomic status may prefer different types of involvement, for example, Asian parents prefer to assist children with homework over volunteering at school.
The authors conclude that parent involvement in education is important for children in special education and say that schools and school districts need to put policies in place to develop parent involvement. They argue that different types of involvement need to be available and appreciated in order to address the varied needs, expectations, and practices of diverse cultures.

In a 2011 article, J. Froiland focuses on what parents say to students to increase their intrinsic motivations to achieve. The author begins with a review of the literature and establishes that intrinsic motivation of students is associated with higher student achievement. He notes that intrinsic motivation for learning declines as students move into secondary school. In this study, the researcher looks for ways to encourage intrinsic motivation to learn in students. Froiland focuses on instructing parents in how to communicate with their children in a manner that supports their children’s autonomy and helps children set goals for themselves and he then looks at the effect of educating parents in this way. He concludes that education of parents regarding how to encourage support of autonomy in children is related to greater levels of intrinsic motivation in students and has a positive effect on academic achievement.

**Summary of Parent Involvement Empirical Literature**

Parent expectations influence student achievement; yet parents may not know their own influence (Rubie-Davies, 2010). While types of parent involvement differ depending on the resources parents have (Epstein, 1971; Lareau, 1989), the resources a child benefits from may differ from what a parent has available because parents may have varied levels of involvement due to differing circumstances and beliefs (Muller, 1995).
Parents of students who do well on tests do not contact schools as often, according to Muller (1995), but whether or not parents contact schools is influenced by several factors. There is a lack of research regarding teachers being evaluated for interactions with parents (Chrispeels, 1996); however, educators need to learn more about families of students, and Auerbach suggests that this be through narrative research (Auerbach, 2002). Teachers need professional development in both how to communicate with parents and encourage their involvement, and schools need to assure that the needs of families are met before parents are able to increase their involvement (Lopez, Scribner and Mahitivanichcha, 2001).

Parent involvement is affected by how parents visualize their roles and the effect the parents believe they will have. Culture and whether or not they feel invited affect levels of parent involvement in schools. For example, Latino parents do not always see their role as being in the classroom (Chrispeels and Rivero, 2001).

Parent involvement at the elementary school level is argued to be important, and has been linked to student success (Hawes and Plourde, 2005); yet differences in parents are evident. For example, more parents in high achieving schools have pursued postgraduate studies. Parents of students in low achieving schools can counter negative effects of poverty on academic achievement through their involvement (Jacobs and Harvey, 2005). In general parent involvement has a positive effect on academic achievement; and it is affected by demographics, habitus, and cultural capital. Parent involvement differs as habitus differs; and when a family has cultural capital, it is easier for them to acquire more (Lee and Bowen, 2006). Research indicates that school staff should appreciate and embrace various forms of involvement by parents and accentuate similarities rather than look for differences between children’s lives at home and at school and between parents’ attempts to be involved in their
children’s academic endeavors (Lee and Bowen, 2006). Latino parents, for example support their children’s education in many ways, such as offering moral support or encouragement in facing challenges (Auerbach, 2006), and educators are often not aware of what minority parents do (Auerbach, 2007). Higher SES parents are more likely to advocate for their children, according to Auerbach (2007); and the narrow perspective of the family-school partnership model excludes many parents, while differences in social position have an effect on the roles parents develop for themselves regarding schools (Auerbach, 2007).

Educators need to look at how parents feel and directly examine how race and socioeconomics affect relationships; and Auerbach recommends that educational leadership programs intentionally develop the parent engagement skills of their students (Auerbach, 2007).

After controlling for prior student achievement, Ice and Hoover-Dempsey found in 2011 that there was not a significant relationship between parent involvement and student achievement; however, they also discovered that parent involvement can be increased by having children ask their parents to be involved (Ice and Hoover-Dempsey, 2011). Other research indicates parent involvement in education is important for children in special education, schools and school districts need policies in place to develop parent involvement, and different types of parent involvement should be both available and appreciated (Zhang, Hsien-Yuan, Oi-man, Benz and Bowman-Perrott, 2011).

Education of parents regarding how to encourage and support autonomy in children is related to greater intrinsic motivation in students and has a positive effect on student achievement (Froiland, 2011).
Summary of Social Capital and Parent/School Relationships Empirical Literature

In a 1999 article, Lareau and Horvat write that some people are able to utilize their social capital and some are not, depending on the setting. They find that Black parents often interact with criticism due to the history of discrimination against Black people and that it is more challenging for Black parents to follow a school expectations than for White parents. Lareau and Horvat embrace Bourdieu’s theories and seek to determine how education perpetuates inequality, determining that the reproduction of social class by educational institutions is complicated by the way schools interact with families and that the value of social capital depends on the setting and other circumstances.

Lareau and Horvat argue that social capital is valuable when it helps parents comply with school expectations. Examples of such social capital are vocabulary, confidence and flexible schedules. They find that even though educators think they treat parents the same, they actually only accept a small number of behavioral styles from parents. They conclude that there are “moments of inclusion and moments of exclusion” (p. 48) or times when students have or do not have opportunity.

Lareau’s 2002 article regarding the findings from interviews and observations of children aged 8 to 10 establishes that middle class parents are involved in “concerted cultivation” by working to develop their children’s abilities through activities (p. 747). They identify fear behind the distrust and insecurity of some parents and say that the ability to be honest with school officials is a form of social capital. They determine that middle class parents are more capable of convincing others to do what they want or give them what they need.
Lareau writes *Unequal Childhoods* based on the same ethnographic study of twelve families. The families are middle class, working class and poor. The children are observed in classrooms and then in their homes. Their parents are also interviewed. 88 families were interviewed and twelve were observed. The study reveals information about how children spend their time and about language, kinship, the concepts of “concerted cultivation” and “natural growth” and imitations of social class (p. 7).

Lareau says Bourdieu’s work pointed to the importance of learning how people maintain or improve their social position (275). She says that her book identifies often invisible ways social class affects children and their opportunities. She says social class affects children invisibly because “Americans are much more comfortable recognizing the power of individual initiatives instead of acknowledging “the power of social class” (p. 7). Lareau writes about differences in language with middle class families using language to reason and working class and poor families using language to direct. She says that middle class parents intervene in their children’s schooling while working class and poor families rely on education professionals, but sometimes working class and poor parents seem to agree in school meetings but may actually disagree with the school vehemently, particularly with regard to discipline. Educators want both support from parents’ interaction with them and, when children have educational problems, strong personalities capable of firm directions.

At the same time, according to Bolivar and Chrispeels, when low income or disadvantaged parents are given information and education, their social and intellectual capital can be increased and their ability to create change through individual efforts or collaboration can be developed (2010).
There is a tension between the perceptions of educators and students in urban schools in that educators do not feel that the families of their students encourage academic achievement; yet, the students do have the perception that their parents support them and their school (Anderson, 2011).

**Social Capital and Parent/School Relationships Empirical Literature**

**Inequality in Childhood**

In a 1999 article, Lareau and Horvat argue that some individuals are able to utilize their social capital and others cannot. They state that social reproduction does not always occur, that whether or not it is perpetuated is dependent on setting and the rules in that setting, both those that are stated and those that are not. This study identifies evidence that Black parents often interact with schools with criticism due to the history of discrimination against Black people and Black students, in particular. The authors point out that Bourdieu’s theory that education perpetuates inequality brought up many questions regarding how this happens. The researchers focus on literature regarding how the attitudes of parents and students differ by class and how this affects students in school.

The researchers argue that Bourdieu acknowledges the differences in how people interact in relation to their backgrounds, but that he does not give adequate attention to the way institutions reject or embrace various individuals and their attempts to utilize their resources to obtain what they want for their children in school. They state that whether or not social capital has value depends on the setting, that people who have social capital may or may not seek to use it and may or may not know how to use it; therefore, they argue, reproduction of social class is complicated by a dependency on these factors.
Lareau and Horvat state that race lessens the importance of social class in school-family interactions. They say that it is more challenging for Black parents to follow institutional expectations or those of schools than it is for White parents. They present the argument that educators seek positive support for schools from parents; but the history of racial discrimination creates difficulty for Black parents in fulfilling this expectation. They say that an example of the special circumstances faced by Black parents with regard to their children’s schools is that for Black parents, race has an influence on their relationships with schools that is separate from the effect of social class. They go on to argue that social capital becomes valuable when it increases parents’ ability to comply with school expectations. Examples they offer of such social capital are extensive vocabularies, the self-confidence to treat teachers as equals, flexible schedules, and the freedom to come to the school during the school day. The authors of this article suggest that being White offers White parents an advantage in interacting with schools.

The findings of their study include the fact that educators believe they treat all parents the same while they actually only accept a small number of socio-emotional behavioral styles as acceptable. They state that White parents have an advantage in developing relationships with schools because they have more trust of school and educators than Black parents do; therefore, White parents are more able to be positive and supportive of educators. The researchers offer examples from their study to support the concept that the suspicion that some Black parents may have toward schools due to a history of racial discrimination affects these families’ ability to make requests of schools.

The researchers conclude with a conceptual framework of “moments of inclusion and moments of exclusion” (p. 48) as times when children are advantaged or disadvantaged,
given opportunity or blocked from opportunity. They also conclude that race heavily influences parent/school relationships and that social reproduction is affected by many factors but not predetermined.

The study that is the foundation for Lareau’s 2002 article involves interviews and observations focusing on children aged eight to 10. The researchers establish that the parents of middle class children are involved in “concerted cultivation” of their children by working to develop their abilities through activities (p. 747). They also were able to determine that an attitude that individual students should have what they feel they need or want from schools is nurtured in students through concerted cultivation. The authors state that the literature regarding parental involvement in schools emphasizes that parents conform to the opinions of school staff.

They determine that fear is one of the reasons that poorer parents have a sense of distrust and insecurity when interacting with schools; therefore, the ability to be honest in interactions with school officials is a form of social capital. In addition, middle-class parents have more ability to convince others to do what they want or give them what they need than poorer parents.

In *Unequal Childhoods*, Annette Lareau’s 2003 book based on the same study as the 2002 article, Lareau writes about exactly what her subtitle states: *Class, Race, and Family Life*. She defines her chapters by the children she writes about, children from her ethnographic study of twelve families. In this book, Lareau contributes a major study to sociology which is “multidimensional” and includes “observations in elementary school classrooms and interviews with a large number of parents” (p. 259).
According to Lareau, the study focuses on third graders because they are “young enough for their parents to still be heavily involved in managing their lives” and “old enough to have some autonomy regarding their free time” (p. 259). She expresses that she felt that children of this age would have “social class influences” (p. 259) transmitted to them by their parents. Lareau studies African American children and White children and chooses “to define social class categories using a combination of empirical realities” (p. 260) she comes across. She provides details regarding her categorization in the book.

Lareau divides the families she studies into “three categories: middle-class families, working class families, and poor families” (p. 261). After many observations of children in classrooms and interviews of their parents and other adults in the children’s lives, Lareau turns to observing twelve children and their families in their homes, including “middle-class families,” “working-class families” and “poor families.” With the assistance of several people, the team interviews 88 families and observes 12 families in numerous two to three hour sessions. Lareau says that eventually, after many observation visits, “normal family rhythms resumed” (pp. 269-270) and the researchers are able to observe families comfortably.

Lareau found that as she examines the data from the interviews and observations, her original interest “in how children spend their time and in the nature of the interactions between families and institutions” are complemented by additional themes: “the role of language, the relative importance of kinship ties, the analogies of concerted cultivation and natural growth, and the limitations of social class in daily life” (p. 274). Lareau frames her study in a theoretical framework based on Pierre Bourdieu’s work, and she turns to Bourdieu for his arguments that “individuals of different social locations are socialized differently” (p.
She explains that Bourdieu’s work “suggests the importance of studying the strategies individuals use to maintain or improve their social position, as well as their children’s position” (p. 275) and links this framework to her study.

She explains that “America may be the land of opportunity, but it is also a land of inequality” (p. 3) and she goes on to say that “this book identifies the largely invisible ways that parents’ social class impacts children’s life experiences” (p. 3). She explains ways that social class affects children’s lives remain invisible because “Americans are much more comfortable recognizing the power of individual initiative than recognizing the power of social class” (p. 7).

In addition to many other differences, Lareau discovers that there are differences “with language use” between the families in her study, “with an emphasis on reasoning in middle-class families and directives in the working class and poor families” (p. 12). She offers situational descriptions of examples of these differences in language usage in the home and then describes circumstances and events that take place at school that she links to these home experiences. With regard to language and many other behaviors and expectations that play into the reproduction of society, Lareau says, “As Pierre Bourdieu points out, the complex nature of social life means that multitudes of subtle skills are drawn on the transmission of social class privilege” (p. 196).

Lareau discusses the way that “parents differ in the ways they monitor and intervene in their children’s schooling.” She says, “In contrast to their middle-class counterparts, working-class and poor parents depended on the leadership of professionals” (p. 12) and left many decisions up to school staff, counting on those at school to know what is best for their
children. She says, “Working-class and poor parents typically are deferential rather than demanding toward school personnel” (p. 198). Yet, she says, “Mothers who nod in silent agreement during a parent-teacher conference may at home,” “denounce the educator as unfair, untrustworthy, or mean” while their children listen (p. 199). This sort of disagreement is very likely to occur around issues related to discipline, Lareau says, because “particularly in the area of discipline, working-class and poor parents are likely to regard the school’s approach as inappropriate” (p. 199). She says that even though working-class parents may be deferential toward the school, it can be with “a sense of distance and distrust, of exclusion and risk, with schools” (p. 227). Lareau’s exploration of the perspectives of working class and poor parents in contrast to those of middle class parents are, as she points out, aligned with social class distinctions Bourdieu theorizes about.

Lareau writes about school staff, saying, “Educators at both schools” in her study, “believe parents should take a leadership role in solving their children’s problems ‘seriously’ enough to initiate contact with educators. In short, educators want contradictory behaviors from parents: deference and support, but also assertive leadership when children had educational problems” (p. 27). She explains that these expectations of what good parents do, that is “take a leadership role in solving their children’s problems” (p. 27) and contacting educators is in direct contrast with what some parents believe is good parenting, that is deferring to the leadership of school professionals. Conversely, Lareau says that middle-class parents believe they have the right and the responsibility to intervene in the classroom (p. 177), making their beliefs and practices more aligned with behaviors that educators associate with good parenting.
Lareau describes differences in the lives of children and identifies “a pattern of concerted cultivation in middle-class families and a pattern of the accomplishment of natural growth in working-class and poor families” (p. 32). She explains this phenomenon in more detail, saying, “In sum, there were social class differences in the number of organized activities, pace of family life, economic strain of family life, time spent in informal play, interest on the part of adults in children’s activities, domination by children’s activities of adult lives, and the amount of autonomy children had from adults” (p. 36). Not only are the children in middle-class families kept busy, she says, but “the organization of middle-class family life around individual children’s activities shapes the experience of all family members” (p. 53). Lareau shares many details from her study to illustrate the activities middle class children participate in and the differing experiences of working class children.

In contrast to the structured and scheduled lives of middle-class children and their families, Lareau says, “daily life for working class and poor children is slower paced, less pressured, and less structured” and “there is less emphasis on performance and more latitude for children to pursue their own choices” (p. 76). The differences in children’s activities exemplify differing parenting styles.

Lareau writes about her conclusions from her study, looking at society at large and at schools within the theoretical framework of Bourdieu. She says,

Class position influences critical aspects of family life: time use, language use, and kin ties. Working-class and middle-class mothers may express beliefs that reflect a similar notion of ‘intensive mothering,’ but their behavior is quite different. For that reason, I have described sets of paired beliefs and actions as a ‘cultural logic’ of child rearing. When
children and parents move outside the home into the world of social institutions, they find that these cultural practices are not given equal value. There are signs that middle-class children benefit, in ways that are invisible to them and to their parents, from the degree of similarity between the cultural repertories in the home and those standards adopted by institutions (pp. 236-237).

These differences in cultural practices and the distinct values place on these practices by social institutions such as schools mirror the distinctions in the value placed on the varying habitus of individuals.

**Inequality in Education**

In 2010, J. Bolivar and J. Chrispeels build on the premise that the inequality in education has been established for their 2010 article. They also point out that it has been shown that when parents are included in making decisions, they gain confidence. They state that parental involvement in schools contributes to student success. They build the basis for their study by establishing that the detrimental effect of poverty on students’ academic achievement can be lessened to some extent by parents working with their children scholastically and through positive relationships between parents and teachers.

The researchers also establish that parents with low income are often not involved with schools in the ways that schools want them to be and they point out that a characteristic of middle income parents is the fact that they are both willing and have the ability to join together with other parents to take action. They explain that this takes social capital to achieve and they seek to determine whether social and intellectual capital can be developed
through educational programs for parents, remarking that parents have not been given strong leadership roles in policy-making at schools.

In building the argument for their study, the authors discuss the ways No Child Left Behind (NCLB) recommends parents be involved in schools, explaining the parental involvement aspects of NCLB. The researchers argue that the skills to make the choices that NCLB allows parents can only be made by individuals with social and intellectual capital and that the relationships parents have with schools differ according to socio-economic status and race.

Bolivar and Chrispeels define social capital as “power and information” (p. 9) in a social setting such as a school community that can be utilized to obtain assets. They say that social capital can have an effect on those people an individual or a group has access to contact. They continue to build the foundation for their study by looking at discussion of social capital and its development from relationships and trust, contact with people who have information, and practices within a community that support individuals. They examine the concept of intellectual capital as the possession of information and abilities by individuals in a group that creates the possibility of collaborative social action.

The researchers delineate that their study looks at effects on Hispanic parents of classes designed to develop social and intellectual capital. The study is a case-study including observations, document review, and interviews; and the researchers bring ideas from social and intellectual capital theories into their analysis of data. They look at trust between instructors of classes and parents and between participants. They examine both participants’ understanding of accepted practices and formal and informal rules and the
accessibility of information. They conclude that when low-income parents are given information and education, their social and intellectual capital can be increased and their ability to create change through individual efforts or collaboration can be developed.

**Reciprocal Relationships**

In 2011 in an article in *Leadership*, M. Anderson states that when students perceive that their teachers hold the students’ parents and communities in high esteem, they are usually more willing to participate academically with their teachers. The author also establishes that educational leaders who develop the cultural proficiency of their schools develop a sense of connection with the school for parents and students and, therefore, increase academic achievement for students. Anderson determines that educators in urban schools do not feel that families of their students encourage academic achievement; yet, the students perceive that their parents support them in school.

**Cultural Capital Empirical Literature**

**Education and Society**

In a 1979 edition of *The Inheritors*, first published in 1964, Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron write about their analysis of studies by the Center for European Sociology and surveys completed by sociology students. The studies included topics such as “students’ mutual acquaintance,” and “students’ image of the student” (p. ix). Bourdieu and Passeron focused mainly on arts students.

A reference to Margaret Mead’s *Continuities in Cultural Evolution* begins
The Inheritors. The Mead passage is the story of a group for which entry was dependent on individuals describing a mystical experience, but what would be designated as the right type of experience was a secret shared only with in accepted families.

The authors describe the numbers of students in higher education as being disproportionate, with “inequality between the various social strata” (p. 2) and with “the social categories most strongly represented in higher education” being “those least represented in the active population” (p. 2). Disparities in education along societal lines results in “the failure of students from the most deprived cases to advance in their studies” (p. 8). Bourdieu and Passeron refer to this as differences in “educational death rates” (p. 8).

They argue that “of all the differentiating factors social origin is doubtless the one whose influence bears most strongly on the student world” (p. 8). They say “social origin exerts its influence throughout the whole duration of schooling, particularly at the great turning points of a school career” (p. 3). They say that there are differences in how similar or dissimilar schools are with students’ home experiences and that these differences and “unequal knowledge about courses and the careers they lead to” (p. 13) create discrepancies in educational pursuits, comfort and achievement. “For students from the lower classes who have survived elimination, the initial disadvantages have evolved, they argue “into an educational handicap” (p. 14).

Bourdieu and Passeron focus on the arts in their analyses, saying “In every area of culture in which it is measured, “students have richer and more extensive knowledge the higher their social origin” (p. 17) and that these differences appear most when knowledge and information are not “directly taught” (p. 17). Education might be an avenue for mitigating disparities in culture and society or within cultures and societies, especially in a
meritocracy; however, Bourdieu and Passeron express that education “would be the royaload to the democratization of culture if it did not consecrate the initial cultural inequalities
by ignoring them” and if it did not “favor” “inherited culture which does not bear the vulgar
mark of effort” (p. 21). So what is known by those in the higher levels of society is valued
and when attempts are made by others to acquire these skills or dispositions, they are
discounted. The authors explain that when a teacher distinguishes between a “gifted” student
and one who works hard, they are “judging nothing other than the relation to culture to which
each is socially assigned by birth” (p. 24).

Bourdieu and Passeron write about the calendar year of students. They say that “the
only calendar imposed derives its structure from the cycle of study” with “high points being
“registration and the feverishness on the eve of examinations” (p. 29) and that the academic
year “establishes the rhythm for academic effort and intellectual adventure,” and “structures
experience and memory around successes and failures” (p. 29). These rhythms are of interest
in how they may affect behaviors. Bourdieu and Passeron say that the academic year “tailors
ambitions to the scope of its narrow horizon” (p. 29).

While the academic calendar and its peculiarities has an effect, “the degree of
commitment to the intellectual game and to the values it implies is never independent of
social origin” (p. 53). Other factors influence patterns, too. Students “who have come from
the social strata that are furthest from academic culture” are, according to Bourdieu and
Passeron, “condemned to experience that culture as unreal” (p. 53) creating a disconnect and
affecting achievement of measures of success. This sense of school as being “unreal” for
some creates disparities. These differences are explained by the educational community one
way or another when the social variances are not considered, giftedness may be used as an
explanation, Bourdieu and Passeron address giftedness, saying “Blindness to social inequalities both obliges and allows one to explain all inequalities, particularly those in educational achievement, as natural inequalities, unequal giftedness” (p. 67).

Finally the authors address gaps in school success. They say, “In short, what the competitive struggle makes everlasting is not different positions, but the difference between positions” (p. 96). They argue that students may never catch up. They say, “permanence can be ensured” and ”the structure perpetuated by movement” (p. 96) and argue “it is an integrative struggle and, by virtue of the initial handicaps, a reproductive struggle, since those who enter this chase, in which they are beaten before they start as the constancy of the gaps testifies, implicitly recognize the legitimacy of the goals pursued by those whom they pursue, by the mere fact of taking part” (p. 97). This look at social differences and how they play out among students in higher education is based on numerous studies, data from which are included in the appendixes to the book. Much of what the researchers found can be applied to differences among students seen today and described as the achievement gap.

Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture is Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron’s 1970 analysis of and writing about the connections between culture and the structure of society. In the book, Bourdieu and Passeron explore and describe how culture creates the framework of society and keeps that framework in place. The authors look at the role education plays in supporting positions of power, and they analyze how the school system is complicit in continuing the divisions within society.

The authors “propose a model of the social mediations and processes which tend, behind the backs of the agents engaged in the school system—teachers, students and their
parents—and often against the will, to ensure the transmission of cultural capital across generations and to stamp pre-existing differences in inherited cultural capital with a meritocratic seal of academic consecration” (p. ix). Bourdieu and Passeron argue that educators, students, and parents do not know that they are participating in the perpetuation of society as it is.

Bourdieu and Passeron describe “linguistic capital” (p. 73) and its influences. In the early years of children’s schooling, they say, “the understanding and use of language” are important factors in “teachers’ assessments” (p. 73). They further explain that “the educational mortality rate can only increase as one moves towards the classes most distant from scholarly language” (p. 73). The emphasis schools place on linguistic capital is an aspect of or a tool used for the reproduction of divisions between classes in society.

Bourdieu and Passeron compare the rules of communication in educational institutions to bracelets and necklaces in a primitive culture which must be worn in a particular fashion for acceptance. The language in schools, they say, including “professorial monologue” (p. 112) is managed by the “laws of the educational universe” (p. 113), laws that everyone does not understand to the same degree. They say, “Not only could the teacher not adopt a new language and relation to language without effecting a disassociation of the contents communicated and the manner of communicating them which he cannot conceive of because they were” “linked” when “he himself received and assimilated them; but also he could not measure exactly the students’ understanding of his language without destroying the fiction which enable him to teach with the least effort, i.e. as he was taught” (p. 113). The educators are agents of the reproduction of society, Bourdieu and Passeron argue, even in, and especially in, the manner in which they speak; but they do not even know it.
Linguistic capital is very valuable, claim Bourdieu and Passeron. “The social value of the different linguistic codes available in a given society at a given time (i.e. their economic and symbolic profitability) always depends on the distance separating them from the linguistic norm the school manages to impose in defining the socially recognized criteria of linguistic ‘correctness,’” they explain. The use of language in educational institutions is one way education reproduces society, and these influences reach beyond years in school.

Describing the means through which the educational system keeps students in their societal stations, the authors say, “in not explicitly giving what it demands, the system demands uniformly of all its student that they should have what it does not give, i.e. the relation to language and culture exclusively produced by a particular mode of inculcation” (p. 128). Going beyond language, they say, the institution of school “gives training and information which can be fully received only by those who have had the training it doesn’t give” (p. 128). Thus the dominant classes depend on education, and education depends on the dominant classes, keeping them dominant.

Bourdieu and Passeron describe how aspects of educational inequality, such as linguistic capital and social capital, add up to long-term disparities in education and the reproduction of society. They say, “the combination of the educational chances of the different classes and the chances of subsequent success attached to the different sections and types of schools constitutes a mechanism of deferred selection which transmutes a social inequality into a specifically educational inequality, i.e., an inequality of ‘level’ or success, concealing and academically consecrating an inequality of chances of access to the highest levels of education” (p. 158). Being pushed away from education may not happen suddenly,
but the selection process powered by linguistic, cultural, and social capital will eventually take its toll on those who do not belong by virtue of having not belonged.

Bourdieu and Passeron cast a light on how this phenomenon can continue without being recognized and addressed, saying that the educational system is able to conceal “its social function of legitimating class differences behind its technical function of producing qualifications” (p. 164), circling back to the assessments that teachers begin when students first come to school, at that time assessments based on early language acquisition.

The reproduction of society by education works for those in power, Bourdieu and Passeron argue. They say, “In ever more completely delegating the power of selection to the academic institution, the privileged classes are able to appear to be surrendering to a perfectly neutral authority the power of transmitting power from one generation to another and thus renouncing the arbitrary privilege of the hereditary transmission of privileges” (p. 167). Again assessments and the technical aspects of education play a part in continuing and marking the process of selection and elimination as legitimate. Even teaching in a traditional manner can contribute to the educational process of reproducing society, say the authors. They say that when “school shares the task of reproducing that product of history which constitutes at a given moment the legitimate mode of the cultivated disposition with families unequally endowed with cultural capital and the disposition to make use of it, nothing better serves the pedagogic interest of the dominant class than the pedagogic ‘laissez-faire’ characteristic of traditional teaching, since this action by default, immediately efficacious and, by definition, ungraspable, seems predestined to serve the function of legitimating the social order” (pp. 205-206). If a student cannot grasp or understand all that is being taught, it
must be his or her fault, since others are able to understand. This perspective does not task the teacher with helping the student to understand the teacher.

The authors explain that “in a society in which the obtaining of social privileges depends more and more closely on possession of academic credentials, the school does not only have the function of ensuring discreet succession to a bourgeois estate which can no longer be transmitted directly and openly” (p. 210), the school system “confers on the privileged the supreme privilege of not seeing themselves as privileged” and subtly convinces “the disinherited that they owe their scholastic and social destiny to the lack of gifts or merits because in matters of culture absolute dispossession excludes awareness of being dispossessed,” (p. 210) making the students and those destined for the lower echelons of society a part of the making of their own destiny and affording them an acceptance.

Pierre Bourdieu’s *Distinction* was originally published in 1979 in France. In the introduction, Bourdieu says “cultural needs are the product of upbringing and education” and that “preferences in literature, painting, or music are closely linked to educational level” (p. 1). In *Distinction*, Bourdieu analyses the tastes of individuals and how those individuals fit within society. Bourdieu works to determine why matters of taste are not simple. He determines that behaviors and preferences are not only esthetic, but also are the reins of power. The cultural choices people make are like passwords to a secret society. Cultural choices or cultural capital are shared through generations and reinforced through education, creating distinctions between people.

*Distinction* is based on a survey of over 1200 people in 1963 and 1967-68. Bourdieu argues that “two basic facts were established” and those are the connection between “cultural
practices” and “educational capital” and “social origin (measured by father’s occupation)” (p. 13). He writes about the connection between educational capital and cultural capital, analyzing the patterns of answers and the cultural choices and the connections between these choices and occupations, Bourdieu is able to establish that the “direct experience and simple delight” in a “cultured household, outside of scholastic disciplines” (p. 2) is not only esthetically valuable, but also powerful.

Bourdieu explains that due to practices and behaviors that people become accustomed to, or habitus, people without cultural capital become complicit in keeping themselves within the same status. People in lower levels of society, for example, have a “taste for necessity,” (p. 374), not for “wasting money” (p. 374) and do not understand the importance of an “investment in social capital” (p. 375), such as a party or other expense. People are complicit in keeping themselves within their classes and classifications, making cultural, social and educational capital as part of inheritance. They also find others like themselves, Bourdieu explains. He says, “Taste is a matchmaker, it marries colours and also people” (p. 243), helping continue the propensity for particular tastes, practices and cultural proclivities. Again, creating distinctions and separation between people and between classes. Distinction is a solid work explaining the findings from surveys of over 1200 people with regard to their tastes, cultural knowledge, and practices. As such, it is a lengthy and definitive exploration into cultural capital, what it is, how it works, and how it is shared within generations.

Habitus and Early Childhood

In a 2006 article, Susan Dumais discusses her empirical work regarding children, their parents’ learned dispositions, and their teachers’ perspectives by focusing on Bourdieu’s
theory regarding habitus, and in particular the fact that Bourdieu argues that differences in cultural capital and habitus stem from early childhood. She states that the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study shows that involvement by children in cultural activities positively affects teachers’ evaluation of students’ academic skills only for children who have a low socioeconomic status. She says that the only factor related to parents’ dispositions that affects teachers’ evaluations for all students consistently are parental expectations that their children will earn a bachelor’s degree.

Dumais discusses Bourdieu’s theory regarding cultural capital and social reproduction that children from higher status homes have an advantage in educational systems because their families speak, write, and have knowledge that teachers appreciate and admire. She explains that Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital is widely known, but that it is part of a bigger social concept which includes the idea of habitus. Habitus, she explains, is Bourdieu’s concept of the learned worldview and pattern of behaviors and sensibilities acquired in early childhood and influenced by social class position. Habitus works to reproduce existing social structures because members of privileged classes behave in ways that guarantee positions among the privilege for their children and individuals who are less privileged see a narrow realm of opportunity for their children, made narrow by their own worldview, perspective, and behavior.

Dumais says that most studies that have looked at social class have sought to understand the effect of social capital on parental involvement, but not how social status affects students’ academic achievement. She uses the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, which contains information on kindergarteners and first graders that are nationally
representative. She uses data from the study to understand how cultural capital and the habitus of parents affect teachers’ assessment of students’ academic abilities.

In looking at previous research, Dumais begins with Bourdieu’s perspective on capital as “economic, social, and symbolic” capital (p. 85). She says that Bourdieu said the most important form of capital in relation to education is cultural capital, which includes “general cultural awareness, verbal skills” (p. 85) and artistic appreciation.

She explains Bourdieu’s theory that cultural capital is unevenly distributed with higher class families having more, and that cultural capital is passed from one generation to the next beginning in infancy. She says that Bourdieu argues that by the time children get to school, differences in cultural capital are clear and that teachers reinforce these distinctions by valuing the cultural capital themselves, favoring students with cultural capital by placing them in more advanced groups and giving them more individual instruction. Additionally she says Bourdieu says that children with cultural capital are able to communicate with teachers better than their peers and also accomplish the educational tasks with more ease.

Dumais describes the differences in habitus, or disposition and behaviors, along social class lines which Bourdieu describes. She says that habitus perpetuates social inequality because children from low SES homes come to believe that college is not for them because their family members did not go to college.

She also explains that the habitus of children from higher SES homes share values with their teachers and tend to interact with their teachers more than students from homes with lower SES. She explains that based on all these ideas, Bourdieu argues in 1977 that school systems actually support and reproduce inequalities in social classes through an
invisible value system that gives advantages to children form higher status homes and silently guides children of lower social economic backgrounds to understand and then accept a lower position in the hierarchy of educational institutions.

Dumais says that quantitative studies have not shown the small ways teachers make note of cultural capital and assign academic rewards based on their evaluations, but she says there have been qualitative studies that describe how socioeconomic status and cultural capital affect relationships between students and teachers and between teachers and parents. She identifies the most complete qualitative research on cultural capital and elementary school students and their families as being those of Lareau (Lareau 1987, 2000, 2002, and 2003; Lareau & Horvat, 1999). She said that in 1989, Lareau determines that some parents do not have the education, career status, or other resources to “feel comfortable confronting teachers” and that “they also believed that school was a separate domain from home” (p. 87). Dumais continues to explore the work of Lareau.

She says that Lareau and Horvat discovered differences in the abilities of parent in using their cultural capital to acquire advantages for their children (Lareau & Horvat, 1999), for example, placement in “higher ability groups.” She says that Lareau and McNamara Horvat spoke of the differences in skills as difference in “habitus” (p. 87), using Bordiew’s language and referring to his theories.

Dumais says that the work of Lareau offers information regarding the institution of education, the hierarchy that reproduces inequalities and the abilities of parents to navigate the hierarchy reflected in their habitus. She goes on and says that some quantitative studies have explored the concept of habitus and that habitus affects students’ occupational goals.
She identifies a lack of information regarding how the differences in exchanges that children and parents have with adults in school systems affect students’ achievement. She says her analysis of the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study will seek to determine how children’s cultural capital affects the way teachers evaluate students’ academic abilities. She explains that in 1977, Bourdieu said that teachers use cultural capital for promoting students and that by changing social hierarchical structures into similar academic ones, educational institutions legitimize the hierarchies of society.

The second question Dumais seeks to answer with her analysis of the data is how the habitus of students’ parents affect teacher’s assessment of students’ academic abilities. Her third question regards how socioeconomic status, cultural capital and habitus affect each other. Dumais explains that cultural activities themselves do not have a great effect on teachers’ assessment of children’s academic skills; but she says the lower children’s socioeconomic status is, the greater the effect is on teacher’s perceptions of students’ academic abilities, concluding that activities and SES status do interact with each other and affect teachers’ perceptions. She also finds that when parents expect their children to attend college, teachers’ assessment of students’ language arts ability increases.

In discussing her findings, Dumais points out that Bourdieu said social class differences are distinct early in children’s lives due to the passing on of cultural capital and habitus from parents to children. She says that children from higher socioeconomic status homes do gain cultural insight from their parents, giving them an advantage in school. Additionally, she says that children from higher SES homes believe they both fit the school setting and will be successful there.
In addition, Dumais finds evidence to support Bourdieu’s theory that children from families from different social classes pass on cultural capital of differing types in different degrees to their children. She finds that kindergarten children from higher SES homes are more likely to take lessons in cultural activities and attend cultural events. She finds that parents who have lower SES “are more likely to feel unwelcome at and uninterested in their child’s school and to want their children to have practical skills before entering kindergarten” and that “higher SES parents are more likely to expect that their children will attain a college degree” (p. 102). These differences in how the cultural capital of parents affects children and the effects of SES on children and on parents’ relationships with school are part of a continued discussion.

Dumais concludes that “the best way to understand the ways in which inequalities are generated and perpetuated in the educational system appears to be with research combining both qualitative and quantitative methodologies” (p. 104). She determines that while involvement in cultural activities, per se, does not seem to affect teachers’ evaluations of students, social capital does have some effects on the way that parents interact with teachers and teachers’ perceptions of students and their families.

**Building Cultural Capital**

C. Delgado-Gaitan, the author of a 2005 qualitative research article, worked with families regarding literacy and developed an interest in how families use stories and computers to change their lives. In the article, she shares from her experiences. She refers to Paulo Freire and says that according to Freire, reading the world includes being able to
describe the experiences one has in the world. She also makes reference to Freire in saying that it is important to question limits and possibilities, and she says computers help in that.

The author states that she began to ask why students from cultures different than those of their teachers are ignored by their teachers. She says that she was not a detached researcher. She says she supported the changes the families were making, and she quotes a mother who described horrors in her previous life but who said those experiences paled in comparison to being asked by the school to help her children with their homework and not being able to assist them.

The author describes the women she worked with and shares that after the women shared their stories over a period of time they realized the character traits their experiences illustrated. She says they started taking classes in English, purchasing computers for their children, and going to their children’s schools. She says they were building social capital.

The author concludes that the women and their families determine the importance of creating a sense of community and the value of people who may have been disenfranchised having a voice.

**Literacy Instruction and Social Practice Theory**

L. Handsfield and R. Jimenez describe an ethnographic study of a 3rd grade teacher’s instruction of literacy for her diverse students in a 2009 article. They use the social practice theory of Bourdieu as a conceptual framework for looking at how the teacher’s habitus with regard to linguistics and literacy and the dialogue regarding instruction come together to effect the teacher’s cognitive strategy instruction. In their study, they determine that the
reading instruction or cognitive strategy instruction was utilized in ways that endorsed a narrow definition of what reading and thinking about texts can be.

The authors explain that the reasoning behind teaching cognitive reading strategies is to explicitly teach readers who struggle use strategies many readers use with intuition, for example, asking questions, connecting the text, thinking out loud, summarizing, visualizing, predicting, clarifying, and for those reading in a second language, utilizing cognates and other resources from their first language. They state that the method is called Cognitive Strategy Instruction and has been recommended in professional literature about reading for teachers. They say that they see the possibility of cognitive strategy instruction as a means for assisting struggling readers, but they also express a wariness regarding Cognitive Strategy Instruction and argue that it may create a narrower definition of what reading is and may not acknowledge the many ways people of different cultures and various linguistic backgrounds think about texts. Based on these concepts, the researchers examine the teaching of two cognitive strategies, asking questions and making connections, in the culturally diverse third grade classroom of one particular teacher.

The position of the researchers is that reading strategies for comprehension have been studied in a variety of instructional settings; yet they say that there has been almost no analysis through a critical lens of cognitive strategy instruction. They discuss teaching that is relevant and culturally responsive and particular practices for teaching linguistically and culturally diverse students, but they argue that there has been little research regarding the complicated and politically charged ways that policies, curricula, and the practices of individual teachers are integrated and resist change. The study examines cognitive strategy instruction within the setting of these complicated relationships in one teacher’s classroom.
The authors explain that they published an article on cognitive strategy instruction (CSI) previously; but in this article, they say they are re-analyzing the data with Bourdieu’s social practice theory as a lens. They explain that Bourdieu discusses how individuals’ patterns of behavior and large social institutions, such as schools, interact with regard to the status quo.

Handsfield and Jimenez conclude that in the case of the one teacher whose work they examined closely, the use of CSI (Cognitive Strategy Instruction) actually supports the status quo and the reproduction of social structure. They find that some assumptions behind CSI can be determined to be what Bourdieu terms misrecognition or the labeling of something (such as an action, way of being, or way of thinking) as normal when it is actually only the dominant action or method.

The authors explain that their intention is not to critique the teaching of the teacher they observe and interview, but to question ideas about reading and thinking that are an integral part of CSI. The researchers establish a definition of habitus, field, and capital, according to Bourdieu’s theories state that habitus is the way of being and interacting with the world established through years of being within a particular social structure. The habitus of individuals, in turn, perpetuates the social structure which serves to establish it in the first place.

Bourdieu’s concept of field, the researchers establish, is made up of the social positions and the exchanges that take place as social power is recognized and struggled for. Distribution of social capital helps to establish the intersecting of individuals and their discourse. Handsfield and Jimenez recognize that Bourdieu’s interest was in the daily
practice of individuals as social agents rather than in the ideas those individuals may have, and the emphasis that Bourdieu placed on daily practice is, according to the researchers, the phenomenon of misrecognition.

Misrecognition, Handsfield and Jimenez explain, is Bourdieu’s term for those traits, dispositions, practices, and actions that are deemed to be natural, human, or normal, which are actually only the customary way of thinking or doing which is common to and recognized as normal by the dominant (or most socially powerful) culture. They summarize the relationship of misrecognition and social capital by explaining that the value of economic, social, and cultural capital is assigned through misrecognition or the valuing of some over others due to assessment based on the values of the dominant culture. Due to the phenomenon of misrecognition some individuals acquire power in schools. They clarify that they interpret Bourdieu’s theories as presenting habitus as something which can be dynamic rather than static, and they emphasize that they interpret Bourdieu as saying that habitus can be transformed.

The authors explain that CSI is a method of teaching reading that emphasizes teaching specific strategies. They point out that CSI has become wide-spread in its use. A great deal of the early research in teaching reading, the authors explain, citing Von Eckerdt, focuses on typical adult thinkers and develops ideas about what an adult reader considered normal does. Then reading strategies were identified for teaching students to read based on the practices determined to be the functions of normal adult readers. They point out that Bourdieu said that the idea that thinking is done in isolation from history or society is overly academic; and they discuss the idea that if reading practices are considered nearly automatic, there is no explanation for who constructs knowledge.
The teacher in the study devalues the reading that took place in her parents’ home, since it was research, catalogs, and paperwork for real estate and not the reading embraced by the dominant culture as being the reading done in literate households such as reading done for pleasure. The authors note that the teacher observed in the study tells students to stop reading and write about connections to the reading in their journals. The authors point out that only particular types of connections are allowed. One child expressed a connection between the text and one of his classmates, a type of connection that was not encouraged. The authors explain that the fact that a connection to another is discouraged is an example of only particular ways of thinking being considered acceptable due to the misrecognition of these ways of thinking as normal. In addition, the authors point out that the idea that all of the children will be able to make a connection to the text at the exact same time does not allow for individual interactions with the text and individual ways of reading and thinking. They argue that the students are actually being monitored for reading behavior rather than really encouraged in comprehension.

Questions were utilized in the observed teacher’s class as an individual enterprise rather than as a means of having a conversation about the text. The questions are not developed for the benefit of the group and as a means for an authentic discussion, but for the benefit of the teacher, as a means of surveillance and to fulfill the needs of the teacher. The questions are asked so that knowledge can be displayed rather than so that knowledge can be discovered. The researchers explain that the teaching they observed communicates that text is static rather than dynamic and closed rather than open and that text is to be known rather than interpreted.
Handsfield and Jimenez explain that they did observe one practice that brought in readers that may have been marginalized. The teacher asked a student to explain his understanding of a word and to utilize his knowledge of cognates. The researchers explain their perception was that the child was asked to utilize his personal literacy knowledge and skills and his social capital to authentically respond to the text and discuss the reading from a personal point of view. They elaborate that the use of cognates is a reading strategy generally reserved for immigrant children, but that it is brought into the main stream in this case. They explain that through this manner of teaching, children are included, as well as thinking about reading that are often marginalized.

The authors discuss the possibility that the aspects of the observed teacher’s use of cognitive strategy instruction that troubles them were due to her novice status as a teacher; however, they dismiss this consideration because the aspects of her implementation of CSI that concern them are not challenges that identified as pitfalls of a new teacher or weakness of this specific teacher. In fact, the researchers selected the particular teacher to observe based on the positive assessments of her colleagues and administrators and are adamant in expressing their belief that the problematic aspects of the observed teacher’s implementation of Cognitive Strategy Instruction are due to her habitus, her assumptions and beliefs based on her own experiences and the dialogue regarding reading instruction in the field.

The authors continue their discussion of their findings with a deep analysis of the observed teacher’s interactions with her students. They explain that she emphasized a connection between thinking and reading and the fact that students were encouraged to ask other students questions about the reading or make connections with other students regarding
The authors then make an important connection between what they observed and research regarding African American students. They wonder about the effect on students who are “socialized into a topic associative style of interaction” (p. 185), which they say has been identified as being known to some African American students, when the teacher reacts to their contribution to class as being unrelated and off-topic. They continue by saying that the contributions to class discussions of minority students have been considered negatively and that these students may be told that their contributions (and thinking) are unwelcome. The authors then define the “regulation of reading” they observed to be “misrecognition of what constitutes reading and a form of symbolic violence (p.185).”

They explain that the children they observed were being taught that particular ways of relating to texts were powerful in the reading classroom. They say that instead of reading practices and skills being neutral, that the practices they observed taught were based on “mainstream, monolingual, white subjectivities—templates that have been misrecognized as being universal (p. 185).” They identify their findings as exemplary of Bourdieu’s theory that what people perceive as everyday experience is then assumed to be normal and then utilized to maintain the status quo. They conclude that children who come from families that do not embrace the reading and thinking of adults considered normal in the dominant culture and discourage individual performance, in particular, may feel excluded from classrooms like the one of the observed teacher. They conclude that children should be supported in using the linguistic capital they possess rather than possibly alienating children by utilizing CSI in ways that emphasize limiting ways that children interact with text. They conclude that CSI is grounded in bias hidden by misrecognition and can become an instrument of symbolic violence.
Teacher Training

In a 2010 article, E. Toshalis seeks to determine whether new teachers are trained to motivate students or control them. The information the author utilizes for analysis comes from observations of and descriptions of teaching interns’ experiences. He states that studies have shown that cultural ideas and experiences influence teachers’ points-of-view and play a part in the disparities in classrooms found along racial, gender, class, and ethnic fault lines. He suggests that some of the literature regarding discipline provides a perspective that student-teacher relationships create a foundation on which some student discipline situations are due to students’ resisting what they see as injustice rather than simply deviant or defiant behavior. He argues that the words and phrases teachers use regarding instruction often play another purpose of controlling students and he discusses tools used for discipline, offering detailed explanations of each of the mechanisms used for creating and maintaining discipline, including examples. He then makes a connection between these “instruments of control” (p. 188) and Bourdieu’s “concept of symbolic violence” (p. 188), sharing Bourdieu’s argument that, for example, the looks of a teacher gives a student as a means of controlling the student can be seen as a sort of weapon. He explains that the quick and quiet ways that a teacher controls students serve to create inequality with regard to the accessibility of resources and social and cultural capital. Bourdieu, Toshalis makes clear, is less concerned with how symbolic power limits the freedom and power of individuals and more concerned with the idea that symbolic violence causes those among whom it is wielded to cooperate in keeping themselves in a particular position in the institutional arrangement, causing them to be complicit in maintaining the status quo.
After establishing his theoretical framework, the author shares that the data for his study were drawn in many forms from a particular urban, American, large, comprehensive high school. He explains his method, saying that he utilized several data sources, including notes from the field, descriptions from teachers and students, and videotapes.

Toshalis then describes in detail many of the observed interactions, coming to the conclusion that the teaching interns he observes are initiated into teaching by being shown how to survive their surveillance, classification, and examination, how to relate to their students, peers, and superiors and how to attain competence (and the rewards that accrue to that judgment) through the reproduction of such discipline in their classrooms” (p. 197); yet Toshalis points out that when students recognize the surveillance and classification, it is easily denied because the symbolic violence is veiled and minimized.

The teaching interns do often attempt to redirect students to academic tasks when their control of the students in their classrooms seems to be loosening; however, when students do not respond to re-direction to academic tasks, they often turn to surveillance, much like what they are under themselves. Regarding classification, the interns participate in ranking their students much as they have been ranked themselves, participating in the same system of sorting people “according to perceived ability” (p. 200).

Regarding examination, Toshalis says that the teaching interns “frequently use examination as a way of controlling student behavior,” explaining that the “extent to which examination shapes discipline is clear: if you do well, you are granted privileges; if you don’t, you aren’t” (p. 201). Initiation is occurring for the interns, Toshalis explains, and they are both learning their role and becoming complicit in it. The interns are taught that to be
effective teachers, they have to control their students. The interns do sometimes resist their own disciplining, for example, by attempting to develop relationships that are outside the hierarchical framework; and their university instructors, too, build relationships that are outside the hierarchy, oppose their own institutions, and sometimes look at relationships, educational institutions, and discipline through a critical lens.

Toshalis says that based on the analysis of the data from his observations and interviews, interns “learn to frame student resistance as a problem rather than a symptom” (p. 204). The implications for his study, Toshalis says, include a recommendation that university advisors, professors, and staff focus more on power relationships in the classroom, classroom struggles and dynamics, and the need for changes in the status quo that may be indicated by disciplinary situations. He also clarifies, saying, “Just because this study suggests an insidious and pervasive disciplining that delimits teacher and student possibility; however, does not mean teacher educators should rid themselves altogether of surveillance, classification, examination, and initiation” (p. 206). He goes on to say that students and teachers do need boundaries; however, he argues that if teaching interns were disciplined more humanely, they would do the same for their students.

In conclusion, Toshalis says that both programs of teacher education and schools “function in part as disciplinary apparatuses in which students are watched, evaluated, sorted, and assigned roles, and teachers are trained to be arbiters of rank” and for teaching interns, “decades of schooling and training culminate in a symbolic vertical move from student to teacher” (p. 207). He says that the perpetuation of this system will only prove to “produce teachers who conflate disempowerment with learning” (p. 207) and teachers will be practiced in and prepared to control students rather than motivate them.
Summary of Cultural Capital Empirical Literature

In *The Inheritors* Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron write about their analysis of studies by the Center for European Sociology and focus on disproportionate numbers of students in higher education due to disparities in education along societal lines. The authors also discuss the calendar year for students and its patterns and effects. The distance a students’ social strata is from the academic world affects the success level for students in the academic world.

In *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, Bourdieu and Passeron continue the dialogue regarding the interplay between schools and society. They argue that educators do not know they are perpetuating society’s divisions and specify linguistic capital and social capital as contributing to the perpetuation of societal inequities.

In *Distinction*, Bourdieu writes about findings from a survey of over 1200 people and in doing so establishes an argument for the power of cultural capital and its effect on educational possibilities. He argues that people become complicit in the reproduction of society and their place in it through their habitus or deeply ingrained behaviors and practices.

In 2006, Susan Dumais both refers to and builds on Bourdieu’s concept of habitus and how others, such as educators, respond to family’s behaviors. She supports Bourdieu’s cultural capital theories, including those regarding the advantage children from higher status homes have as they move through educational systems. Dumais uses the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study data to understand and support Bourdieu’s concepts and theories.

In a qualitative study, also in 2005, C. Delgado-Gaitan finds that some parents feel bad about being asked about helping their children with homework when they can’t. She
conveys how parents’ cultural capital increases when they communicate with each other using stories and when they purchase computers.

An ethnographic study by L. Handsfield and R. Jimenez also utilize Bourdieu’s work as a foundation. These authors find evidence of the validity of Bourdieu’s term misrecognition or labeling something as normal or preferred when it is simply part of the higher status culture. Their work is yet another example of empirical findings that relate to or support the early work of Bourdieu and Passeron regarding cultural capital, its manifestations and its interactions with academic systems.

The work of Bourdieu plays an important role in a 2010 study by E. Toshalis. In his article about the findings from the study, Toshalis questions whether teachers are taught in their pre-service training to motivate students or control them, making a strong case for a connection between the behavior of teachers and Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic violence.

**Cultural Capital Theoretical Literature**

**Bourdieu and Education**

In a 1990 article, Nash looks at Bourdieu’s theories related to education. In particular, he questions Bourdieu’s emphasis on habitus. Nash points out that Bourdieu’s theories are grounded in both history and anthropology and states that Bourdieu’s theories have had a unifying effect on educational sociology. Nash argues that Bourdieu’s theories were developed to explore and explain reproduction in society, but that they have been increasingly applied to education. He says that the application to education has sometimes been faulty due to both a lack of a complete understanding of Bourdieu’s theories and because the theories are taken out of context.
Nash says that studies of societies must be accomplished through looking at economic and cultural systems and that Bourdieu’s theories regarding social capital as a means for reproducing society are an avenue for examining cultural reproduction. He says that Bourdieu’s focus on cultural capital should not be interpreted as Bourdieu denying the existence of economic capital and its influence on society. He explains that Bourdieu theorizes that cultural capital may be attitude, objects, and educational attainment and says that Bourdieu argues that along with cultural capital is social capital, including resources related to one’s personal web of sometimes institutionalized relationships and recognitions. He clarifies that Bourdieu presents social capital as those social connections that can be utilized for achieving a goal.

Nash delineates that the concept of capital applied to cultural and social resources supports examination and discussion of these properties and that Bourdieu looks at the strategies behind the reproduction between generations accomplished through the transmission of cultural capital. Nash explains that Bourdieu saw this transmission of cultural capital as occurring through families and explains that the concept gave Bourdieu the grounds on which to question the idea that schools are vehicles of social change and equality.

Nash discusses Bourdieu’s concept of habitus and explains that to Bourdieu, habitus represents the practices, both formal and informal, the traditions, and the rules of a society. Bourdieu habitus influences behavior with the structure that exists in society and that habitus is the internalization of the structure and beliefs within a society. Nash states that Bourdieu theorizes that it is not individuals that perpetuate position in society or even organizations, but habitus, the internalization of societal structure framed by and held secure within that structure and informing behavior and practices.
Nash argues that there are limitations to Bourdieu’s theories. He says that Bourdieu’s concept of habitus does not allow for free will, decision-making, or strategic change by individuals. Nash says that Bourdieu only acknowledges the strategic practices of groups, but not of individuals. He says that Bourdieu’s emphasis is on how the socialized expectations of behaviors and practices of individuals support the desired outcomes by groups. He says that Bourdieu presented the institution of education and a conservative power that Bourdieu saw schools in some societies as the origin of habitus for children, arguing that schools reinforce habitus developed by children at home.

Nash discusses cultures and the fact that all aspects of culture are arbitrary to anthropologists. He explains that if there is a tension between the home culture of a student and the school, then the school is less effective as a means for transmitting the culture of the school. He further explains that if the school supports a middle-class culture, then students who are from a working class culture will not fit in and will have less benefit from the school than students who do come from a middle class background. Nash says this theory seems reasonable, but then says it is not exactly the theory espoused by Bourdieu. He says that Bourdieu suggests that school is an institution that follows a code that is anthropologically arbitrary, yet utilized throughout the levels of the educational institution as an indicator of children’s preparedness for learning; therefore, school reinforces one class cultural code, style, and both academic and technical knowledge. Nash argues that Bourdieu does not present the withdrawal from education by lower class students as being part of an arbitrary cultural construct. He also argues that Bourdieu does not present the lack of skills or cultural capital of working class children as skills and capital arbitrarily emphasized by a culture. He says that Bourdieu advocates for priority educational programs and argues that by doing so,
Bourdieu disavows the arbitrary nature of the cultural behaviors that working class students do not bring to school.

Nash goes on to explain his position that while Bourdieu acknowledges the arbitrary nature of class culture and the exclusion based on that culture, Bourdieu argues that schools continue the exclusion of some individuals or groups by responding to students who do have the skills and the cultural capital emphasized by the school, therefore, perpetuating class distinctions and reproducing society. Nash says that Bourdieu claims that the failure of the school is its failure to find a way to teach children all that they need to know to succeed within the institution of school.

Nash explains that according to Bourdieu’s theories a school system under the direction of the dominant populous will determine that students with the habitus of the dominant classes will be ready for school and will determine that students with the habitus of the dominated classes are deprived and have deficits. Nash goes on to say that schools will pay no attention to the habitus of children who are not of the dominant classes and that this results in low academic achievement by these children, and he says that if the habitus of the children is that of a culture of resistance, the schools will attempt to separate, change, or do away with the voicing of the culture.

Nash points out that one aspect of Bourdieu’s theorizing regarding schooling regards problems concerning how to prepare students for school who do not come from a culture that provides them with readiness without refusing to teach the children who do come from a culture that prepared them. Nash explains that Bourdieu makes a distinction between the idea of cultural capital and family attitudes. He says that Bourdieu’s viewpoint is that a
family’s class or cultural bearing develops expectations regarding academics. He says that Bourdieu’s view is that class values stem from habitus, but that they are not the same as cultural capital.

Nash writes about Bourdieu’s 1986 work *Distinction* and says that Bourdieu looked at the working class a great deal with attention paid to educational opportunities, the acceptance of lack of opportunity, the resignation regarding what one has, and the differing perspective a working class person may have on the cost of education. Nash also explains that Bourdieu theorizes that a working class person may believe that there are opportunities rightfully belonging to a different cultural group and that if members of the working class pursued these opportunities, they would be excluded somehow.

Nash says that Bourdieu appears to suggest that the middle class perpetuates itself because middle class individuals have the cognitive and social resources they need to navigate the educational system which they control and because they exclude those in classes they dominate. Nash says that Bourdieu argues that the practices of the middle class that keep them in a position of authority are recognizable and that the dominant culture does work to maintain their authority through a systematic approach. He says that Bourdieu’s theory is that working class children and children of minority cultures do not succeed in school because school is structured in a manner to exclude them by neglecting them. He concludes that Bourdieu’s contributions are significant to the sociality of education, and he says Bourdieu’s thinking is focused on questions and problems that have often been ignored. He summarizes that Bourdieu’s work helps educational sociologists see the connection between family and differences in academic achievement and also helps sociologists approach theories about education with an appreciation for the complexity of culture and education.
Ultimately, even though Nash questions aspects of Bourdieu’s theories and their applicability to education, he acknowledges the importance of Bourdieu’s contributions to sociology.

In a theoretical article in 1991, D. Gartman looks at Pierre Bourdieu’s “theory of culture as a system of symbols furthering a misrecognition of class” (p. 431) through comparing it to other theories. Gartman explains that Bourdieu explores the intertwining of culture and economy and says that Bourdieu claims that individuals internalize the class structure within which they find themselves; however, he criticizes Bourdieu’s theories. Gartman rejects Bourdieu’s theories in favor of the “Frankfurt school” (p. 422). Gartman says that Bourdieu’s theories are created without connection to history or the influences of capitalism and the changes in social order caused by production.

Gartman explains Bourdieu’s theory of habitus as the argument that position in society is based on both culture and economics kept consistent through the misrecognition of particular behaviors as being normal for and valued by people of higher status. He explains that these behaviors and symbols are perpetuated through lifestyle, ways of being, or dispositions known as habitus, and he says that Bourdieu argued that the habitus of people causes them to have particular “tastes in food, clothing, art, and so on” (p. 424) and that people’s habitus places them in social strata.

He says that class for Bourdieu is “defined by different levels and types of capital, both economic and cultural” (p. 424). He explains that Bourdieu argues that the dominant class is able to enforce their “life-style as the legitimate standard of judgment” through “symbolic violence” (p. 425) and that the “violence is hidden from view and thus accepted by the victims themselves,” making the reproducing of the power structures remain.
Gartman expresses chagrin regarding what he says is the fact that Bourdieu does not acknowledge the theory of the “Frankfurt school” (p. 425). He says that the Frankfurt school theorists argue that capitalism obscures class structure; however, Bourdieu does not acknowledge this theory or possibility, Gartman says, but argues that “culture legitimates class through misrecognition” (p. 426). Gartman states that Theodor Adorno of the Frankfurt school, says that “cultural preferences” “are created by the manipulative marketing strategies of the culture industry” (p. 427) and that “product distinctions” “are in reality superficial differentiations of fundamentally similar goods” (p. 427). In contrast, Gartman says, Bourdieu suggests that when “objectively identical products are consumed by different classes, they are appropriated and perceived differentially according to their respective habitus” (p. 422).

Gartman says that there is evidence to support Bourdieu’s theory that culture symbolizes distinctions in class and to support the Frankfurt school’s idea that mass culture actually “obscures class differences” (p. 428). He explains that Bourdieu says that differences in class cause cultural differences because of habitus (learned dispositions), but that these differences are seen as stemming from the worthiness of individuals (due to misrecognition or seeing certain behaviors as more valued than others) instead of because of class position and, therefore, offer legitimacy to class position. He says that to the contrary, the Frankfurt school theorists argue that differences in class are impossible to discern because of mass culture, which causes the distinction between classes to become invisible and, therefore, legitimates the class system.

Gartman explains that Bourdieu says that the differences in culture and behavior between people is due to class position and class position is largely due to cultural capital,
but the differences in lifestyle that define people by class are learned at home or at school through the internalization of practices and disposition. Gartman says that this argument does nothing to address where the lifestyle choices begin. He says that “Bourdieu’s structuralist approach conceives of classes as the passive recipients of a culture that reproduces the structure of domination and carries little potential to transform it (p. 429).” He says that Bourdieu says people are constantly attempting to find ways to gain more return for their capital within a field; however, he points out that the attempts almost always take place within the field in which they find themselves and do not generally go up against the rules that are generally followed within that field.

**Discourse in the Educational Setting**

In 1997, P. Singh states that Basil Bernstein’s work has spawned controversy and that some have criticized it as “presenting a deficit model of working class languages” (p. 2). Singh argues that this criticism is based on a mistaken interpretation of Bernstein’s terminology regarding the language used by people of different class standings. Bernstein’s terminology, Singh argues, is meant to be descriptive, not prescriptive, and is not meant to explain basic differences between groups of people.

Singh says that Bernstein’s research on discourse in the educational setting is built on the foundation of his earlier theory regarding “classification and framing of educational knowledge” (p. 5). He explains that Bernstein theorizes that “classification (power) and framing (control) structure the symbolic insulations” within the classroom (p. 5). He further explains, saying, “Power relations create, legitimize and reproduce symbolic boundaries between different groups of students (e.g., gender, race, class, disability, learning difficulties,
gifted and talented) and different categories of instruction” (p. 5). “Pedagogic discourse is the rule which leads to the embedding of instruction (content, skills) in a social order (p.5),” Singh says, summarizing the basic idea behind Bernstein’s concepts. Speech affects both thinking and dialogue. Thinking and dialogue affect behavior and practices.

In a theoretical article in 1999, Andrew Sayer critiques Bourdieu’s work. He casts a critical eye toward his own appreciation of Bourdieu’s theories. He describes concepts important to Bourdieu, beginning with habitus, which he defines as characteristics and behaviors formed in early social interactions and experiences. He goes on to discuss strategized action and the tension between the idea that people strategize and that their behaviors are dictated by habitus, internalized behaviors and personal traits. The third concept of Bourdieu’s discussed by Sayer is the idea of culture as being economic in nature.

**Countering Misrecognition**

Sayer even asks himself if it is his own habitus which causes him to admire Bourdieu, but he then questions Bourdieu’s theory of misrecognition. He explores the idea that he may just appreciate Bourdieu’s work due to its own merit, but then he realizes that his habitus or “imprinted dispositions subconsciously acquired mainly from early social experience” (p. 405) may cause him to appreciate Bourdieu’s ideas.

“Strategized action” according to Bourdieu’s theories, Sayer says, is the idea that everything one does, whether consciously or not, is part of strategizing to increase one’s capital (p. 406). Sayer points out that a remarkable aspect of Bourdieu’s work is the presentation of culture in an economic framework.
Sayer explains misrecognition as the labeling of actions, or behaviors, or objects as being intrinsically valuable when they are actually seen as having valued simply because the dominant culture defines them in that way.

“Is it (1) that there can be no such thing as disinterested judgment, that all judgments are actually forms of social distinction or is it (2) that disinterested judgments are possible (albeit difficult) but often get distorted by habitus and the struggles of the social field, and that those struggles can be masked behind apparently disinterested judgments,” (p. 416) Sayer asks, as he questions Bourdieu while he looks for and seems to find contradictions within Bourdieu’s theories.

He says, “If I like something because of my habitus, I can scarcely help liking it, regardless of whether it brings me advantages relative to others” (p. 425). Finding a paradox in Bourdieu’s theories of habitus and strategized action, he argues that he likes certain things without strategy, meaning he simply likes them and not so that he will get ahead somehow by liking them.

Sayer concludes, however, that Bourdieu is “brilliant” in his “analysis” of social interactions and the interplay of the “lay” world and the “academic” one (p. 426). He goes on to say that, “the conflation of social power and aesthetic, moral or epistemic authority in everyday life is a major problem, but if we are to have success” in taking a critical stance toward it we must both be aware of how “common the conflation is, and us an approach which itself refuses to conflate them” (p. 427). Sayer argues for examination of practices and analyzing explicitly how educational practices perpetuate social structures.
In a 2001 article, P. Kingston says, “The socially privileged receive better grades in school, perform better on standardized tests, and earn higher degree,” (p. 88). In the subsequent pages, he seeks to determine the validity of Bourdieu’s ideas regarding the “connection between social privilege and academic success” (p. 88). Kingston explains that “cultural capital is associated primarily with Bourdieu” (p. 88) and he says that he argues that the “promise” that cultural capital theory will provide an explanation” regarding why social privilege and success” are linked has “largely gone unfulfilled” (p. 88).

He summarizes Bourdieu’s theories about cultural capital and education, saying, “Bourdieu has argued that schools reflect and are responsible to the cultural orientations of the dominant class.” He continues explaining that according to Bourdieu, “elite children” are “strongly socialized at home to their class culture” and they “come to school with dispositions that distinctly ‘fit’ the cultural biases of this institution and are rewarded in school for their particular cultural orientations” (p. 89).

Kingston turns to Lamont and Lareau (1988) for a definition of cultural capital and quotes them, saying that “cultural capital is ‘institutionalized, i.e., widely shared, high status cultural signals (attitudes, preferences, formal knowledge, behaviors, goals, and credentials) used for social and cultural exclusion’” (p. 89). He explains that this definition highlights the sense that cultural capital like economic capital can be “saved, invested, and used to obtain other resources” (p. 89). Further, he explains that this definition emphasizes that “cultural capital is not” “a general resources available and valuable to everyone” but “is largely the property of the existing elite” (p. 89).
Kingston says that in order to determine how cultural capital is connected with academic achievement we need to ask if the cultural capital is one of several variables that higher achieving students have in their favor. Kingston questions the independent influence on academic achievement by cultural capital, suggesting that more may be involved when he discusses the possible impact of cultural capital on academic achievement.

Kingston relates that in 1982, DiMaggio wrote about Bourdieu’s theory that children from homes with more cultural capital are more easily communicated with by teachers and receive more attention and special attention from them and that these children are more able to navigate educational institutions. Kingston argues, however, that it could be other aspects of families that have cultural capital, rather than the cultural capital itself which influences academic achievement positively, qualities such as “perseverance” developed from “practicing the piano,” for example; and Kingston suggests that data regarding teachers also casts doubt on Bourdieu’s theories. He says that Bourdieu’s theories hinge on the idea that “teachers value elite culture” (p. 92) and questions whether or not this is always true, suggesting that teachers value other characteristics, as well. Kingston summarizes that “there is no convincing evidence that class-based differences in cultural capital” “explain why socially advantaged students do better in school” (p. 94). He says that any benefits these children do have in school cannot be linked to preferences by school personnel. He explains that Lareau and Horvat’s definition of cultural capital is broader. They pointed out, according to Kingston, that “cultural resources are socially significant only if they are effectively used” (p. 96). Kingston concludes that “Lareau and Horvant’s analysis valuably suggests that the educational services that a child receives are affected by parents’ interest, personal styles, temperament, race, and class, as well as by a teachers’ characteristics and the
social setting at school” (p. 96) as he concludes that the question of how the cultural capital of children may affect them and their experiences at school is a complex one.

In their 2002 book, Webb, Schirato, and Danaher provide an overview of Bourdieu’s concepts; and in three particular chapters go into detail, exploring concepts and their application to education. The authors begin the work with a glossary of both terms necessary for understanding Bourdieu and terms specific to Bourdieu’s concepts.

They define “cultural arbitrary” as “a term Bourdieu uses to suggest that the differential power relations pertaining to our culture have no necessary basis but are rather arbitrarily constructed to reflect the interests of dominant groups” (p. x). Much of understanding Bourdieu is grounded in coming to understand his concept that at the basis of individuals’ actions and reactions are the positioning that people in power do to reproduce their own positions of power and pass them on to others that are like them.

For example, the authors define Bourdieu’s concept of “doxa” as “a set of core values and discourses which a field articulates as its fundamental principles and which tend to be viewed as inherently true and necessary. For Bourdieu, the ‘doxic attitude’ means bodily and unconscious submission to conditions that are in fact quite arbitrary and contingent” (p. xi). This definition, like the one for the concept of “cultural arbitrary” (p. xi) relates to the idea that some tastes and behaviors are arbitrarily labeled as better than others.

A key concept of Bourdieu’s is that of “habitus,” which the authors define, in part, as “a concept that expresses on the one hand, the way in which individuals ‘become themselves’—develop attitudes and dispositions—and, on the other hand, the ways in which those individuals engage in practices” (p. xii). They explain that the habitus of individuals
guides reactions and interactions. Bourdieu further theorizes, according to Webb, Schirato, and Danaher, that others respond to people based on both their own habitus and that of the people they are responding to, and that the tension between the habitus of individuals and what is accepted and valued, hence reproducing the stratification of society.

Another key concept defined in the glossary is “symbolic violence,” defined as “the violence which is exercised upon individuals in a symbolic, rather than a physical way. It may take the form of people being denied resources, treated as inferior or being limited in terms of realistic aspirations” (p. xvi). Because this violence is symbolic, it may be difficult to identify, even by those on whim it is perpetuated, especially if they are already disenfranchised or children.

Next, the authors explain the concepts of “cultural field and the habitus” (p. 21). “A cultural field can be defined as a series of institutions, rules, rituals, conventions, categories, designations, appointments and titles which constitute an objective hierarchy, which produce and authorize certain discourses and activities” (pp. 21-22). They state that “Bourdieu understands the concept of cultural field to refer to fluid and dynamic, rather than static, entities” (p. 22). The context within which behaviors and events take place may change, but this context or field is powerful.

“Although a lower class migrant family may strive to get its children educated, the habitus of the children will, in advance, disqualify them from success, both in the sense that the children will signal, in everything they do and say, their unsuitability for higher education, and as a corollary, the children will themselves recognize this, and more or less
expect failure” (p. 24) write the authors, providing a specific example of the effect of habitus on success.

The authors define and discuss habitus and relate the concept of habitus to education in the early pages of their book, as well as in detail later as they discuss Bourdieu’s writing about education. They also write more generally about misrecognition and symbolic violence saying, “One of the more obvious examples of the relation between misrecognition and symbolic violence can be seen in the way gender relations have, historically, been defined in terms of male domination,” (p. 25) The authors relate Bourdieu’s terms and concepts to the repression of women and its implications in this passage.

They continue, saying, “We can say that gender domination took (and takes) place precisely because women misrecognized the symbolic violence to which they were subjected as something natural” (p. 25). The authors relate the role women have had in perpetuating their own submission to the concepts of habitus and symbolic violence.

The authors explain that “education is of crucial importance for Bourdieu because it is the mechanism through which the values and relations that make up the social space are passed on from one generation to the next” (p. 105). They continue by exploring the idea that social change is promoted by education in contrast to Bourdieu’s perspective that society is actually reproduced by education. In fact, they explain, Bourdieu found that “schools tend to have the function of reproducing social inequalities” (p. 107. The authors describe the importance of educational knowledge to social status and Bourdieu’s studies focused on the “distribution” of “cultural capital” (p. 110) and the part educational institutions play in reproducing “existing social relations and inequality” (p. 112). These inequalities and their
effect on children and adults in the context of schools play an important role in the discussion of schools are reproducers of society.

Bourdieu, the authors explain, is different in his perspective regarding “the mechanism that educational systems employ to reproduce existing social relations in students” (p. 114). The authors identify this distinguishing “mechanism” in Bourdieu’s theoretical explanation of how educational institutions reproduce stratification in society as hinging on “habitus” (p. 114). They say, “For Bourdieu, it is the habitus that is the key. The habitus is the set of durable dispositions that people carry within them that shapes their attitudes, behaviours (sic) and responses to given situations” (pp. 114-115). The authors explain that according to Bourdieu, the reproduction of society occurs through interplay between the habitus of a child and the school. The ideas of Bourdieu regarding the language used by the home and that used by the school is one way that the reproduction of “these dominant and dominated positions” (pp. 116-117) take place are emphasized by the authors, as well as are Bourdieu’s concepts regarding the “cultural arbitrary and symbolic violence” (p. 117). The authors turn to a children’s movie for a metaphorical example of Bourdieu’s theories:

The film The Lion King (1994) can be used as an example of how the cultural arbitrary relates to symbolic violence and the roles of pedagogic action, both important elements of educational practice. The divisions and different power relations between the animals in The Lion King are presented not as being arbitrary, but as tied to a biological reference point, the circle of life. According to the circle of life, everything is connected in the food chain, creating a hierarchy leading up to the lions, who are the kings of the jungle. But if we step back and reflect that The Lion King is actually a popular Hollywood film aimed at children, we can see that it functions as a form of symbolic violence. The film works through its narrative to encourage or dispose viewers to make a connection between the divisions that apply in their own culture (p. 118).
Utilizing the work of Pierre Bourdieu, J. Daniel Schubert argues in his 2002 article that identifying and understanding symbolic violence is the best avenue for recognizing and addressing domination and the ways that those who are dominated contribute to their domination as part of commonly practical cycles.

Schubert argues that those who are in favor of multiculturalism should utilize Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic violence to support their promotion of multiculturalism. He argues that those who are excluded may be excluded due to an end to affirmative action, and that some may be due to letting people know they are not welcome.

Schubert focuses on college and universities as he addresses symbolic violence in the educational setting. He acknowledges that campuses of higher education have always been at the center of strife and political change. Schubert advises those who favor multiculturalism to move away from focusing on fighting against hegemony and focus instead on Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic violence as a means for defending the concept of multiculturalism. Schubert admits that the concept of hegemony recognizes the existence of dominant groups who have an active role in curtailing the voicing of alternative understandings of experience. He acknowledges the ways that dominant groups demonstrate against their subservience through means such as songs and graffiti. Schubert says that the concept of hegemony does not address the strategy behind the behavior of both those who dominate and those who are dominated. He cites Bourdieu in stating that in dominating others is not through physical practices. He explains that symbolic violence is a means to legitimize the sorting of individuals. He explains that a difference in the concept of symbolic violence and that of hegemony is that symbolic violence includes analysis of the ways that human behavior, both by the dominating group and those who are dominated create, recreate, and contribute to
stratification of society. Within the educational setting, categorizing of individuals can be by “class, race, and gender” (p. 1092), but can also be “various ways of truth telling such as professorial speech” (p. 1092). Schubert cites Bourdieu, Passeron, & de Saint Martin, 1965/1994. Schubert explains that as people we create “social categories” even though “the ways of being in the world are…potentially limitless” and that…to impose one way among many as the only, correct, or right way is to engage in symbolic violence” (p. 1092). He says that Bourdieu’s argument was “that the educational system not only reproduces inequality, but it also heightens it” (p. 1093). In order to give a specific example of this heightening of inequality and the long-term damage it can do, Schubert shares the story of an individual who was harmed by symbolic violence, domination, and categorization. “By fourth grade, Catherine had come to despise her mother for her embarrassing manner and speech” (p. 1094), she says, introducing Catherine. She continues, saying, “Now, 40 years later, Caffilene, as she is once again known, still speaks of a mixture of love and hatred toward bother mother and her teachers. The hatred for her mother is the result of the embarrassment Catherine felt about her origins in the face of an overwhelming mass schooling and culture; the hatred for her teachers is the result of them teaching her to hate her own culture and the people in it, even if one of those people was her own mother” (p. 1094). In Catherine’s case—or Caffilene’s—as in the case of many, due to the power of her teachers and the symbolic violence she endured, the victim become complicit in her own injuries.

Schubert explains that “violence can occur even if it is not intended and even if it is not realized” (p. 1095). To simply advocate for multiculturalism might not be to bring a greater variety of people together for domination and subservience; however, if symbolic violence is identified, recognized, and explored, then the educational setting will not
“welcome members of different categories of people into the dominant way of being in the world but will “multiply and legitimize alternative ways of being and thinking,” Schubert says, citing Guerrero, 1996. Schubert further explains, saying that when people assimilate, they must confirm and “conformity is a form of symbolic violence because it arbitrarily values one way of being while it devalues others” ( ). Schubert concludes that defining the categorization and domination of people as symbolic violence rather than simply promoting multiculturalism can help bring all voices together to be heard rather than bring people together for some to be heard and others not, while some are oppressed, if not excluded.

In a 2003 article, Roy Nash quotes S. J. Charlesworth, 2000, in saying that the reproduction of society through educational institutions has not changed since Bourdieu first published his ideas over 40 years ago. He says many sociologists “have given socialized habit a central place in social explanation” (p. 44). He is able to establish the sociology of habits, therefore laying a foundation for understanding Bourdieu’s work and how it developed. Nash further explains that “socialization theories explain how people come to be members of their culture,” and he states that sociologists agree “that people do what they have been brought up to do” (p. 50). This thinking is a foundation for Bourdieu’s concept of habitus.

“Bourdieu regarded society as a series of arbitrary cultures” competing with “each other in which dominance was secured, not as a result of any intrinsic merit” (p. 51), Nash says, citing Robbins, 2000. He says that Bourdieu argued that inequality in education is reproduced by a “culturally arbitrary curriculum” that students with a habitus that is not aligned are unable to access. He further explains that Bourdieu said that “symbolic violence” supports the curriculum of the dominated classes and pushes away those students who are not
of the dominant culture. Nash says that there is no reason to think that “school knowledge is organized and taught with the conscious intention of excluding those with an inferior habitus” (p. 51) because the result is the same regardless of the intention. Nash cites Lane, 2000, in saying that Bourdieu advocated for a “universal curriculum” (p. 51).

Nash admits educational sociology has not developed an accumulation of empirical data to support the development of specific “models” for addressing the differences in education (p. 59). He says that the “emerging recognition of Bourdieu as a realistic thinker” has been real progress in the field of educational sociology (p. 59). He concludes that in educational psychology there is no lack of theories and methods, but that there is a lack of “explanation” (p. 59) and that Bourdieu may offer realistic explanations for both theories and models of practice.

Rob Moore explores Pierre Bourdieu’s ideas about cultural capital in relation to more general theories in this 2004 article. He also explores the ways that Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital interacts with all that Bourdieu says about “the reproduction of social inequality in and through education” (p. 445). He cites Bourdieu & Passeron, 1997, and Bourdieu, 1997, in laying the groundwork for his discussion.

Moore defines cultural capital as stemming from the economic term capital. He says that Bourdieu links culture with capital, bringing together two distinct concepts, and then includes social, linguistic, and symbolic as types of capital. Moore says these concepts, although different, each stem from some sort of “investment” (p. 446). Moore explains that “habitus” or dispositions and behavior and style, can bring “distinction” to an individual that
places him or her in the social “hierarchy” with a sense of “legitimacy” to the structure of society and the place individuals have in it (p. 446).

Moore moves from his explanation of social capital and Bourdieu’s related concepts and terms habitus and distinction into discussion of “exchange” and “transformation” in relation to cultural capital (p. 446). He further explains, saying, “Symbolic forms of capital are not seen for what they are.” He says, “They are systematically misrecognized” (p. 446). Moore summarizes some of the groundwork and implications of Bourdieu’s concepts, saying, “Once it is acknowledged that the positions and relations of the cultural field are valorized by power relations rather than by aesthetic qualities intrinsic to them, then they can be recognized as arbitrary and their imposition through pedagogic action seen as constituting ‘symbolic violence’” (p. 447). Recognizing symbolic violence for what it is takes a broadening of perspective and an imagining that things could be other than they are.

He explains that when Bourdieu describes “culture as arbitrary,” he casts doubt on the idea that particular aspects of what is valued by a group as the preferred culture have value of and within themselves (p. 447). He discusses habitus, or socially conditioned dispositions stemming from one’s culture of origin and writes about habitus as a system of “probabilities” within a “field of power” (p. 450). He explains that the probability structures of habitus operate in symbolic fields and that economic capital becomes cultural capital.

He says, “The work of the system of pedagogic communication is to maintain the relationship between education and the dominant group in order both to guarantee that group’s success in education and maintain the reproduction of its distinctive habitus through education to continue its success and the conditions of that success” (p. 451). In these lines
he summarizes the very complex concepts of Bourdieu and exposes the purposefulness of the reproduction of society through education and the very expectation that it will occur.

Moore concludes by explaining that he makes an effort in the article to explain Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital through Bourdieu’s “theory of exchange and of the transubstantiation of the different forms of economic capital.” Moore points out the irony in explaining cultural capital through economic capital terms since culture often denies the influence of economics on culture.

Access to Knowledge

Roy Nash opens his 2004 article by stating that what “counts as knowledge” and “who should have access to knowledge” are important questions (p. 605). He continues by saying that the article will explore theories of two sociologists who have contributed to the debate regarding curriculum and knowledge. He lists Bourdieu’s primary concepts as “symbolic violence, the cultural arbitrary, “and “the conservative function of the school” (p. 606). The other sociologist he says he will discuss is Bernstein. He explains that Bernstein investigated issues related to knowledge and power.

Nash says that a major component of critical perspectives on education is the argument that schools deny participation by those whose opinions and styles are not aligned with those the school promotes. He says this line of thought acknowledges that the knowledge that is accepted by schools as being standard and accepted as valuable is actually socially constructed to have value and to be accepted as natural or universal. He explains that students who are from diverse backgrounds who are accustomed to communicating according to “codes of communication” (p.607) that are different than those accepted as
standard by the school meet with difficulties and are excluded by the school by being ignored or rejected.

Nash explains that Bourdieu argued that the ways curriculum is structured in schools and the manner in which some curriculum is made available to some students and not to others causes individuals to suffer and is an example of “symbolic violence” (p. 607). He further discusses Bourdieu’s concepts, saying that people who practice the behavior of a “literate culture possess a symbolic culture that is recognized and legitimated” (p. 610). He continues, saying that Bourdieu’s theory regarding symbolic violence is a “reminder that knowledge and its forms are not given, but the products of human beings (p. 610). As the products of human beings, this knowledge is not innate and not innately more valuable than other knowledge, behaviors or practices.

According to Nash, Bourdieu suggests a pedagogy that would be universal and would not necessitate assuming that students would (or should) come to school with particular types of knowledge, but Nash says the idea was thought to be similar to deficit-based theories and nothing came of his idea.

Nash looks at Bernstein’s theories, noting that Bernstein’s concepts are complicated; however, he does not explain that Bernstein wrote about language as a code which is structured and organized. He explains that according to Bernstein, “‘elaborated’ code generates a language or discourse of social power, whereas the ‘restricted’ code generates a discourse of subordination.” An aspect of Bernstein’s theory is the idea that teachers participate in keeping children divided by class by teaching the elaborated code to some children and the restricted code to others. Nash goes further in explaining Bernstein’s
concepts, saying that the “dominant class” “must necessarily employ a discourse with the capacity to express generalized and abstract conceptions” (p. 612); yet the class who is dominated “is more or less limited” “to certain forms of linguistic expression” (p. 612). The more concrete discourse narrows both possibility and perspective.

Nash asks important questions. He asks “what principles and practices confer and sustain knowledge hierarchies” and “what principles and practices control social access to knowledge” (p. 615). These questions lead to others. He asks, “To what extent are social class differences in perception and cognition derived from class socialization practiced with a necessary structural relationship to economic and cultural production” (p. 615). These questions seek to uncover what schools keep secret, perhaps even from themselves.

Nash says that the concept that curriculum may not be arbitrary is, in fact, right. He says that science curriculum may be universal, rather than arbitrary. He goes on to discuss both Bourdieu and Bernstein’s theories regarding how the dominant class restricts access to education and reproduces the hierarchal structure of society through practice and through language. He concludes that “the transmission of knowledge is not as arbitrary as Bourdieu’s and Bernstein’s theories assume” due to the non-arbitrary nature of science; however, he acknowledges the importance of sociologists such as Bernstein and Bourdieu regarding the “reproduction of educational inequality” (p. 621).

In a 2005 article, Roy Nash explores Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of habitus and Dewey’s theory of collective intelligence as explanation for the reproduction of inequality in education. Nash points out that Dewey argued in 1937 that the environment individuals live in creates patterns of behavior that affect their actions. Nash explains that habitus is “defined
by Bourdieu as a collection of dispositions” (p. 13). Nash zeroes in on “cognitive habitus” (p. 15) and moves on to discuss habitus that involves patterns of speech. In this way, Nash relates Bourdieu’s work to that of Bernstein.

Nash discusses political considerations regarding the concept of “cognitive habitus” (p. 17). One consideration is that cognitive habitus could be considered a deficit theory. He concludes that exploring the concept of cognitive habitus could enlighten the search for information about inequalities in education.

Pierre Bourdieu Key Concepts

Published in 2008, Pierre Bourdieu Key Concepts is a collection of chapters edited by M. Grenfell which focus on the concepts which create the theoretical framework of Bourdieu. The chapters work together to communicate a broad perspective of Bourdieu’s theories while offering a more in depth perspective of concepts one at a time. It begins with a biography of Bourdieu by Michael Grenfell and ends with a conclusion and postscript, also by Grenfell.

Grenfell explains that Bourdieu was driven “to explain the social, political and cultural practices that surround him” (p. 15). In this quest, Grenfell says, Bourdieu sought to answer the question of whether school is “a democratizing agent” and what “education and culture offer” (pp. 18-19).

Chapter Two is written by Derek Robbins. Robbins writes about Bourdieu’s “Theory of Practice” (p. 27) and says in the first statement of his chapter that “central to this chapter is Bourdieu’s Outlining of a Theory of Practice from 1977, which is a translation and revision of a 1972 work by Bourdieu. Robbins explains that his main point is laying the foundation
for describing Bourdieu’s educational experience instilled in him a lasting ambivalence about the function and status of objective knowledge” (p. 29). He explains, “The ideal, shared with his father, was that education was the means to achieve an inclusive society, but the actuality was that he imbibed a cognitive culture which procured him ‘distinction,’ potentially elevating him above the process of mass democratization” (p. 29). Bourdieu focused on education, Robbins explains, due to the “social division” in his own “schooling” (p. 33), caused by the circumstances of his own cultural experiences.

In Chapter Three, Karl Matons explains Bourdieu’s concept of “habitus” (p. 49). He says that habitus is “dispositions or tendencies” that are “durable in that they last over time” (p. 51). He says that habitus is “structured by conditions of existence and generates practices, beliefs, perceptions, feelings and so forth in accordance with its own structure” (p. 51). He further explains that Bourdieu believed that one’s habitus interacts with the culture and environment in which one becomes involved and that “practices” develop (p. 52). He shares that Bourdieu theorized that the interplay of habitus and environment creates a relationship that not only affects the choices one has, but also the choices one will feel free to make.

“We are faced at any moment with a variety of possible forks in that path, or choices of actions and beliefs. This range of choices depends on our current context. (The position we occupy in a particular social field), but at the same time which of these choices are visible to us and which we do not see as possible are the result of our past journey” (p. 52), Maton says, explaining what he identifies as Bourdieu’s perspective on choices and the phenomenon that one’s choices may be limited as greatly by one’s worldview as by actual circumstances.
and events. Maton will continue in this vein, working to assure that the possible effects of habitus Bourdieu considered are clear.

“Our aspirations and expectations, our sense of what is reasonable or unreasonable, likely or unlikely, our beliefs about what are the obvious actions to take and the natural way of doing them, are all for Bourdieu neither essential nor natural, but rather conditioned by our habituses and are thereby a meditated form of arbitrary social structure, (p. 52)” says Maton. The scrutiny and questioning with which Bourdieu and those, such as Grenfell and Maton, who attempt to convey his concepts, encourage creates an environment in which little can be accepted as necessarily so.

In Chapter Four, Patricia Thomson writes about Bourdieu’s concept of “field,” describing it as “social space” (p. 67) where “capital” is “exchanged” (p. 69). She explains that “Like a force field, a social space operates semi-autonomously” (p. 70). Power is at play, she explains, saying, “the fields that make up the field of power are not all on a level playing field: some are dominant and the game in subordinate fields is often dependent on activity in another—what happens in the housing field, for example, is highly dependent on what happens in the state and the financial field” (p. 73). These social contexts or fields affect each other.

Thomson explains that, according to Bourdieu’s ideas, fields not only affect other fields, but also affect the social agents within the fields themselves. She goes on to explain, saying that “field and habitus constitute a dialectic through which specific practices produce and reproduce the social world that at the same time is making them” (p. 75).
Examining habitus and looking at field, along with the way the two affect each other can offer a means into understanding social structure. Thomson says, “Field is one part of a trio of major theoretical tools. Together with its stable mates, habitus and capital, it offers an epistemological and methodological approach to a historicized and particular understanding of social life” (p. 81). In this statement, as well as in the chapter overall, Thomson explains concepts that help Bourdieu develop and answer social questions.

In Chapter Five, “Social Class,” Nick Crossley says, “In Reproduction, he (Bourdieu) claims to know how children from culturally wealthy backgrounds inherit that wealth, in the form of embodied dispositions which are recognized and valued both by teachers and by the institutional procedures of the educational field (p. 95).” This explanation lays the foundation for Bourdieu’s concept of habitus. Crossley goes on, saying that Bourdieu explains the phenomenon like this, “These students appear brighter and more articulate to their teachers because they ‘speak the same language’ and because the cultural knowledge and abilities valued and rewarded within the educational system are those which these children have experienced and acquired at home” (p. 95). Over the next few pages, Crossley discusses the reproduction of society, habitus, field, and class, expanding on his introduction.

In Chapter Six, Robert Moore discusses the topic of the chapter, “Capital.” He says that Bourdieu broadened the concept for the term capital to include “noneconomic” “forms of exchange” (p. 101). He discusses “symbolic capital, saying it includes sub-types such as cultural capital, linguistic capital, scientific and literary capital” (p. 103). He goes on to describe how these forms of capital are exchanged, and he, too, identifies habitus as a key concept of Bourdieu’s theories. He continues, eventually turning to “symbolic violence” (p. 108) which he defines as “the misrecognition of the actual arbitrariness of values in symbolic
fields” when associated with cultural capital (p. 108). Misrecognition or the valuing of something arbitrary as something essential can be as difficult to recognize as the term implies.

Ce’cile Deer writes about “Doxa” in Chapter Seven, saying that doxa refers to “shared but unquestioned opinions and perceptions” which determine what is considered “natural” or acceptable or not” (p. 120). Doxa builds itself on misrecognition and perpetuates symbolic violence.

The remaining chapters define hysteresis, a tension between one’s habitus and the field or context, written about by Cheryl Hardy, interest, as in the interests of the “dominate classes” (p. 159) and Bourdieu’s philosophy “that there is no such thing and disinterested act” as explained by Michael Grenfell. Grenfell says that Bourdieu argues that “it is only within the domestic family situation” (p. 167) that Bourdieu sees people genuinely putting their interests aside. He says that Bourdieu saw even altruistic acts as being for one’s own purposes in some manner.

The tenth chapter, “Conatus,” written by Steve Fuller, describes conatus as “those impulses that develop and express themselves (more or less) in response to particular aspects of the social conditions” (p. 174). Fuller argues that conatus is closely related to habitus. He draws a distinction between the two by describing conatus as will or lack of will, as in drive of lack of drive, and habitus as dispositions. He says that “conatus endows people with certain propensities via the habitus accumulated by them” and that these “evolve into personal life projects” (pp. 177-178). Both habitus and conatus can have a fierce hold on individuals and groups.
J. Daniel Schubert writes about “suffering symbolic violence” in Chapter Eleven. He states early in the chapter that, “According to Bourdieu, contemporary social hierarchies and social inequality, as well as the suffering that they cause, are produced and maintained less by physical force than by forms of symbolic domination” (p. 183). He explains that in his writing, particularly when writing about education, Bourdieu establishes the idea that “violence results when we misrecognize, as natural, those systems of classification that are actually culturally arbitrary and historical” (p. 184). Schubert explains that symbolic violence and the domination it achieves are accomplished with ease, simply by going “about their normal daily lives, adhering to the rules of the system” because “the dominant and the dominated perceive these systems to be legitimate” (p. 184). He explains that the dominated contribute to their own domination through expectations and behaviors that complement the actions of those who dominate them. He says, “symbolic violence may in some ways be ‘gentler’ than physical violence, but is no less real” (p. 184), exploring that the word “symbolic” should not be interpreted as less significant or less violent.

Schubert goes on, saying, “the function of schools is to teach and socialize students, but Bourdieu emphasizes that schools teach students particular things and socialize them in particular ways” (p. 188). Symbolic violence is the means by which school authorities support or discourage members of the dominating and dominated classes by what is emphasized.

He quotes Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), saying “‘pedagogic action is objectively a symbolic violence to the extent to which it is an imposition of a cultural arbitrary by an arbitrary power’” (p. 188). What is taught, how it is taught, what is applauded, what is reprimanded, the academic skills that are seen as foundations for learning or are taught, are
according to this concept, selected by the dominant culture, and these choices are symbolically violent.

Schubert describes the mechanisms of the reproduction of society through educational institutions, saying, “The lack of fit between lower-and working-class habitus and educational field, and the blaming of the individuals involved for their poor performance, is a form of symbolic violence through which social class hierarchy is reproduced” (p. 189).

He explains that children from dominated classes are blamed for “their own” (p. 189) lack of ability to perform tasks in the same manner and with the same skills as children from the dominating classes, and the assumption is made that the skills and performance abilities that schools emphasize are those that matter.

“It is worth nothing, though, that misrecognition of social privilege as natural superiority” “serves to solidify that privilege and, for members of subordinated groups, exacerbated symbolic violence and intensify social suffering” (p. 190) even though the emphasized skills and performance abilities are not chosen by disinterested parties, but by members of the dominant class.

Cécile Deer writes about “Reflexivity” in Chapter Twelve. She says reflexivity is at the “origin and the heart of Pierre Bourdieu’s work” (p. 199). She explains that for a social observer, it is critically important according to Bourdieu for them to be self-aware will help them understand their own interest affecting their observations. Deer says, “For Bourdieu, reflexivity means that all knowledge producers should strive to recognize their own objective position within the intellectual and academic field” (p. 201). Observers need to be aware of
their own position inside or, less likely, outside the dominant class, and the way their position influences their perceptions and observations and what they want to protect or denounce.

Deer explains that reflexivity “aims to make explicit the two-way relationship between the objective structures of the intellectual, academic, and social-scientific fields and the incorporating structure (that is habitus) of those operating within these fields” (p. 206). Habitus affects both the observer and those being observed.

Reflexivity is the practice of seeking to understand our own points of view and using that understanding to develop understanding. “The difficulty is that the interviewer/observer must be able to include in his or her vision a description of the interviewee’s experience from his or her own point of view” (p. 211), something which must be done with conscious care.

In the final section of the book, identified as the Conclusion, Michael Grenfell writes a summary of the concepts portrayed in each chapter, explaining the connections between the concepts and concluding that “implicit in Bourdieu’s view of the world is that differentiation and distinction results in a kind of violence being perpetuated on those not belonging to the dominant social groups” (p. 215).

The violence, while symbolic, is no less damaging to those on whom it is perpetuated. He says that Bourdieu challenges academics and intellectuals to be reflexive in fields that are not renowned for self-disclosure” (p. 218) so that their observations and analysis of those observations will be meaningful contributions to social science.

Finally, in the Postscript “Methodological Principles,” Grenfell delineates a “Bourdieuian approach to research,” (p. 219) including the “construction of the research
object” by approaching “any major significant object in an unexpected manner,” (p. 220) a “three-level approach to studying the field of the object of research” which includes looking at the power relationships within the field to be studied, including the “position of the field” itself, the “relations” between those within the field “who compete for the legitimate forms of specific authority” within the field, and analyzing the “habitus of agents,” the systems of dispositions they have acquired by internalizing a deterministic type of social and economic condition” (p. 222). Grenfell summarizes and connects the concepts so that the philosophy, theories, tools, and terms of Bourdieu are accessible to students and social scientists, alike.

Summary of Cultural Capital Theoretical Literature

The cultural capital theoretical literature explores, defines, discusses, questions, and argues against or about the work of Bourdieu and Passeron. In 1990, Nash questions habitus and argues that the application of Bourdieu’s early ideas to education is faulty and says that Bourdieu intends for social capital to be considered as social connection that can be used for achieving a goal. He also says that Bourdieu did not intend for the existence and impact of economic culture to be ignored. He explains that Bourdieu’s examination of the strategies behind the reproduction of society accomplished through the transmission of cultural capital from one generation to another propelled Bourdieu to begin to question the perception that schools are vehicles of social change.

Nash emphasizes the importance of Bourdieu’s concept of habitus but argues that there are limitations to Bourdieu’s theories, such as no acknowledgement of the free will and strategic practices of individuals. Nash discusses Bourdieu’s theories about cultural capital and schools, but identifies what he says is a tension in Bourdieu’s writing. He says that when
Bourdieu advocates for priority educational programs he disavows the arbitrary nature of the cultural behaviors valued by schools. Nash says that ultimately Bourdieu claims that the failure to find a way to teach children what they need to know to succeed in school is the failure of schools.

Dr. Gartman particularly focuses on Bourdieu’s concepts of misrecognition and habitus; yet he criticizes them in relation to the Frankfurt school theorists’ view that capitalism obscures class structure. Gartman says that Bourdieu does nothing to address where lifestyle choices begin; yet he does acknowledge that Bourdieu says that choices take place within a field in which individuals find themselves.

P. Singh, moving in a different, but related direction, writes about Bernstein’s work regarding language and discourse in the educational setting. Singh explains Bernstein theories about language use in school settings as a means of creating and maintaining power relations and boundaries. Andrew Sayer questions whether people follow habitus or their own strategies in the behavior and questions whether his own appreciation of Bourdieu is due to his own habitus. He discusses misrecognition and habitus as paradoxical concepts.

Kingston seeks to determine the validity of Bourdieu’s theories in 2001. He acknowledges cultural capital as a theory of Bourdieu and discusses the advantages children from privileged classes have in school. Kingston discusses Lamont and Lareau and their work regarding cultural capital. He refers to DiMaggio, too, and his writing about the ease of communication in children from homes with higher cultural capital have in communicating with their teachers; however, he suggest other factors could be influencing the success of
these children. Kingston argues that Lareau and Horvant’s definition of cultural capital is broader than Bourdieu’s and argues that how cultural capital affect education is complex.

Webb, Schirato and Danaher review Bourdieu’s concepts and their application to schools and provide definitions and examples for Bourdieu’s concepts such as cultural arbitrary, doxa, habitus, symbolic violence and cultural field; and they relate these concepts to the history of the repression of women. Schubert continues the discussion of symbolic violence and says that the concept could be used to support multiculturalism.

In 2003, Nash says that the concepts of Bourdieu identified forty years earlier are still at play. He acknowledges the importance of socialization theories and the concept of symbolic violence. Rob Moore joined the conversation in 2004, focusing on habitus and social capital, as well as the cultural field and power positions within it.

Nash continues the discussion through writing about access to knowledge, and he links Bourdieu to Bernstein regarding issues of knowledge and power. He writes about Bernstein’s description of language as a code.

A 2008 collection of chapters by various authors defines and explains Bourdieu’s terms, concepts and theories, including habitus, field, social class, capital, doxa, hysteresis, conatus, symbolic violence, reflexivity and distinction. In the conclusion the books’ editor, Grenfell discusses a Bourdieu influenced approach to research, saying that it includes looking at the power relationships within a field, the position of the field itself and the relationships between those within the field who compete for authority, the habitus of individual involved and their inherited attitudes, behaviors, tastes, dispositions and aspirations.
Overall Summary of Related Literature

Parent involvement in schools and achievement includes descriptions of the evolution of what is meant by parent involvement and a look at early assumptions about how parents should be involved. The literature recognizes the misrecognition of middle class parent involvement in students’ educations as definitive (Epstein & Jenson, 2004) with a discussion of a link between student achievement and parent involvement and the importance of high teacher expectations of parents (Chrispeels, 1991). Broader definitions of parent involvement follow, and these include activities at home that are school-related (Davies, 1997). The literature also emphasizes the need for teachers to learn from parents about families and their educational experiences (Davies, 1997; Epstein, 2001) and the need for schools to consider changing to accommodate parents rather than asking parents to change for schools (Epstein & Janson, 2004).

How neighborhoods affect parent involvement (Eccles & Harold, 1993), the importance of intentional strategies to increase parent involvement, the importance of collaboration between schools and homes (Davies, 1997; Whitaker, 2003), the fact that parents may influence students academically (Epstein, 2001) and the need for schools to take action to involve parents rather than wait on parents to determine ways to be involved (Spera, 2005) are themes in the literature. The literature also identifies and defines types of parent involvement, variations in parent involvement along cultural and/or socioeconomic lines, differences in parenting styles and the possible distinctions in outcome these differences may predict, the importance of principals letting all stakeholders know how important parents are and that embracing a wider range of parent involvement possibilities, including those parents initiate themselves, as important (Davies, 1997; Epstein & Janson, 2004; Spera, 2005).
Studies regarding parent involvement show that parent expectations influence student achievement even though parents may not know their own influence (Rubie-Davies, 2010), that types of parent involvement differ depending on the resources parents have (Epstein, 1971; Lareau, 1989), and that the resources a child actually benefits from may not be predicted by what a parent has available due to the fact that parents may differ in their levels of involvement due to differing circumstances and beliefs (Muller, 1995).

Studies also indicate that parents of students who do well on tests do not contact schools as often (Muller, 1995), but whether or not parents contact schools is influenced by several factors. While there is a lack of research regarding teachers being evaluated for interactions with parents (Chrispeels, 1996), studies indicate that educators need to learn more about families of students and suggest that this could be accomplished through narrative research (Auerbach, 2002). Teachers need professional development in communicating with parents and encouraging their involvement, and schools need to assure that the needs of families are met before parents are able to turn their focus to increasing their involvement in schools (Lopez, Scribner and Mahitivanichcha, 2001).

The way parents imagine their roles influences their involvement in schools, along with their beliefs regarding the effect they may have and whether or not they feel invited to be involved in schools (Chrispeels and Rivero, 2001). Parent involvement at the elementary school level is associated with student success (Hawes and Plourde, 2005), according to studies. Empirical research indicates that the involvement of parents of students in low achieving schools can mitigate the negative effects of poverty on academic achievement (Jacobs and Harvey, 2005), that parent involvement has a positive effect on academic achievement and is affected by demographics, habitus, and cultural capital. Researchers find
that differences in habitus or beliefs and behaviors are linked with differences in parent involvement and that when a family has cultural capital, they are able to obtain more cultural capital (Lee and Bowen, 2006). Additionally research emphasizes that school staff members need to appreciate a broad range of involvement by parents and look for similarities rather than differences between children’s lives at home and at school and between parents’ attempts to be involved in their children’s academic endeavors (Lee and Bowen, 2006). In her research, Auerbach finds that educators are often not aware of what minority parents do, higher SES parents are more likely to advocate for their children, the narrow perspective of the family-school partnership model excludes many parents, and differences in social position have an effect on the roles parents develop for themselves with regard to schools (Auerbach, 2007). She also finds that educators need to seek to understand how parents feel, directly examine how race and socioeconomics affect relationships, and that educational leadership programs need to include focus on strategies to develop the parent engagement skills of potential principals (Auerbach, 2007).

Research reveals that parent involvement can be increased by having children ask their parents to be involved (Ice and Hoover-Dempsey, 2011), and schools and school districts need policies in place to develop parent involvement and both make available opportunities for and appreciate different types of parent involvement (Zhang, Hsien-Yuan, Oi-man, Benz and Bowman-Perrott, 2011).

Education of parents regarding how to encourage and support autonomy in children is related to greater intrinsic motivation in students and has a positive effect on student achievement, according to research (Froiland, 2011), and some people are able to utilize their social capital and some are not, depending on the setting (Lareau and Horvat, 1999).
Research indicates that Black parents often interact with criticism due to the history of discrimination against Black people (Lareau and Horvat). Bourdieu’s theories inspire researchers to determine how education perpetuates inequality. Lareau and Horvat argue that social capital is valuable when it helps parents comply with school expectations, and they find that even though educators think they treat parents the same, they do not.

Lareau’s 2002 article regarding the findings from an ethnographic study establishes that middle class parents are involved in “concerted cultivation” by working to develop their children’s abilities through activities (p. 747) and that fear is behind the distrust and insecurity of some parents. They determine that middle class parents are more capable of convincing others to do what they want or give them what they need.

Lareau writes *Unequal Childhoods*, based on the same ethnographic study of twelve families who are middle class, working class and poor, reveals information about how children spend their time, about language, kinship and about the concepts of “concerted cultivation” and “natural growth” (p. 7).

Lareau says that her book identifies often invisible ways social class affects children and their opportunities, and she says social class affects children invisibly because “Americans are much more comfortable recognizing the power of individual initiatives instead of acknowledging “the power of social class” (p. 7). She writes about differences in language, saying that middle class families use language to reason and working class and poor families using language to direct. She also says that middle class parents intervene in their children’s schooling while working class and poor families rely on educational professionals. She says that sometimes working class and poor parents seem to agree in
school meetings but may actually disagree with the school vehemently later, particularly with regard to discipline. She notes that educators want both support from parents’ interaction with them and, when children have educational problems, strong personalities capable of firm directions.

At the same time, according to Bolivar and Chrispeels, when low income or disadvantaged parents are given information and education, their social and intellectual capital can be increased and their ability to create change through individual efforts or collaboration can be developed (2010).

There is a contradiction between the perceptions of educators and students in urban schools in that educators do not feel that the families of their students encourage academic achievement; yet, the students do have the perception that their parents support them and their school (Anderson, 2011). The parent involvement literature is largely about crossing boundaries and linking worlds, defining types of parent involvement, the positive influence of parent involvement on student achievement with acknowledgement of the effects of demographics and setting on that influence, and various ways that parent involvement affects schools and students.

Cultural and social capital literature can be argued to have begun with Pierre Bourdieu. Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron write about studies by the Center for European Sociology in *The Inheritors*, and they identify disproportionate numbers of students in higher education due to disparities in education along societal lines, discuss the calendar year for students and its patterns and effects and argue that the distance a students’ social strata is from the academic world affects the success level for students in the academic
world. They continue the dialogue in *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, when they argue that educators do not know they are perpetuating society’s divisions and specify linguistic capital and social capital as contributing to the perpetuation of societal inequities.

In *Distinction*, Bourdieu establishes an argument for the power of cultural capital and its effect on educational possibilities. In an argument based on analysis of a survey of over 1200 people, he says that individuals and groups participate in remaining in their station in society and in the reproduction of society through their habitus or behaviors and practices.

Susan Dumais grasps Bourdieu’s concept of habitus and his ideas about the ways that others respond to family’s behaviors in her 2006 article. She supports Bourdieu’s cultural capital theories, and she finds support for the idea that children from higher status homes have advantages as they move through educational systems in the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study data she analyses.

In a qualitative study, also in 2005, C. Delgado-Gaitan finds that some parents are troubled by not being able to help their children with homework and that parents’ cultural capital can be increased through simple actions. L. Handsfield and R. Jimenez contribute to the conversation through an ethnographic study. They find evidence of the validity of Bourdieu’s term misrecognition, the labeling of something as normal or preferred when it is simply part of the higher status culture. Bourdieu’s work is also important as a foundation for a 2010 study by E. Toshalis. Toshalis questions whether teachers are taught in their pre-service training to motivate students or control them, making a strong case for a connection between the behavior of teachers and Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic violence.
Cultural capital theoretical literature delineates and explains concepts and terms found in the work of Bourdieu and Passeron. In 1990, Nash questions habitus and argues that Bourdieu did not intend for the existence and impact of economic culture to be ignored in a focus on cultural and social capital. He discusses Bourdieu’s questioning of the perception that schools are vehicles of social change. He emphasizes the importance of Bourdieu’s concept of habitus but argues that there are limitations to Bourdieu’s theories, such as no acknowledgement of the free will and strategic practices of individuals. He discusses Bourdieu’s theories about cultural capital and schools, but argues that when Bourdieu advocates for priority educational programs he disavows the arbitrary nature of the cultural behaviors valued by schools. Nash says that ultimately Bourdieu claims that the failure to find a way to teach children what they need to know to succeed in school is the failure of schools.

Dr. Gartman builds on Bourdieu’s concepts of misrecognition and habitus; yet he argues that the Frankfurt school theorists’ view that capitalism obscures class structure should not be ignored. He says Bourdieu does not address where lifestyle choices begin; however, he acknowledges Bourdieu’s theory that individual choices take place within a field in which people find themselves.

P. Singh writes about Bernstein’s work regarding language and discourse and power relations and boundaries in school settings. Andrew Sayer suggests that people may follow their own strategies rather than simply following the direction that their habitus takes them and discusses misrecognition and habitus as paradoxical concepts.
In 2011, Kingston looks at Bourdieu’s theories and acknowledges cultural capital as Bourdieu’s concept and discusses the advantages children from privileged classes have in school. He also discusses Lamont and Lareau and their work regarding cultural capital. Kingston argues that Lareau and Horvant’s definition of cultural capital is broader than Bourdieu’s and argues that how cultural capital may affect education is complex.

Webb, Schirato and Danaher review Bourdieu’s concepts and their application to schools and provide definitions and examples for Bourdieu’s concepts; and Schubert continues the discussion of symbolic violence, arguing that the concept could be used to support multiculturalism. Nash acknowledges the importance of socialization theories and the concept of symbolic violence in a 2003 article, and Rob Moore joins the conversation in 2004, focusing on habitus and social capital, as well as the cultural field and power positions within it. Nash continues the discussion through writing about access to knowledge; and he links Bourdieu to Bernstein regarding issues of knowledge and power, recognizing Bernstein’s description of language as a code.

In a 2008 book, chapters by various authors define and explain Bourdieu’s theories and concepts, including habitus, field, capital, symbolic violence and more. The terms and theories are accessible in the edition, and in the conclusion Grenfell, the books’ editor, broadens the discussion to look at Bourdieu’s approach to research, which includes looking at a field, the power relationships within that field and the relationships of those who compete for authority within the context, as well as the habitus of those involved.

A passage from an article by J. Schubert included previously in the review of the literature illustrates a point at which the ideas and information in the parent involvement
literature and the concepts and theories in the social and cultural capital literature intersect. Schubert writes about Catherine who had “come to despise her mother for her embarrassing manner and speech” in elementary school. He says that as an adult, “Caffilene,” as she became known again, “speaks of a mixture of love and hatred toward both her mother and her teachers.” Schubert says the negative feelings Caffilene expresses toward her mother are due to the her early feelings of embarrassment, but he says her “hatred for her teachers is the result of them teaching her to hate her own culture and the people in it, even of one of those people was her own mother” (2002, p. 1094).

The sentiment of Caffilene and her struggle conveyed by this passage speak to the complexities and difficulties experienced by children and their parents when their interactions and abilities are not aligned with those of the educational institutions they find themselves navigating, tensions and experiences that manifest themselves in, as the parent involvement and social capital literature indicate, in any number of ways, including the perpetuation of society as it has been vs. the meritocracy it is pleasant to think schools offer.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter specifies the methodology used for a study of parent calls. Following a brief introduction, the chapter includes the research purpose and theoretical lens, assumptions of the study, introduction of the investigator, research hypotheses, the research design, a description of the research site, demographic data of the population, major research questions, guiding quantitative research questions, guiding qualitative research questions, related quantitative research questions, related qualitative research questions, rationale for using a mixed method approach, a description of the quantitative data set and instrumentation, a description of the qualitative data collection, a plan for qualitative data analysis, a description of the role of the investigator, an explanation of how accessibility will be obtained and an outline of the ethics regarding the treatment of the data sets, the significance of the study, the limitations of the study, and a summary of the chapter.

Research Purpose and Theoretical Lens

The theoretical lens for the study is Bourdieu’s theoretical framework of symbolic violence and his concept that schools are reproducers of class divisions in society. The researcher seeks to determine if there is parallelism between social class and parental concerns expressed through calls to district office administrators. The free and reduced lunch
make-up of the schools parents call about are utilized as the indicator of the social class of the majority of the students in those particular schools and of the parents who call about those schools because there is no other indicator of the wealth or lack of wealth of these individuals.

The goal of the study is to establish an understanding of the parents who call district offices about their students’ schools. Through data analysis, identification is made of patterns in topics parents call about, when parents call, and what they say. Patterns in parent calls are explored in relation to the socioeconomic make-up of the schools the parents call about to determine if a relationship can be established between the socioeconomic make-up of schools and the patterns in parent calls about those schools.

Another guiding principle of the conceptual framework is the identification of different types of parental involvement (Lareau, 1989; Epstein & Jansorn, 2004; Muller, 1995). The analysis of calls to district offices includes classifying those calls into types of calls in a similar fashion to the identification of different types of parent involvement in education (Epstein, 1991). The relationship between different types of parent calls and school characteristics is examined just as the relationship between types of parental involvement and student achievement have been examined (Auerbach, 2007; Epstein, 1990; Lee & Bowen, 2006).

**Assumptions of the Study**

For purposes of this study, it is assumed that *parent calls* are those calls and contacts made to district offices by parents, guardians, or others concerned with the welfare of children which are more substantial than a call with a factual question, but are an expression of a complaint, concern, or compliment.
Key Assumptions

1. Parallelism between parental complaints/concerns and social class.
   It is assumed that parental complaints emanate from a particular social class perspective and that parental concerns will mirror such class distinctions.

2. Schooling and cultural neutrality.
   It is assumed that schools are not culturally neutral social places and that they favor children from some social classes over others through their routines, grouping and curricular practices and selections.

3. Parallelism between parent complaints/concerns and the school calendar.
   It is assumed that the number and nature of parent complaints or concerns will be related to the timing of academic and social events in schools according to the school calendar.

   It is assumed that examples of Pierre Bourdieu’s concepts related to his theory regarding the role schools play in cultural reproduction will be identified in the parental complaints/concerns made to district offices.

Introduction of the Investigator

The investigator, while now in a role as a principal in one of the district’s schools, was for a period of time one of the district office employees who took calls, entered data into the electronic database, and took narrative notes on calls, as well as being one of the personnel who reached out to district school supervisors and school principals in attempts to resolve parents’ concerns. This role gave the researcher a position of trustworthiness within the
district, perhaps facilitating access to the data and, also, means that the investigator did have
direct involvement in categorizing some of the calls in the electronic database and taking
notes regarding up to about 15% of the total calls in the study as she worked to resolve
concerns with parents and schools prior to the time she actually conducted the study.

The Research Design

The Methodology

The study utilizes Bourdieu’s theory of symbolic violence and his concept that
schools perpetuate the stratification of society along social class lines as a theoretical lens.
The study of parent calls to district offices is accomplished through a mixed method
approach with quantitative research being preliminary and the use of qualitative data as
secondary. Quantitative data are analyzed in order to compare characteristics of schools
based on student data with the number of parent calls regarding particular topics made to
district office staff throughout the course of a five year period. A database of calls expressing
concerns, compliments, or complaints to the district offices of an urban school district in the
Southeastern United States is examined. Basic information about the calls parents made to
district office administrators in this school district over the past ten and a half years was
recorded in a database by individuals who took and processed the calls. The information in
this database for a period of five school years from the fall of 2008 to the spring of 2013 is
analyzed through a quantitative approach and the quantitative analysis is linked to a content
analysis of a selected sample of the calls made to the district offices. Narrative
documentation of parent calls to district offices has been kept in addition to the electronic
database and consists of notes taken regarding conversations with parents, often containing
actual quotations of statements that parents made. Qualitative analysis is of the narrative
documentation of a sample of parent calls selected through maximum variation sampling (Marshall & Rossman, 1999), focusing on cases that offer a variety of parental concerns stemming from situations in different schools to the extent that the convenience and the quality of the data allow. In order to have a variety of calls in the sample, narrative data from every call that came into one region of the district in one year, the middle year of the five in the study, are examined in the study. The notebooks of narrative data were preserved and intact in that region. The region has a variety of schools representing the range of schools in the district, including schools of all grade levels and socioeconomic profiles. The narrative data from this single school year for these 21 schools represent approximately 360 cases or initial phone calls into district offices.

**Quantitative Data Set and Instrumentation**

The study is both primarily and initially quantitative. The researcher begins with a quantitative approach as the primary method and follows with evaluation and interpretation of the quantitative results. Qualitative data analysis of the narrative documentation of selected calls enhances and enriches quantitative findings (Glatthorn & Joyner, 2005).

The quantitative aspect of the study is a correlation study. The researcher analyzes variables and looks for relationships between them through the use of correlation coefficients. Over the last ten and a half years, the calls that came into the administrative offices of the school district were recorded in a central database. Basic information about all calls that came into district offices was entered into this database. Correlation research offers understanding regarding patterns of relationships among variables to show, in this case, how the socioeconomic make-up of schools as reflected by free and reduced lunch
percentages and the topics and frequency of parent calls may be related and how the number and nature of parent calls are associated with the calendar year,

The free and reduced lunch status of schools, the achievement levels of schools, the size of the schools and other similar data, the time in the calendar year that calls are made and the topics that parents call about are chosen as variables based on the assumptions that parental concerns emanate from a particular social class perspective and that parental concerns will mirror such class distinctions, that schools are not culturally neutral places and that there is a parallelism between parent calls and the concepts of Bourdieu, and that there is a parallelism between parent calls and the school calendar.

**Quantitative Data Analysis**

The quantitative data are analyzed by identifying variables and looking for relationships between them through the use of correlation coefficients. The Pearson method of computing correlation is used to determine the extent to which variables are related.

**Description of the Qualitative Data Collection**

Over the past ten and a half years in an urban school district in the Southeastern United States, parent calls to district offices in which the parent has had something to say, such as a complaint, concern or compliment, have been recorded in an electronic database. In addition, narrative documentation of these calls was been kept in notebooks. Five and a half years ago, the school district was divided into five regions. The narrative documentation of the calls from the year before regionalization was divided into notebooks for each region. Additionally, collected in notebooks within each region and organized by school, is narrative documentation for each year’s parent calls of substance,
calls during which parents expressed a concern or compliment rather than a simple question. The quantitative data for parent calls for a period of five years are studied. The five year period is the year before regionalization and the first four years of regionalization. The narrative data for the calls that were received by one region of the district in the central year of the five years are utilized for the qualitative study. The region consists of a little more than a fifth of the schools in the district at the time; and the schools represent a range of grade levels and socioeconomic demographics.

Documents regarding the calls are analyzed through a qualitative approach. The documents analyzed are narrative accounts of the same calls in the database. The qualitative follow-up to the quantitative study allows for exploration into the complex aspects of the calls as expressed by the callers themselves. The qualitative approach to the study is a narrative analysis examining the stories that some callers tell when they call the district offices of a particular school district. Rather than focus on the sociolinguistic techniques inherent in the narratives, the study focuses on life events and the narrator’s approach to those events (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

**Qualitative Data Analysis**

Narrative documentation is selected through maximum variation sampling (Marshall & Rossman, 1999), focusing on cases that offer a variety of calls from parents with various concerns stemming from situations in different schools to the extent that the convenience and the quality of the data allow.

Units of meaning are identified within the narrative documentation for selected calls from the five year period in the study. These sections of narrative data are labeled with inductive codes in order to note and organize emergent themes. Bourdieu’s theoretical
framework is a lens for looking at the emerging categories of data in the narrative documentation. Sorting and categorizing of the data in a process of qualitative methodology called coding (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) takes place and identification labels are assigned to similar phrases and segments of thought which appear in the data with some regularity in order to create the possibility of organizing the data according to emergent themes. These themes are reflected on in relation to the schools the parents called about and are analyzed and discussed through a theoretical lens based on the concepts of Bourdieu. The researcher seeks to determine what the distinguishing characteristics are of the concerns expressed by parents of children in schools and to identify how the nature of the calls varies based on the socioeconomic aspects of a school’s population as indicated by the free and reduced lunch percentages for the schools the children of callers attend.

Selected documents with narrative notes taken by district level office staff during conversations with parent callers are scanned into a qualitative analysis software program and then analyzed and labeled according to emergent themes. The researcher identifies units of meaning and excerpts of text within the documentation of the conversations and labels those through coding, the organizing and categorization of qualitative data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher condenses selected narrative documents into segments that can be analyzed and ascribes emerging codes to meaningful passages in and looks for similarities and differences in coded sections of text in a search for patterns of meaning in text. Related coded sections of text are classified for the generation of tentative categories (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Categories of data are then analyzed and reflected on in relation to relevance to Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic violence and his theory that schools reproduce social class stratification.
Description of the Research Site and the Population

The Research Context

The study of calls to district offices by parents takes place in an urban school district in Southeastern United States. The school district is only an example of the school districts which serve students; however, due to a dearth of research on this topic, analysis of one district becomes a revealing case (Van Maanen, 1988), one that illustrates visible aspects of the kinds of calls parents make when they want to talk to someone in the school system above or beyond the realm of their child’s school.

The School District for the Study

The school system consists of 124 schools serving 72,585 students in grades K-12. Of these schools, 65 are elementary, 22 are middle schools, 28 are high schools, and five are alternative schools. 117 languages/dialects are spoken in the homes of the students, and 95 countries are represented by the student population. 10,134 of the students are identified as students with special needs requiring special education; and 13,111 are identified as advanced learners. 56.58% of the students received free or reduced-price lunch assistance.

The ethnic composition of the student population is 0.57% American Indian, 5.75% Asian, 40.78% Black, 12.03% Hispanic, 3.74% Multi-Racial, 0.15% Pacific Islander, and 36.98% White.

The expenditure per student is $8,095.8125, excluding capital expenditures, child nutrition, the district’s afterschool program, and special revenue funds. $370,583,259 of the total school district funds are state funds. $183,019,973 are local funds, and $45,146,626 are federal funds. In 2011-2012, graduating students were awarded a total of $139,050,955 in
The school district employs 9,486 full-time and 10,404 part-time employees, including 4,994 teachers.

The 2012 EOG (End of Grade test) and EOC (End of Course exam) composites scores proficiency rate for the district is 75.9 percent proficient, an increase from the 2011 rate of 74.5 percent. In 2012, nineteen schools in the district achieved the highest designation given through the state’s recognition program, and more than one-third of the district’s schools received positive designations within the top recognition categories by the state.

The district’s graduation rate increased to a high of 84.5 percent in 2012, and six of the district’s high schools achieved 100 percent graduation rates. Students in the district took 9,116 Advanced Placement exams in 2012 and had a passing rate of 53.66 percent. The district has 1,096 AP Scholars. A small high school in the district was recognized as one of the best high schools in the country by both the Washington Post and the Daily Beast. A total of 16 schools in the district were listed in the Washington Post’s High School Challenge. In 2012, 528 graduates received the district’s first Service-Learning Diploma, which recognizes students who recorded 175 or more hours of service learning experience. Another 354 graduates earned the district’s service learning exemplary award, which recognized 75 hours of service. High school students in the district recorded a total of 164,606 service learning hours during 2011-12.

In January 2011, the district launched a free resource for parents. The parent-focused project provides classes on a variety of topics for parents, grandparents and family members. Since its inception this dedicated and focused and parent program has reached more than 14,000 parents through various classes, workshops and family events.
The district was regionalized in the beginning of the 2009-2010 school year and was divided into five regions with approximately 14,000 students in each region. The number of schools each region serves varies due to the fact that some schools have many more students than others. In a suite of offices, each region has a staff consisting of one or more office support whose duties include answering calls, a district office administrator who works to lower with discipline and discipline data and talks with parents and schools to resolve concerns, an academic coach, an assistant director and a director for the region who supervise the schools in their areas, evaluate principals, and work with other district level leaders to make decisions and lead the district. In the summer of 2013, some reorganization in school assignments took place; however, the basic structure and staffing remained. The investigator of this study was an employee in one of the district offices and answered calls, worked with parents and schools principals and addressed discipline data from the summer of 2009 until the fall of 2013.

In 2013, the district superintendent renewed his contract. He has led the district through the implementation of one four year strategic plan and has just revealed a second four year strategic plan. Responsiveness to parents is a component of both of these plans, and the district is an organization that holds individuals, schools, and offices accountable for respectful interactions with parents.

**Demographic Data for the County**

The school district is in a county with a population of 495,279 in 2011, according to U.S. Census data. 12.5% of the population is over 65 years old. The population is 59.9% White, while the state in which the county is found has a population that is 72.1% White. The county population is 33.1% Black in a state with a population that is 22% Black. The
home ownership rate is 62.9% in a state with a home ownership rate of 67.8%. The per capita money income for 12 months in the county is $26,644 (in 2011 dollars) in 2007-2011 in a state with a 12 month per capita income of $25,256 during the same time period. The median household income in the county in the 2007-2011 period is $46,288 in a state with a median household income of $46,291. In 2007-2011, 16.2% of the population was below poverty level. The county has an area in square miles of 645.7 and 756.4 persons per square mile in a state with 196.1 persons per square mile in 2011.

**Major Research Questions**

The hypotheses and questions guiding this study explore the ideas that parent calls are cyclical in nature, that the concerns parents express to school district office administrators provide evidence that schools reflect Bourdieu’s theory of cultural reproduction and that parent calls to district offices are evidence of and a thrust against social class divisions.

**Hypotheses**

**H.1.** *Parent calls are cyclical in nature and can be an indicator of patterns of parent concerns which might be anticipated.*

**H.2a** *Parent calls to district offices follow patterns in their nature and frequency as stipulated within Bourdieu’s theory of cultural reproduction in that they follow patterns in relationship to the characteristics of social class (as indicated by the percentage of student participation in the free and reduced lunch programs in the schools parents call about).*

**H.2b** *Parent calls to district offices generate evidence that education continues social structure division.*

**H.2c** *Parent calls are a source of resistance to the assumption that schools are culturally neutral.*
The study includes both quantitative and qualitative research questions for examining the nature and timing of parent calls and exploring connections between parent calls to district offices and Bourdieu’s theory of cultural reproduction and related concepts. Research questions follow.

**Quantitative Research Questions**

R.1. What is the nature of the calls parents make to school district offices?

R.1.1 To what extent do external influences such as the time of year affect the nature of calls made to district offices by parents; are the calls cyclical in nature and how are any cycles in the calls related to the months of the school year?

R.2. To what extent do characteristics of schools influence the nature of calls parents make to district offices?

R.2.1 Is there evidence in either the quantitative or qualitative documentation of parent calls that the structure of schools reproduces the structure of society?

R.2.2 How does a child’s capital, that is either the economic capital of the family as determined by the free and reduced lunch program participation at the school the student of concern attends or the cultural capital of the student as determined by the number of higher level courses offered at the school and/or the academic performance at the school, affect the nature of the issues their parents take to district offices?

R.2.3 Are some types of calls exempt from the effects of social class?

**Qualitative Research Questions**

R.3. Is there evidence of a discrepancy in ability to advocate for children between parents associated with higher socioeconomic status and those associated with schools with lower socioeconomic status?
R.3.1 Is there evidence in the data regarding the calls that parents vary in “their skills at using the cultural capital to gain advantages in particular situations” (Dumais, 2006, p. 87)?

R.4. Do calls provide evidence or examples aligned with Bourdieu’s concepts of interest, doxa, hysteresis, social class, cultural capital, misrecognition, and/or symbolic violence, either through the number and general types of calls associated with schools fitting specific profiles or in the narrative documentation of calls?

R.4.1 Is there evidence of a tension between parental habitus and the practices of school personnel as communicated by callers from lower income schools?

R.4.2. Do middle class parent calls illustrate a sense of entitlement (Lareau, 2002)?

R.4.3 Do working class parent calls show a resistance to authority and/or a sense of powerlessness or fear (Lareau, 2002)?

R.5. Do parent calls have the patterns associated with a middle class practice of “concerted cultivation” or working class/poor parents’ view of children’s development as an “accomplishment of natural growth” within them (Lareau, 2003, p. 3)?

R.5.1 Do working class parents ask for students to be able to do less and middle class parents ask for children to be able to do more (Lareau, 2002)?

R.5.2 Do children’s wishes propel middle class parent calls (Lareau, 2002)?

The Role of the Investigator

Knowledge of the Data

The researcher recently changed positions in this district; however, previously in a district office position for the district to be studied, the researcher was charged with receiving and responding to parent calls and concerns for one of the five regions in the district. In this role, she was one of a few people who logged calls for the region in a database, listened to
the concerns of parents, took narrative notes regarding the calls and worked with the parents and the schools to facilitate a resolution to the concerns. Many of the calls were taken by office support who typed the narrative data from the calls and sometimes simply answered questions or referred the calls back to the school. Much of the time, however, the calls were referred to the researcher who, as one of the responsibilities of her position, sought to work with the schools and the parents to work through the concerns that the parent expressed. If the researcher, in her district office position, was unable to resolve the concerns as an ombudsman and facilitator, then the parents were referred to one of the individuals in a supervisory role in relation to the school. Each of the regions has two individuals who directly supervise the schools. These two individuals, an area superintendent and assistant, work out of the same suite of offices as the personnel answering parent calls for each region, and communication regarding parent concerns occurs regularly.

Since the researcher was involved in both the creation of or scribing of narrative notes for some of the calls, the follow through and work with parents and principals for most of the calls and the maintenance of the quantitative database and the qualitative data collection for her region for a period of four years of the five years selected for the study, she certainly had a direct influence regarding some of what was recorded in her region during those years; however, she was only one of the people entering data in her region and there are four other regions with individuals with similar roles. The electronic database utilizes school codes rather than school names; and when the data from across the district are utilized, any influence regarding or effects on the electronic database due to the researcher’s role is mitigated. Each of the individuals answering calls received training in utilizing the electronic database, taking notes on the calls, and working to resolve parent concerns. Each of the
regions serves approximately the same number of students; however, the number of schools varies due to variance in the sizes of the schools. So the researcher and the staff in her regional office were in contact with potentially a fifth of the students and parents in the district regarding concerns, with the other district office personnel in similar positions, along with their office staff, being responsible for and in direct contact with the parents in their assigned schools. The quantitative data for all the regions in the district are in one electronic databank. At one point each region had notebooks with narrative documentation of parent calls; however, all of these notebooks are not still available. The notebooks for the region in which the investigator worked are intact. The notebooks cover one year when the investigator was not in a district office and four when she was; however, the narrative notes in the notebooks were written by others in her office, as well. The quantitative database for the district indicates the variety of and types of calls, and the qualitative analysis of some of these calls offers richer information.

One advantage of the previous role of the researcher as an individual who had direct contact with parents with concerns, is a firsthand knowledge of the existence of the databases, the process and procedures the district utilizes in receiving and responding to parent concerns and the depth of information that the documentation contains.

**Accessibility**

The researcher has access to the quantitative database in which basic information regarding parent concerns is logged and to the narrative documentation of the conversations and resolutions that ensued when parents expressed concerns to district level administration for one of the regions. The researcher received permission to utilize the electronic database
and any available narrative documentation by making a formal request to district level leaders. Having worked in the district for nine years, the researcher has been able to establish a reputation of trustworthiness. In addition, since the researcher was in the role of a district office employee who knew and frequently met with the other district office staff in similar positions in other regions, she had a direct relationship of trust with at least one of the other individuals in each region in the district who work with parents regarding concerns and knew about the similar training they all received regarding responding to parent calls and entering data regarding these calls.

Significance of the Study

This study seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis of the nature of parent calls to district office staff in an urban school district in the Southeastern region of the United States. The study seeks to determine if there are relationships between the frequency and nature of parent calls to district offices and the characteristics of schools, the time of year, and other internal and external events and circumstances. Calls and patterns in calls are examined in relation to the school profiles of the schools about which the calls are made.

Limitations of the Study

As in any study, there are limits to this study:

1. The calls examined are the calls that have come into the district offices of one school district; and while many of these calls may represent similar calls that might be made in similar districts, there could be concerns that parents might make that are particular to a specific district.

2. The quantitative database contains limited information.
3. The categorizing of the types of calls into the database and the creating of the narrative documents for the calls were produced by a number of individuals who may have been influenced by their own sense of what the call was mainly about and what might be important to record; so there may be inconsistencies in what was recorded in the database and in the contents and quality of the notes taken; however, the individuals taking the calls were given similar, although short, training in using the database and taking notes on the calls.

4. The perceptions of schools that the district personnel taking the calls may have had could have influenced the perceptions district staff had of the calls, influencing the notes they took and the categories they may choose for particular calls.

5. The response of district office to parent calls may not be consistent from region to region within the district, and variation in response to calls may affect the number and nature of calls from one region to another.

6. Particular events in the local or national news, such as a school shooting, for example, may affect the number and nature of calls at a particular time.

7. The free and reduced lunch make-up of the schools parents call about are utilized as the indicator of the social class of the majority of the students in those particular schools and of the parents who call about those schools because there is no other indicator of the wealth or lack of wealth of these individuals.

8. A call from a school designated as higher or lower income may not be from a parent who is aligned with the socioeconomic status of the majority of parents at a particular school; but for purposes of this study, calls from parents of students at schools are considered to be representative of the socioeconomic status as identified by the free
and reduced lunch program percentages for the schools, with some being considered higher income and some considered lower income.

9. No claims can be made about the inclusivity of the calls in the study because the call data analyzed are from calls to district offices, and it has to be assumed that some complaints were resolved at the school level. The complaints reaching district offices represent unresolved concerns of the most serious problems from the perspectives of the parents and are not random; therefore, the database itself may contain a skew, but the skew represents the most serious and sustained complaints from the parents’ point of view and the framework of Bourdieu’s cultural reproduction are applied to the most serious concerns.

**Summary of the Methodology**

This chapter has explained the methods in this study of parent concerns expressed to district office administrators. The study was completed through a mixed methods approach, utilizing quantitative data analysis of a database in which basic information about parent calls is kept and utilizing a qualitative analysis of some of the narrative documentation of the conversations with parents who contact district offices in a large, urban school district in the Southeastern United States. The study offers a unique perspective on the concerns of parents because the calls are initiated by the parents themselves and the parents speak about whatever is on their minds, rather than answering questions or being led to one topic or another by an interviewer.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This research study examines the nature and frequency of parent calls to the district offices in an urban school district in the Southeastern region of the United States. The study provides empirical evidence regarding both timing and topics of calls to district offices and includes a content analysis of some calls. The analysis of calls in relation to characteristics of the schools the calls are about offers insight into how characteristics such as size, achievement levels, qualities of teachers and the socioeconomic make-up of schools’ student bodies based on free and reduced lunch program participation correlate with the number and types of calls and explores associations between school characteristics and call content.

Description of Parent Calls to District Offices

This study addresses the nature and frequency of calls to district office staff by parents and guardians of students. While there may be short calls received by district office staff seeking factual answers to questions regarding the functioning of schools, such as schedules and attendance zones, the particular calls examined in this study are calls in which the parent has had a complaint or a compliment. A comprehensive analysis of the nature of parent calls to district office staff is accomplished in this study with identification of relationships between the frequency and nature of parent calls to district offices and the time in the school year, characteristics of schools and the socioeconomic make-up of school populations as indicated by student participation in each school’s free and reduced lunch
program. Calls and patterns in calls are examined in relation to the characteristics of the schools about which the calls are made. This study of parent calls to district offices is a mixed methods study. Quantitative data are analyzed in order to compare characteristics of schools based on school, teacher and student data with the number of parent calls regarding particular topics made to district office staff throughout a five year period. Over the past ten and a half years in an urban school district in the Southeastern United States, calls to district offices in which a parent has had a complaint or concern have been recorded in a database. In addition, narrative documentation of these calls has been kept in notebooks. The narrative data for approximately a fourth of the schools in the district is secure for this five year period. There are 5,369 calls in the electronic database for the five year period. The quantitative analysis of the electronic database is linked to a qualitative content analysis of a selected sample of parental calls made to the district. 1,616 of these 5,369 calls are about schools in one region. The notebook documentation of the calls about the schools in this region are the source of primary documents. This research study examines the nature and frequency of parent calls to a school system’s district offices along with a content analysis of some calls.

Quantitative Results

Research Question R.1

R.1. What is the nature of the calls parents make to school district offices?

Related Research Hypothesis H.1

H.1. Parent calls are cyclical in nature and can be an indicator of patterns of parent concerns which might be anticipated.

The initial step in quantitative analysis of the data involved descriptive statistics and was a bivariate analysis between year and the 15 call types and between year and the total
calls in the database. There were 5,369 calls in the study that came into the school district and were recorded by staff for the months of August through June each year over a period of five school years (August 1 through June 30) beginning on August 1, 2008, and ending on June 30, 2013. Of 5,369 calls, 48 were missing data regarding either call type or month; however, data regarding the school year are present for all 5,369 calls. The number of calls recorded in the electronic database decreased over the five years from 1,317 in the 2008-2009 school year to 877 in 2012-2013. The total calls per school year are shown in Table 1.

Table 1.

*Frequencies and Percentages of Total Calls to District Offices and School Years*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Calls to District Offices</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008-2009</td>
<td>1317</td>
<td>24.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-2010</td>
<td>1260</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-2011</td>
<td>1059</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-2012</td>
<td>856</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-2013</td>
<td>877</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A cross-tabulation between year and number of each type of calls (including total calls) did not show anomalies indicated between different school years; so a cross-tabulation between month and number of each type of call through a bivariate analysis was the next step in order to look for patterns by month. A great deal of variation between school years and between like months of different school years was not evident; however, variation between total calls for months within school years for each of the school years was evident.
Research Question R.1.1

R.1.1 To what extent do external influences such as the time of year affect the nature of calls made to district offices by parents; are the calls cyclical in nature and how are any cycles in the calls related to the months of the school year?

Following the cross-tabulation between year and call type was a cross-tabulation with a Chi-square test to summarize the differences between the observed frequencies by month and call type to determine the number of parent calls of each type that occurred during each month. The Chi-square = 654.46, df = 140, p = 0.000. The relationship between month and call type is statistically significant. The data indicating the total number of calls of each type by month over the five year period for each of the 11 months of the school year across the five year period, as well as the percentage of total calls of each type are shown in Table 2.

Table 2.

Number of Types of Calls Percentage of Total Calls by Months across Five School Years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Calls to District Offices</th>
<th>Call Type</th>
<th>Months of Calls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jan</td>
<td>Feb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>(%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>(9.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trans.</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(8.6)</td>
<td>(12.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(8.6)</td>
<td>(9.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(6.4)</td>
<td>(10.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(8.9)</td>
<td>(9.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Activity</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(9.2)</td>
<td>(7.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guardian</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(9.5)</td>
<td>(4.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(9.7)</td>
<td>(9.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(25.0)</td>
<td>(16.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend.</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(14.7)</td>
<td>(11.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruction.</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(7.0)</td>
<td>(8.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Assign.</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(8.4)</td>
<td>(8.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NonComp.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4.8)</td>
<td>(4.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMOD</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3.4)</td>
<td>(6.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Calls</td>
<td>434</td>
<td>505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(8.2)</td>
<td>(9.5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The term “Legal” refers to calls that were categorized by the district staff who took the calls as being legal in nature. “Trans.” refers to calls categorized as being about transportation concerns. “Safety” is self-explanatory and refers to calls related to that topic. “EC” refers to calls about what is generally known as exceptional children’s services within school systems which are services designated for children who have officially identified special needs. Calls designated as EC are calls about exceptional children’s services. “Personnel” indicates calls about staff members, including principals, assistant principals and teachers. “Other” refers to calls that staff did not note as fitting any of the other 15 pre-determined category options for selection as each call’s category or type. “St. Activity” represents the category of student activities. “Guardian” refers to calls about issues related to guardianship. “Discipline,” “Main.,” “Attend.” “Instruction.” refer to calls categorized as being about discipline, maintenance, attendance or instructional in nature. “NonComp” refers to called considered to be non-complaints. “SMOD” refers to calls mostly about what is known as Standard Mode of Dress or school uniforms.

Analyzing the data across five school years for frequencies and percentages through inferential statistics with the Chi-Square test analysis accomplished through a cross-tabulation bivariate analysis between month and call type resulted in data illustrating the number and percentages of calls by month and type of call. The number of calls that came into district offices over the five year period under consideration and the total percentage of the number of calls of each type that came in for each month of the school year (adding the five years together) are shown in Table 2. These percentages allow anticipation of the topics of greatest concern to parents at particular times of the year. As seen in Table 2, of the 5,321 calls with values for both call type and month, the largest number of calls were categorized
as being about personnel with 1,425 calls. Of these calls, 186 came in during May, 168
during March and 153 during February. The second highest number of call type is discipline
with 1,025 calls being noted as being about discipline. 137 of the calls about discipline came
into the district in March, 135 in October and 114 in April. The category with the third
highest number of calls is noted as other, with 931 calls over the five year period. There
were 525 calls categorized as instructional, with 79 coming in during August and 71 in
September, respectively. Calls noted as being about Student Assignment number 346. 97 of
these were in August, and 46 were in September across the five years. 301 calls were
categorized as being about safety with 37 safety calls coming in during February, and 35 in
both September and October.

In this analysis, calculations were not run to determine if each individual month had a
significant correlation with types of calls. Months of the school year, in general, were
considered as the categories of the independent variable with the months August through
June considered since they are the months of the school year. The dependent variables for
the calculation were types of calls with each type of call representing its own given number
of calls. Through the analysis, it was determined that the month of the school year and the
types of calls that come into district offices have a statistically significant positive
correlation. The number of calls for each month and the percentage of each type of call that
came in during particular months of the year are shown in Table 2. Of interest are the
months of the year when the most calls of each type come into district offices.

Since the call data analyzed is for 11 months of each year, 9.09% of total calls or each
call type per month would indicate an even distribution of the calls across the months. As
illustrated in Table 2, 12% of the total calls came in during September. 18.8% of legal calls
came in during May. 23.6% of calls about transportation came in during September, and 21.3% of transportation calls came in during August. 12.3% of calls about safety came in during February. 11.7% of calls coming into the district about exceptional children’s services came into the district during May with another 11.7% coming in during November. 13.1% of the calls about personnel issues came into district offices during May. 12.9% of calls identified as other came in during September. 15.8% of calls about student activities came into district offices during September, and 14.5% came in during August. 16.7% of calls about guardianship issues came into district offices during October, with another 16.7% coming in during November. 13.2% and 13.4% of calls about discipline came in during March and October, respectively. 16.7% of the calls about maintenance came in equally in the months of February, April, September and November. 14.7% of attendance calls came in during January. 15% of instructional calls came in during August, followed by 13.5% in September. 13.1% of personnel calls came in during May. 12.9% of calls identified as other came in during September. 28% of calls about student assignment came in during August, with another 13.3% of calls about student assignment coming in during September. 16.7% of calls about guardianship issues came in during November.

The Research Hypothesis Related to Research Question 1

In summary, parent calls are cyclical in nature and can be an indicator of patterns of parent concerns which might be anticipated. Hypothesis H.1 was confirmed. The data show that types of parent calls are correlated with months of the school year and that similar types of calls come into district offices in similar months from year to year.
**Research Question R.2**

*R.2. To what extent do characteristics of schools influence the nature of calls parents make to district offices?*

**Research Hypothesis H.2a**

*H.2a Parent calls to district offices follow patterns in their nature and frequency as stipulated within Bourdieu’s theory of cultural reproduction in that they follow patterns in relationship to the characteristics of social class (as indicated by the percentage of student participation in the free and reduced lunch programs in the schools parents call about).*

**Research Question H.2b**

*H.2b Parent calls to district offices generate evidence that education continues social structure division.*

**Research Question H.2c**

*H.2c Parent calls are a source of resistance to the assumption that schools are culturally neutral.*

**Parent calls and characteristics of schools.**

Characteristics such as size, achievement levels, qualities of teachers and the socioeconomic make-up of schools’ student bodies based on free and reduced lunch program participation at schools are examined for correlation with the total number of calls and calls about different topics, as indicated by call type.

The next steps in analyzing the quantitative data involved descriptive statistics and consisted of bivariate analysis between individual variables representing characteristics of teachers, academic proficiency levels, out of school suspension rates, crime rates, and school size to identify any correlations between characteristics of schools and types of calls.
Features of teachers.

Calculations were computed for types of calls and characteristics of teachers at schools in the district in order to determine if teacher data at particular schools were correlated with the types of calls parents make to district offices. The characteristics of teachers considered were the percentages of teachers with advanced degrees, the percentages of teacher turnover, the percentages of teachers with National Board Certification, the percentages of teachers with less than four years of experience and the percentages of teachers with more than 10 years of experience.

The bivariate correlations were Pearson correlations.

Pearson correlations between school characteristics related to teachers and types of calls.

The Pearson correlations range in value from -1.00 to +1.00. The coefficients range in value from -1.00 to +1.00 and indicate the degree that low or high scores on one variable tend to go with low or high scores on another variable. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3.

Pearson Correlation Results between Characteristics of Schools Related to Teachers and Calls Related to Personnel and Instruction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Call Types</th>
<th>% of Teachers w/ Adv Degrees</th>
<th>% of Teacher Turnover</th>
<th>% of Teachers w/NBC</th>
<th>% of Teachers w/ &lt; 4</th>
<th>% of Teachers w/ &gt; 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Correlation 1</td>
<td>Correlation 2</td>
<td>Correlation 3</td>
<td>Correlation 4</td>
<td>Correlation 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal</td>
<td>.058</td>
<td>.156</td>
<td>-.060</td>
<td>.165</td>
<td>-.166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trans.</td>
<td>-.047</td>
<td>.138</td>
<td>-.139</td>
<td>.018</td>
<td>-.084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>.009</td>
<td><strong>.190</strong></td>
<td>-.130</td>
<td>.087</td>
<td>-.113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC</td>
<td>-.067</td>
<td>-.021</td>
<td>-.171</td>
<td>.122</td>
<td>-.071</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel</td>
<td>-.025</td>
<td>.067</td>
<td>-.125</td>
<td>.053</td>
<td>-.147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>-.040</td>
<td><strong>.299</strong></td>
<td><strong>-.214</strong></td>
<td><strong>-.222</strong></td>
<td><strong>-.236</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Activity</td>
<td>-.006</td>
<td>.117</td>
<td>-.072</td>
<td>.038</td>
<td>-.030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guardian.</td>
<td>.088</td>
<td>-.026</td>
<td>-.026</td>
<td>-.029</td>
<td>-.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline</td>
<td>-.064</td>
<td>.178</td>
<td><strong>-.234</strong></td>
<td>.105</td>
<td>-.179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main.</td>
<td>-.058</td>
<td>.044</td>
<td>.034</td>
<td>.119</td>
<td>-.100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend.</td>
<td>-.052</td>
<td><strong>-.188</strong></td>
<td>-.053</td>
<td>.068</td>
<td>-.049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruction.</td>
<td>.024</td>
<td><strong>.248</strong></td>
<td>-.100</td>
<td>.062</td>
<td>-.053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Assign.</td>
<td>.082</td>
<td><strong>.255</strong></td>
<td>-.094</td>
<td>.151</td>
<td>-.081</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NonComp.</td>
<td>-.007</td>
<td><strong>.330</strong></td>
<td>-.151</td>
<td><strong>.228</strong></td>
<td><strong>-.192</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMOD</td>
<td>-.187</td>
<td>.113</td>
<td><strong>-.198</strong></td>
<td><strong>.259</strong></td>
<td><strong>-.237</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Calls</td>
<td>-.040</td>
<td><strong>.240</strong></td>
<td>-.204</td>
<td>.152</td>
<td><strong>-.189</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed).

**Teachers with advanced degrees.**

No correlation was found between Percentages of Teachers with Advanced Degrees and any call types or the total number of calls.

**Teacher turnover.**

No statistically significant correlation was found between Percentage of Teacher Turnover and calls about legal issues, transportation, EC (exceptional children’s services),
personnel, student activities, guardianship, discipline, maintenance or SMOD (Standard Mode of Dress/student uniforms).

A statistically significant positive correlation was found between Percentage of Teacher Turnover and the total number of calls and calls about safety, identified as other, about instructional issues, student assignment and identified as non-complaints. As the percentage of teacher turnover increases in schools, the total number of calls and calls of these types to district offices by parents of students in those schools increases.

A statistically significant negative correlation was found between Percentage of Teacher Turnover and attendance. As the percentage of teacher turnover increases in schools, the number of calls to district offices by parents about attendance decreases.

Teachers with National Board Certification.

No statistically significant correlation was found between Percentage of Teachers with National Board Certification and total calls or calls about legal issues, transportation, safety, EC (exceptional children’s issues), personnel, student activities, guardianship, maintenance, attendance, instruction, student assignment or identified as non-complaints.

No statistically significant positive correlation was found between Percentage of Teachers with National Board Certification and any types of calls or total calls.

A statistically significant negative correlation was found between Percentage of Teachers with National Board Certification and the number of calls identified as other, about discipline and SMOD (Standard Mode of Dress/student uniforms). As percentages of teachers with National Board Certification increase in schools, the number of calls identified as other, about discipline and SMOD increases.
**Teachers with less than four years of experience.**

No statistically significant correlation was found between Percentage of Teachers with Less than Four Years of Experience and calls about legal issues, transportation, safety, EC (exceptional children’s services), personnel, student activities, guardianship, discipline, maintenance, attendance, instruction, student assignment or the total number of calls.

A statistically significant positive correlation was found between Percentage of Teachers with Less than Four Years of Experience and calls identified as non-complaints and calls about SMOD (Standard Mode of Dress/student uniforms). As the percentage of teachers with less than four years of experience increases, the number of calls identified as non-complaints and about SMOD increases, as well.

A statistically significant negative correlation was found between Percentage of Teachers with Less than Four Years of Experience and calls identified as other. As the percentage of teachers with less than four years of experience increases, the number of calls to district offices identified as other decreases.

**Teachers with more than 10 years of experience.**

No statistically significant correlation was found between Percentages of Teachers with More than 10 Years of Experience and calls about legal issues, transportation, safety, EC (exceptional children’s services), personnel, student activities, guardianship, discipline, maintenance, attendance, instruction or student assignment.

No statistically significant positive correlation was found between Percentage of Teachers with More than 10 years of experience or any type of calls.
A statistically significant negative correlation was found between Percentage of Teachers with More than 10 years of Experience and calls identified as other and non-complaints, calls about SMOD (Standard Mode of Dress/student uniforms) and total calls. As percentages of teachers with more than 10 years of experience increase in schools, calls to district offices identified as other and non-complaints, about SMOD and total calls decrease.

**Pearson correlations between overall proficiency, crime and suspension and types of calls.**

After the analysis of characteristics of teachers and types of calls were calculated, bivariate analysis between individual variables representing overall proficiency, crimes per 100 students and out of school suspension per 100 students were each computed with variables representing types of calls and total calls to determine if correlations could be identified. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4.

*Pearson Correlation Results between Variables Representing Overall Proficiency, Crimes per 100 Students and Incidents of Out of School Suspension and Call Types*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Call Types</th>
<th>Overall Proficiency</th>
<th>Crimes per 100</th>
<th>Out of School Suspension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legal</td>
<td>.033</td>
<td>.304*</td>
<td>.268*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trans.</td>
<td>-.120</td>
<td>.170</td>
<td>.318*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>-.102</td>
<td>.340*</td>
<td>.494*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Correlation</td>
<td>Significance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC</td>
<td>-.033</td>
<td>.169</td>
<td>.201*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel</td>
<td>-.066</td>
<td>.307*</td>
<td>.464*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>-.075</td>
<td>.463*</td>
<td>.626*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Activity</td>
<td>.091</td>
<td>.420*</td>
<td>.320*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guardian.</td>
<td>-.145</td>
<td>-.031</td>
<td>.096</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline</td>
<td>-.033</td>
<td>.479*</td>
<td>.604*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main.</td>
<td>-.069</td>
<td>-.031</td>
<td>-.014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend.</td>
<td>.127</td>
<td>.302*</td>
<td>.292*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruction.</td>
<td>.124</td>
<td>.393*</td>
<td>.362*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Assign.</td>
<td>.077</td>
<td>.359*</td>
<td>.399*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NonComp.</td>
<td>-.048</td>
<td>.372*</td>
<td>.488*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMOD</td>
<td>-.047</td>
<td>.359*</td>
<td>.383*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Calls</td>
<td>-.031</td>
<td>.481*</td>
<td>.615*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed).

**Overall proficiency.**

No statistically significant correlation was found between Overall Proficiency and any type of calls or the total number of calls.

**Crimes per 100 students.**

No statistically significant correlation was found between Number of Crimes per 100 Students and calls about transportation, EC (exceptional children’s services), guardianship or maintenance.
A statistically significant positive correlation was found between Crimes per 100 Students and calls about legal issues, safety, personnel, calls identified as other, about student activities, discipline, attendance, instruction, student assignment, calls identified as non-complaints, calls about SMOD (Standard Mode of Dress/student uniforms) and the total number of calls. As the number of crimes per 100 students increases, the number of calls about legal issues, safety, personnel, identified as other, about student activities, discipline, attendance, instruction, student assignment, identified as non-complaints and about SMOD (Standard Mode of Dress/student uniforms) and the number of total calls increase.

**Out of school suspension per 100 students.**

No statistically significant correlation was found between OSS (Out of School Suspension) per 100 Students and calls about guardianship or maintenance.

A statistically significant positive correlation was found between OSS (Out of School Suspension) per 100 Students and calls about legal issues, transportation, safety, EC (exceptional children’s services), personnel, calls identified as other, about student activities, discipline, attendance, instruction, student assignment, identified as non-complaints, about SMOD (Standard Mode of Dress/student uniforms) and total calls. As incidents of OSS in schools increase, calls about legal issues, transportation, safety, EC, personnel, calls identified as other, about student activities, discipline, attendance, instruction, student assignment, identified as non-complaints, about SMOD and total calls increase, also.

**Crime and suspension rate data, parent calls and school size.**

Out of school suspension rates (the number of out of school suspensions per 100 students) and crime rates (the number of reported crimes in schools per 100 students) are
correlated with the number of overall calls coming into district offices about schools and with
most types of calls; however, it could be that other variables explain the association between
calls to district offices and suspension rates and crime rates. Elementary and middle schools
are generally smaller than high schools, and both more crime and more suspensions occur in
high schools. These high schools where crime and suspension rates are higher than in
elementary schools have many more students than elementary schools do. The higher
number of calls associated with higher out of school suspension and crime rates could be due
to the size of the schools.

*School size.*

The next step was to look at school size and determine if, in fact, total calls and types
of calls are correlated with school size. Because school size was a continuous variable with
numerous different school sizes in the data utilized for characteristics of schools, recoding
the school size variables into new categorical variables made a bivariate analysis possible.
Creating two categories of school size and then conducting bivariate analysis with the
variables of school size and the variables of total calls and types of calls indicates whether
there is a correlation between school size and total calls and school size and particular types
of calls. Through computing a frequency table, it is determined that identifying schools with
up to 585 students as small (the size at which elementary schools in the district are assigned
an assistant principal) and schools with 586 to 1900 students as large results in large enough
sample sizes. After recoding the continuous variable of school size into a categorical
variable with small schools being those with up to 585 students and large schools being 586
to 1900 students, Pearson correlation calculations were completed to determine if there is a
correlation between school size and total and types of calls. Results are shown in Table 5.
Table 5.  

*Pearson Correlation Results between Categorical School Size and Call Type Variables*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Call Types</th>
<th>School Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legal</td>
<td>.421*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>.326*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>.416*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC</td>
<td>.354*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel</td>
<td>.438*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>.488*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Act.</td>
<td>.611*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guardianship</td>
<td>.057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline</td>
<td>.607*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance</td>
<td>.025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>.484*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional</td>
<td>.706*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Assign.</td>
<td>.518*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Complaint</td>
<td>.429*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMOD</td>
<td>.264*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Calls</td>
<td>.641*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed).*
The fact that school size has a statistically significant correlation with total calls and all call types except guardianship and maintenance leads to a need for split file calculations in order to see if the correlations that are significant between characteristics of schools and total calls and types of calls exist for both large schools and small schools.

**Crimes per 100 students and OSS per 100 students and parent calls controlling for school size.**

Calculating a bivariate analysis of the characteristics of the crime rate and suspension rate and types of calls and total calls in files split by school size was the next step in order to determine if correlations found between Crimes per 100 Students and 11 call types and total calls and correlations found between OSS (out of school suspension) per 100 Students and 13 call types and total calls are due to school size alone or if these variables are correlated with call types in both small and large schools. While controlling for size by dividing the schools within the data into large schools and small schools by splitting the file, the bivariate analysis computed indicates whether correlation exists between the crime rate and the suspension rate and parent calls for large schools, small schools, neither or both. Overall Proficiency is not included in the table because no correlations were found between Overall Proficiency and any call types in earlier calculations. Correlations were found between crime and call types and OSS and call types. Results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6.

*Pearson Correlation Results between Crimes per 100 Students and Incidents of Out of School Suspension and Call Types and Total Calls in Split File Calculations for Small Schools (1-585) and Large Schools (586-1900)*
## Call Types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Call Type</th>
<th>Small School Crimes per 100</th>
<th>Large School Crimes per 100</th>
<th>Small School OSS per 100</th>
<th>Large School OSS per 100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legal</td>
<td>.124</td>
<td>.407*</td>
<td>.221</td>
<td>.267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>.235</td>
<td>.371*</td>
<td>.141</td>
<td>.421*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>.235</td>
<td>.371*</td>
<td>.526*</td>
<td>.420*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC</td>
<td>-.089</td>
<td>.218</td>
<td>.053</td>
<td>.195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel</td>
<td>.207</td>
<td>.286*</td>
<td>.378*</td>
<td>.520*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>.332*</td>
<td>.541*</td>
<td>.660*</td>
<td>.653*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Act.</td>
<td>.023</td>
<td>.582*</td>
<td>-.007</td>
<td>.409*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guardianship</td>
<td>.029</td>
<td>-.091</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline</td>
<td>.316*</td>
<td>.589*</td>
<td>.595*</td>
<td>.735*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance</td>
<td>-.061</td>
<td>-.008</td>
<td>.019</td>
<td>-.021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>.072</td>
<td>.409*</td>
<td>.023</td>
<td>.428*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional</td>
<td>-.069</td>
<td>.576*</td>
<td>.082</td>
<td>.529*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Assign.</td>
<td>.009</td>
<td>.503*</td>
<td>.215</td>
<td>.500*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Comp.</td>
<td>.244*</td>
<td>.448*</td>
<td>.393*</td>
<td>.605*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMOD</td>
<td>.472*</td>
<td>.347*</td>
<td>.374*</td>
<td>.432*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Calls</td>
<td>.298*</td>
<td>.594*</td>
<td>.595*</td>
<td>.735*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed).

**Crimes per 100 students in small schools.**

In Small Schools no statistically significant correlation was found between Crimes per 100 Students and calls about legal issues, transportation, safety, EC (exceptional...
children’s services), personnel, student activities, guardianship, maintenance, attendance, instructional concerns or student assignment.

In Small Schools, a statistically significant positive correlation was found between Crimes per 100 Students and calls identified as other, about discipline, identified as non-complaint calls, about SMOD (student uniforms) and total calls. When crimes per 100 students increase in small schools, the number of calls identified as other, about discipline, identified as non-complaint calls, about SMOD and the number of total calls increase.

**Crimes per 100 students in large schools.**

In Large Schools, no statistically significant correlation was found between Crimes per 100 Students and the number of calls about EC (exceptional children’s services), guardianship or maintenance.

In Large Schools, a statistically significant positive correlation was found between Crimes per 100 Students and calls about legal issues, transportation, safety, personnel, identified as other, about student activities, discipline, attendance, instruction, student assignment, identified as non-complaints, about SMOD (Standard Mode of Dress/student uniforms) and total calls. As crimes increase in large schools, the number of calls to district offices about legal issues, transportation, safety, personnel, identified as other, about student activities, discipline, attendance, instruction, student assignment, identified as non-complaints, about SMOD and the total number of calls increase.

**Out of school suspension in small schools.**

In Small Schools, no statistically significant correlation was found between OSS (Out of School Suspension) per 100 Students and calls about legal concerns, transportation, EC
(exceptional children’s services), student activities, guardianship, maintenance, attendance, instruction or student assignment.

In Small Schools, a statistically significant positive correlation was found between OSS (Out of School Suspension) per 100 Students and calls about safety, personnel, calls identified as other, about discipline, identified as non-complaint, about SMOD (Standard Mode of Dress/student uniforms) and total calls. As the number of incidents of OSS increases in small schools, the number of calls about safety, personnel, identified as other, about discipline, identified as non-complaint, about SMOD and total number calls increase.

**Out of school suspension in large schools.**

In Large Schools, no statistically significant correlation was found between OSS (Out of School Suspension) per 100 Students and calls about legal issues, EC (exceptional children’s services), guardianship or maintenance.

In Large Schools, statistically significant positive correlations were found between OSS (Out of School Suspension) and calls about transportation, safety, personnel, identified as other, calls about student activities, discipline, attendance, instruction, student assignment, identified as non-complaint calls, about SMOD (Standard Mode of Dress/student uniforms) and total calls. As the number of incidents of out of school suspension increases in large schools the number of calls about transportation, safety, personnel, identified as other, about student activities, discipline, attendance, instruction, student assignment, identified as non-complaints, about SMOD and the number of total calls increase.

Correlations were found between crimes and out of school suspension and calls identified as other, about discipline, identified as non-complaints, about Standard Mode of
Dress and the total number of calls in both large and small schools. Correlations were also identified between out of school suspension and safety calls and between out of school suspension and personnel calls in both small and large schools. Based on this data, an analysis to determine if other school characteristics are correlated with parent calls when controlling for size becomes important, proficiency levels being of interest.

**Proficiency levels and parent calls.**

While overall proficiency was not correlated with any types of calls when large and small schools were considered together, the presence of so many correlations when controlling for school size indicates the possibility of correlations between other variables and call types when small and large schools are analyzed separately. For this reason, overall proficiency was considered again and math and reading proficiency were considered for the first time in the analysis. Only call types found to have correlations with other school characteristics were considered because these call types represent the majority of the calls and were found to be correlated with other variables in the study thus far. The largest numbers of calls over the five year period were about personnel with 1,425 calls and about discipline with 1,025 calls. The other categories at least 300 calls were calls identified as other, about instruction, student assignment and safety. These call types are considered in the analysis with the file split by large and small schools. Non-complaint and SMOD (Standard Mode of Dress/student uniform) calls are included because correlations were found between these call types and characteristics of schools. In summary, call types considered for this calculation are safety, personnel, other, discipline, instructional, student assignment, non-complaint, SMOD and total calls. The results are shown in Table 7.
Table 7.

*Pearson Correlation Results between Overall, Math and Reading Proficiency and Call Types*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Call Types</th>
<th>Small School Overall Prof</th>
<th>Large School Overall Prof</th>
<th>Small School Math Prof</th>
<th>Large School Math Prof</th>
<th>Small School Read Prof</th>
<th>Large School Read Prof</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>-.183</td>
<td>-.215</td>
<td>-.048</td>
<td>-.439*</td>
<td>-.155</td>
<td>-.112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel</td>
<td>-.179</td>
<td>-.292*</td>
<td>.029</td>
<td>.211</td>
<td>-.179</td>
<td>-.292*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>-.231</td>
<td>-.176</td>
<td>-.117</td>
<td>-.440*</td>
<td>-.226</td>
<td>-.063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline</td>
<td>-.207</td>
<td>-.310*</td>
<td>-.056</td>
<td>-.455*</td>
<td>-.198</td>
<td>-.209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional</td>
<td>.088</td>
<td>-.084</td>
<td>.120</td>
<td>-.451*</td>
<td>.105</td>
<td>.034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Assign.</td>
<td>.031</td>
<td>-.060</td>
<td>-.055</td>
<td>-.329*</td>
<td>.024</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Comp.</td>
<td>-.138</td>
<td>-.204</td>
<td>-.043</td>
<td>-.518*</td>
<td>-.135</td>
<td>-.096</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMOD</td>
<td>-.120</td>
<td>-.236</td>
<td>-.057</td>
<td>-.213</td>
<td>-.125</td>
<td>-.197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Calls</td>
<td>-.207</td>
<td>-.298*</td>
<td>-.026</td>
<td>-.483*</td>
<td>-.026</td>
<td>-.483*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed).

Small schools and overall, math and reading proficiency.

In Small Schools no statistically significant correlations were found between any of the considered call types and overall proficiency, math proficiency or reading proficiency.
Large schools and overall proficiency.

In Large Schools, no statistically significant correlations were found between Overall Proficiency and calls about safety, identified as other, about instruction, student assignment, identified as non-complaint calls or about SMOD (Standard Mode of Dress/student uniforms).

In Large Schools, no statistically significant positive correlation was found between Overall Proficiency and any type of calls or total calls.

In Large Schools, a statistically significant negative correlation was found between Overall Proficiency and calls about personnel, discipline and the total number of calls. As the overall proficiency (the percentage of students in the schools scoring as proficient on standardized tests) increases in large schools, the number of calls to district offices by parents about personnel and discipline and the total number of calls decrease.

Large schools and math proficiency.

In Large Schools, no statistically significant correlation was found between Math Proficiency and calls about personnel or SMOD (Standard Mode of Dress/student uniforms).

In Large Schools, no statistically significant positive correlation was found between Math Proficiency and any type of calls or total calls.

In Large Schools, a statistically significant negative correlation was found between Math Proficiency and calls about safety, identified as other, about discipline, instruction, student assignment, identified as non-complaints and total calls. In large schools, as math proficiency increases (the percentage of students in the schools scoring as proficient in math
on standardized tests), the number of calls about safety, identified as other, about discipline, instruction, student assignment, identified as non-complaints and about SMOD (Standard Mode of Dress/student uniforms) decrease.

**Large schools and reading proficiency.**

In Large Schools, no statistically significant correlation was found between Reading Proficiency and calls about safety, identified as other, about discipline, instruction, student assignment, identified as non-complaints or about SMOD (Standard Mode of Dress/student uniforms).

In Large Schools, no statistically significant positive correlation was found between Reading Proficiency and any type of calls or total calls.

In Large Schools, a statistically significant negative correlation was found between Reading Proficiency and calls about personnel and total calls. In large schools, as reading proficiency increases (the percentage of students in the schools scoring as proficient in reading), the number of calls about personnel and the total number of calls decrease.

**Summary of the data related to the influence of school characteristics on parent calls.**

Characteristics of schools influence the number and nature of calls that parents make to district offices to a statistically significant degree. Increases in teacher turnover in schools result in an increase in total calls and some types of calls to district offices. The percentage of teachers with more than ten years of experience in schools is related to a decrease in total calls and in some types of calls to district offices. The number of crimes in schools and the number of incidents of suspension in schools are related to an increase in the total number of
calls and increase in several specific types of calls by parents to district offices when all 
schools are considered together. The size of schools is related to the number of calls to 
district offices. When controlling for size, crimes per 100 students and incidents per 100 
students in small school and in large school have a statistically significant positive 
correlation with total calls and some types of calls. Math proficiency in large schools is a 
characteristic related to numbers of calls. Math proficiency in large schools has a statistically 
significant negative correlation with the total number of calls and several types of calls. Total calls and several types of calls decrease as math proficiency increases.

In the analysis of data related to general characteristics regarding schools and parent 
calls, a statistically significant positive correlation was found between the percentage of 
teacher turnover in schools and calls to district offices about safety, identified as other, about 
instruction, about student assignment, identified as non-complaint calls and total calls. As 
teacher turnover increases, calls of these types increase. There is a statistically significant 
negative correlation between percentages of teacher turnover in schools and calls about 
attendance. As teacher turnover increases, calls about attendance decrease.

The percentage of teachers in schools with less than four years of experience has a 
statistically significant correlation with a few call types, but teachers with more than ten 
years of experience have a statistically significant negative correlation with several types of 
calls and total calls. There are less parent calls to district offices when there are more 
experienced teachers because there is a statistically significant negative correlation between 
some types of calls and total calls and the percentage of teachers with more than ten years of 
experience. There are fewer calls identified as other and about discipline and SMOD 
(Standard Mode of Dress/student uniforms) when there are more teachers with National
Board Certification. The percentage of teachers with National Board Certification has a statistically significant negative correlation with calls to district offices identified as other and calls about discipline and SMOD.

Overall proficiency levels in schools are not correlated with any call types or with total calls when all schools are analyzed together. When schools are analyzed together, the number of crimes per 100 students and the number of incidents of out of school suspension per 100 students have a statistically significant positive correlation with most types of calls, specifically with calls about legal issues, safety, personnel, calls identified as other, calls about student activities, discipline, attendance, instruction, student assignment, calls identified as non-complaint calls, calls about SMOD (Standard Mode of Dress) and total calls. When schools are analyzed together, suspension rates also have a statistically significant positive correlation with calls about transportation and exceptional children’s services, but crime rate does not.

School size has a statistically significant positive correlation with total calls and with calls of every type except guardianship and maintenance. When school size increases, the number of calls to district offices increase. More students and more parents mean more calls.

In large schools, as the crime rate or the suspension rate increases the total number of calls and every type of call except those about legal issues, exceptional children’s services, guardianship and maintenance increase, as well. There is a statistically significant positive correlation between the number of crimes per 100 students and between the number of incidents of out of school suspension and most types of calls in large schools. In large schools, there is a statistically significant positive correlation between the number of crimes per 100 students and calls about legal issues. In large schools, as the crime rate increases, the
number of calls about legal issues do, too. In small schools, there is a statistically significant positive correlation between the number of crimes per 100 students and the total number of calls and calls identified as other, calls identified as non-complaint calls and calls about discipline and about SMOD (student uniforms). Total calls and calls of these types increase as the crime rate increases in small schools. There is also a statistically significant positive correlation with the total number of calls and with calls about safety, personnel, calls identified as other, calls about discipline, calls identified as non-complaint calls, calls about SMOD and the number of incidents of out of school suspension in schools. As the suspension rate increases in small schools, the total number of calls and the number of calls of these types to district offices increase, as well.

There is no statistically significant correlation between overall proficiency, math proficiency or reading proficiency in small schools and calls of any type. When controlling for size and analyzing the data for large schools, the overall proficiency percentage has a statistically significant negative correlation with calls about personnel and discipline and total calls. When overall proficiency increases in large schools, fewer calls about these topics are made to district offices. Math proficiency in large schools has a statistically significant negative correlation with total parent calls and calls about safety, calls identified as other, calls about discipline, instruction, student assignment, calls identified as non-complaints and total calls. As math proficiency increases in large schools, the total number of calls to district offices and the number of calls about these topics decrease. Reading proficiency in large schools and total calls and calls about personnel have a statistically significant negative correlation. As reading proficiency percentages increase in large schools, the number of total calls and the number of calls about personnel decrease.
Research Question R.2.1

R.2.1 Is there evidence in either the quantitative or qualitative documentation of parent calls that the structure of schools reproduces the structure of society?

Considering free and reduced lunch program participation percentages.

The initial step in analyzing the quantitative data to examine the extent to which characteristics of schools influence the nature of calls parents make to district offices involved inferential statistics, specifically ANOVA or an analysis of variance, a statistical test of significance of differences between two groups across one or more than one variable. In this case, the two groups were schools that were classified as Title I and schools that were not, Title I being the categorical and independent variable, in conjunction with the continuous dependent variable of various types of calls and total calls.

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was calculated on types of calls/total calls about schools and Title I status. The results of the test indicated there was no significance, $F(1,117)=.738$, $p=.392$ ($r=3.92$)

While the analysis did not identify a significant relationship between Title I schools and non-Title I schools and total calls or types of calls, the researcher began to question whether or not the results were affected by an inappropriate combining of groups, that is large schools and small schools or high schools and elementary schools. Title I status is based on free and reduced lunch percentages and is a status that indicates that schools receive federal funding for instructional materials, additional staff, parent opportunities for involvement with schools and professional development for staff. The threshold is set by districts and, in the district in the study, the threshold (or percentage of free and reduced
lunch percentage required for the status) is much higher for high schools than for elementary schools. Consequently there are very few high schools in the district that have ever been Title I, and there are many elementary schools with Title I status. High schools in the district may have many more students receiving free and reduced lunch than elementary schools but still not be considered Title I because the threshold or bar at which high schools are identified as Title I is a much higher percentage of free and reduced lunch participation than it is for elementary schools. The implication of these facts are that the socioeconomic status of the families of student populations in high schools that are not Title I could be considerably lower than that of the students’ families in elementary schools that are Title I. Since high schools are larger, as well, and would reasonably be expected to have a proportionately larger number of calls than elementary schools and since high schools are excluded from Title I status because the threshold of the percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch is considerably higher for high schools than for elementary, Title I status was not the best indicator of higher or lower socioeconomic status for student populations for purposes of this study.

With no indication of a correlation between Title I status and parent calls, the next step was to see if any significant correlations could be identified between the frequency of parent phone calls and any characteristics of schools.

**Pearson correlations between schools’ free/reduced lunch percentages and types of calls.**

After the analysis of types of calls and characteristics of schools related to teachers, proficiency percentages, school size, out of school suspension and crime rates followed by an analysis of Title I in relation to calls, the next step was an analysis of free and reduce lunch
program participation percentages. A bivariate analysis between individual variables representing free and reduced lunch percentages were calculated with variables representing various types of calls in order to determine if correlations could be identified. The results are presented in Table 8.

Table 8.

*Pearson Correlation Results between Free and Reduced Lunch Percentages and Call Types*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Call Types</th>
<th>% Free &amp; Reduced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legal</td>
<td>-.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>-.135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>.062</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC</td>
<td>-.011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel</td>
<td>.028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>.064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Act.</td>
<td>-.176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guardianship</td>
<td>.160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance</td>
<td>.039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>-.086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional</td>
<td>-.151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Assign.</td>
<td>-.082</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
No statistically significant correlations were found between Free and Reduced (percentage of student free and reduced lunch program participation) and any type if calls, and no statistically significant correlation was found between Free and Reduced and the total number of calls.

Because correlations were found when schools were categorized by school size and none were found when looking at free and reduced lunch program participation percentages, a need for looking for correlations between free and reduced lunch percentages while controlling for school size was indicated. Results for the computation between free and reduced lunch program percentages while controlling for school size are shown in Table 9.

Table 9.

Pearson Correlation Results between Free and Reduced Lunch Percentages and Call Types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Call Types</th>
<th>Small School</th>
<th>Large School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legal</td>
<td>.168</td>
<td>.023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>.133</td>
<td>.489*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Free</th>
<th>Reduced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>.141</td>
<td>.240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC</td>
<td>.016</td>
<td>.298*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel</td>
<td>.151</td>
<td>.384*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>.231</td>
<td>.240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Act.</td>
<td>.013</td>
<td>.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guardianship</td>
<td>.167</td>
<td>.294*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline</td>
<td>.260*</td>
<td>.328*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance</td>
<td>.062</td>
<td>.042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>.177</td>
<td>.169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>.126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Assign.</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Comp.</td>
<td>.102</td>
<td>.251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMOD</td>
<td>.170</td>
<td>.255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Calls</td>
<td>.218</td>
<td>.353*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed).

Small schools.

In Small Schools, no statistically significant correlation was found between Free and Reduced (percentages of students receiving free and reduced lunch) and any call type except discipline calls, and no correlation was found between Free and Reduced and total calls.

In Small Schools, a statistically significant positive correlation was found between Free and Reduced (percentages of students in the free and reduced lunch program) and calls about discipline. In small schools, as percentages of students participating in the free and
reduced lunch program increase (with higher free and reduced lunch percentage utilized as an indicator of lower socioeconomic demographics for the school), discipline calls increase.

**Large schools.**

In Large Schools, no statistically significant correlation was found between Free and Reduced (the percentage of students participating in the free and reduced lunch program) and calls about legal issues, safety, identified as other, about student activities, maintenance, attendance, instruction, student assignment, identified as non-complaint calls and about SMOD (Standard Mode of Dress/student uniform).

In Large Schools, a statistically significant positive correlation was found between Free and Reduced (the percentage of students participating in the free and reduced lunch program) and calls about transportation, EC (exceptional children’s services), personnel, guardianship, discipline and the total number of calls. In large schools, as the percentage of students participating in the free and reduced lunch program increases, the number of calls about transportation, exceptional children’s services, personnel, guardianship, discipline and the number of total calls increase, as well.

**Research Question R.2.2**

*R.2.2 How does a child’s capital, that is either the economic capital of the family as determined by the free and reduced lunch program participation at the school the student of concern attends or the cultural capital of the student as determined by the number of higher level courses offered at the school and/or the academic performance at the school, affect the nature of the issues their parents take to district offices?*
Looking at parent as advocates in schools controlled for size and socioeconomic data.

With correlations found between free and reduced lunch program participation and five call types, looking at particular variables representing characteristics for which correlations were found in schools categorized by both size and socioeconomic status became the next step. Schools were categorized by size with Small being 0-585 students and Large being 586-1900 students and by free and reduced lunch program participation percentages utilized as an indicator of the socioeconomic demographics of school populations with schools with free and reduced lunch participation percentages of 0 to 52.15% categorized as High (high socioeconomic status) and schools with free and reduced lunch program participation percentages of 52.16% to 100% categorized as Low (lower socioeconomic status); however, the sample size of High Socioeconomic Small Schools, High Socioeconomic Large Schools and Low Socioeconomic Large Schools were too small for the results of an analysis to be statistically significant.

The sample size for Low Socioeconomic Small Schools with 48 schools was large enough for significant results.

There was a statistically significant positive correlation found between OSS (Out of School Suspension) per 100 students and Total Calls in Low Socioeconomic Small Schools with a coefficient of .641.

There was no statistically significant correlation between Reading Proficiency and Total Calls in Low Socioeconomic Small Schools with a coefficient of -.158.

There was a statistically significant correlation between Crimes per 100 Students and Total Calls with a coefficient of .297.
There was no correlation found between Math Proficiency and Total Calls with a coefficient of -.038.

Since these results could not be compared to those of other schools categorized by both size and free and reduced lunch program participation because the sample sizes were too small, the next step became to look at call types and schools categorized by socioeconomic demographics as indicated by free and reduced lunch program participation without controlling for size. For purposes of this study, High Socioeconomic Schools are those with free and reduced lunch program participation percentages between 0 and 52.15%. Low Socioeconomic Schools are those with free and reduced lunch program participation percentages between 52.16% and 100%. These designations were chosen so that schools of all levels, elementary to high schools, would fall within each of the ranges. The results are shown in Table 10.

Table 10.

*Pearson Correlation Results between Variables Representing Overall, Math and Reading Proficiency for Schools Categorized as High and Low Socioeconomic Status by Free and Reduced Lunch Percentages*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Call Types</th>
<th>High Socio Overall Prof</th>
<th>Low Socio Overall Prof</th>
<th>High Socio Math Prof</th>
<th>Low Socio Math Prof</th>
<th>High Socio Reading Prof</th>
<th>Low Socio Reading Prof</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legal</td>
<td>.014</td>
<td>.059</td>
<td>-.066</td>
<td>-.062</td>
<td>-.008</td>
<td>.074</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Low socioeconomic schools and proficiency levels.

In Low Socioeconomic Schools, no statistically significant correlations were found between overall, math or reading proficiency levels and any call types or with total calls.

High socioeconomic schools and proficiency levels.

In High Socioeconomic Schools, no statistically significant positive correlations were found between overall, math or reading proficiency levels and any call types or with total calls.
In High Socioeconomic Schools, a statistically significant negative correlation was found between Overall Proficiency and calls about safety, discipline, maintenance and SMOD (Standard Mode of Dress/student uniform). In high socioeconomic schools as indicated by low free and reduced lunch program participation percentages, as the overall proficiency increases, the number of calls about safety, discipline, maintenance and SMOD (Standard Mode of Dress/student uniforms) to district offices decreases.

In High Socioeconomic Schools, a negative correlation was found between Math Proficiency and calls about safety, personnel, identified as other, about discipline, instruction, identified as non-complaint, about SMOD (Standard Mode of Dress/student uniform) the total number of calls. In high socioeconomic schools as indicated by low free and reduced lunch program participation percentages, as math proficiency increases, the number of calls about safety, personnel, identified as other, about student activities, discipline, instruction, identified as not being complaints, about SMOD (Standard Mode of Dress/student uniform) and the total number of calls decrease.

In High Socioeconomic Schools, a negative correlation was found between Reading Proficiency and calls about safety and personnel. In high socioeconomic schools as indicated by low free and reduced lunch program participation percentages, when reading proficiency increases, the number of calls about safety and personnel issues decrease.

Other variables demonstrating correlations with several call types were Crimes per 100 Students and OSS (out of school suspension) per 100 students. The crime rate and suspension rate have been examined in relation to call types and in split file analysis for analyzing correlations with call types in large and small schools. In order to understand how crime rates and suspension rates are correlated with call types in low and high socioeconomic
environments, the bivariate analysis of these variables were computed with the school file split into High Socioeconomic Schools (as indicated by low free and reduced lunch program participation percentages) and Low Socioeconomic Schools (as indicated by high free and reduced lunch program participation percentages). The results are shown in Table 11.

Table 11.

*Pearson Correlation Results between Variables Representing Crime per 100 Students and OSS (Out of School Suspensions) per 100 Students for Schools Categorized as High and Low Socioeconomic Status by Free and Reduced Lunch Percentages*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Call Types</th>
<th>High Soc Crimes</th>
<th>Low Soc Crimes</th>
<th>High Soc OSS</th>
<th>Low Soc OSS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legal</td>
<td>.484*</td>
<td>.212</td>
<td>.424*</td>
<td>.259*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>.136</td>
<td>.164</td>
<td>.237</td>
<td>.320*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>.410*</td>
<td>.326*</td>
<td>.503*</td>
<td>.513*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC</td>
<td>.246</td>
<td>.149</td>
<td>.372*</td>
<td>.201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel</td>
<td>.593*</td>
<td>.208</td>
<td>.742*</td>
<td>.409*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>.766*</td>
<td>.341*</td>
<td>.752*</td>
<td>.626*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Act.</td>
<td>.704*</td>
<td>.304*</td>
<td>.693*</td>
<td>.319*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guardianship</td>
<td>-.094</td>
<td>-.031</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>.076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline</td>
<td>.764*</td>
<td>.348*</td>
<td>.848*</td>
<td>.605*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance</td>
<td>.121</td>
<td>-.130</td>
<td>.267</td>
<td>-.117</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Attendance \( .411^* \) \( .299^* \) \( .460^* \) \( .398^* \)
Instructional \( .606^* \) \( .307^* \) \( .711^* \) \( .398^* \)
Student Assign. \( .602^* \) .229 \( .574^* \) \( .476^* \)
Non-Complaint \( .582^* \) .284 \( .611^* \) \( .503^* \)
SMOD \( .533^* \) \( .261^* \) \( .562^* \) \( .403^* \)
Total Calls \( .750^* \) \( .354^* \) \( .824^* \) \( .620^* \)

*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed).

**Crimes per 100 students in high and low socioeconomic schools.**

In High Socioeconomic Schools (as indicated by low free and reduced lunch program percentages) no statistically significant correlations were found between Crimes per 100 students and calls about transportation, EC (exceptional children’s services), guardianship and maintenance.

In High Socioeconomic Schools (as indicated by low free and reduced lunch program participation percentages), statistically significant positive correlations were found between Crimes per 100 Students and calls about legal issues, safety, personnel, identified as other, about student activities, discipline, attendance, instruction, student assignment, identified as non-complaints, about SMOD (Standard Mode of Dress) and the number of total calls. When the number of crimes per 100 students increases in high socioeconomic schools as indicated by low free and reduced lunch program percentages, the number of calls of about legal issues, safety, personnel, identified as other, about student activities, discipline, attendance, instruction, student assignment, identified as non-complaints, and about SMOD (Standard Mode of Dress) and the number of total calls increase.
In Low Socioeconomic Schools (as indicated by high free and reduced lunch program participation percentages), no correlations were found between Crimes per 100 Students and calls about legal issues, transportation, EC (exceptional children’s services), personnel, guardianship, maintenance, student assignment and identified as non-complaints.

In Low Socioeconomic Schools (as indicated by high free and reduced lunch program participation percentages), statistically significant correlations were found between Crimes per 100 Students and calls about safety, identified as other, student activities, discipline, attendance, instruction, SMOD (Standard Mode of Dress/student uniforms) and between Crimes per 100 students and the total number of calls. When the number of crimes per 100 students rises in low socioeconomic schools as indicated by high free and reduced lunch program percentages, the number of calls of total calls and the number of calls about safety, identified as other, student activities, discipline, attendance, instruction and SMOD (Standard Mode of Dress/student uniforms) also increase.

**Out of school suspensions per 100 students.**

In High Socioeconomic Schools, no statistically significant correlations were found between OSS (Out of School Suspensions) per 100 Students and calls about transportation, guardianship, and maintenance.

In High Socioeconomic Schools (as indicated by low free and reduced lunch program participation percentages), statistically significant positive correlations were found between OSS (Out of School Suspension) per 100 Students and calls about legal issues, safety, EC (exceptional children’s services), personnel, identified as other, student activities, discipline, attendance, instruction, student assignment, identified as non-complaints, SMOD (Standard Mode of Dress) and between out of school suspension and the number of total calls. When
out of school suspension rises in high socioeconomic schools as indicated by low free and reduced lunch program percentages, the number of total calls and the number of calls about legal issues, safety, exceptional children’s services, personnel, identified as other, student activities, discipline, attendance, instruction, student assignment, identified as non-complaints and SMOD (Standard Mode of Dress/student uniforms) increase.

No correlations were found between OSS (Out of School Suspensions) per 100 Students in Low Socioeconomic schools and calls about EC (exceptional children’s services), guardianship and maintenance.

In Low Socioeconomic Schools (as indicated by high free and reduced lunch program participation percentages), statistically significant positive correlations were found between OSS (Out of School Suspensions) per 100 Students and calls about legal issues, transportation, safety, personnel, identified as other, student activities, discipline, attendance, instruction, student assignment, identified as non-complaints, SMOD (Standard Mode of Dress) and between out of school suspension and the number of total calls. When out of school suspension rises in low socioeconomic schools as indicated by high free and reduced lunch program percentages, the number of total calls and the number of calls regarding legal issues, transportation, safety, personnel, identified as other, about student activities, discipline, attendance, instruction, student assignment, identified as non-complaints and about SMOD (Standard Mode of Dress/student uniforms) increase.

**Summary of data related to questions about evidence that schools reproduce society and the interactions of cultural capital and parent calls.**

In large, high socioeconomic schools (with 586 students or more and student free and reduced lunch program participation of 52.15% or less), there is a statistically significant
positive correlation between the percentages of students who participate in the free and reduced lunch program and calls about transportation, exceptional children’s services, personnel, guardianship, discipline and the total number of calls.

While the only correlation between overall proficiency, math proficiency or reading proficiency in low socioeconomic schools (with student free and reduced lunch program percentages of 52.16 or more) is a statistically significant negative correlation between math proficiency and calls identified as non-complaint calls in low socioeconomic schools. In high socioeconomic schools, there is a statistically significant negative correlation between math proficiency and several types of calls, including the total number of calls and calls about safety, personnel, discipline and instruction. As math proficiency increases in higher socioeconomic school, these calls decrease. In high socioeconomic schools, reading proficiency has a statistically significant negative correlation with calls about safety and personnel. These calls decrease as reading proficiency increases.

**Research Question R.2.3**

*R.2.3 Are some types of calls exempt from the effects of social class?*

Calls correlated with the suspension rate, calls about discipline and calls correlated with the crime rate are exempt from social class.

School size is correlated to calls about discipline. Discipline calls are correlated to crime rates and suspension rates of schools in both small schools and in large schools. Discipline calls are the only call type that is correlated to free and reduced lunch program participation percentages in small schools.

As the crime rate increases, there are more total calls about schools. The crime rate is correlated with total calls and calls about discipline in small schools and large schools.
Crimes per 100 students have a statistically significant positive correlation with total calls in low socioeconomic small schools. In high socioeconomic schools, as the crime rate increases, the total number of calls and calls about discipline increase, as well.

As the suspension rate increases, there are more total calls to district offices about schools and more calls about discipline. As the suspension rate increases the number of total calls and calls about discipline in small schools and large schools increase, as well.

Suspension per 100 students and total calls have a statistically significant correlation with total calls in low socioeconomic small schools. In high socioeconomic schools, as the suspension rate increases, the total number of calls and calls about discipline increase. In low socioeconomic schools, as the number of incidents of out of school suspension increase, the number of calls about discipline and the total number of calls increase.

**Related Research Hypotheses**

**Research hypothesis H.2a.**

*H.2a Parent calls to district offices follow patterns in their nature and frequency as stipulated within Bourdieu’s theory of cultural reproduction in that they follow patterns in relationship to the characteristics of social class (as indicated by the percentage of student participation in the free and reduced lunch programs in the schools parents call about).*

When controlling for socioeconomic factors by splitting the school file, it was shown that in high socioeconomic schools, as overall proficiency increases, the number of calls about safety, discipline, maintenance, and SMOD decrease because these call types and overall proficiency have a statistically significant negative correlation in high socioeconomic schools. In low socioeconomic schools, overall proficiency, reading proficiency and math proficiency have no significant relationship to the number of total calls or the number of any
type of call except in the case of math proficiency increases in low socioeconomic schools. Math proficiency has a statistically significant negative correlation with the number of calls identified as non-complaint calls in low socioeconomic/high free and reduced lunch schools, with non-complaint calls decreasing as math proficiency increases in low socioeconomic schools. In high socioeconomic schools, as math proficiency increases, the total number of calls, the number of calls identified as other, the number of calls identified as non-complaints and the number of calls about safety, personnel, student activities, discipline, instruction and SMOD decrease. There is a statistically significant negative correlation between these call types and math proficiency in high socioeconomic schools. In high socioeconomic schools, as reading proficiency increases, the number of calls about safety and personnel decrease because there is a statistically significant negative correlation between reading proficiency and these call types in high socioeconomic schools.

Hypothesis H.2a was confirmed because in low socioeconomic/high free and reduced lunch schools, student proficiency levels have almost no correlation with calls; however, in high socioeconomic/low free and reduced lunch schools, as proficiency levels of students increase, the number of many types of calls decreases. For example, proficiency levels have no correlation with calls about personnel in low socioeconomic schools; but both reading and math proficiency levels have a statistically significant negative correlation with calls about personnel in high socioeconomic (low free and reduced lunch) schools. Parents of students in high socioeconomic/low free and reduced lunch schools make fewer calls to district offices when proficiency levels in their students’ schools increase, particularly when math proficiency increases, while parents of students in low socioeconomic/high free and reduced lunch schools do not make fewer calls in relationship to proficiency levels of students in
those schools. The evidence shows that parent calls do follow patterns related to characteristics of social class as indicated by free and reduced lunch program participation percentages.

**Research hypothesis H.2b.**

*H.2b Parent calls to district offices generate evidence that education continues social structure division.*

When not controlling for size, the percentage of student participation in the free and reduced lunch program has no statistically significant correlation with any type of call or with the total number of calls; however, results were different when controlling for size. In small schools, as the percentage of student participation in the free and reduced lunch program increases, the number of calls about discipline increases due to a statistically significant positive correlation between free and reduced lunch program participation percentages and calls about discipline in small schools. In large schools, as the percentage of student participation in the free and reduced lunch program increases, there is an increase in total calls and in the number of calls about transportation, EC (exceptional children’s services), personnel, guardianship and discipline due to a statistically significant positive correlation between free and reduced lunch program participation percentages and total calls and these types of calls in large schools.

Hypothesis H.2b was confirmed by the relationship of student free and reduced lunch program participation percentages and parent calls to district offices. As free and reduced lunch percentages increase in small schools, the number of calls about discipline increase. As free and reduced lunch program percentages increase in large schools, calls about
transportation, exceptional children’s services, personnel, guardianship, discipline and the total number of calls increase. The statistically significant positive correlation between student free and reduced lunch program participation percentages in large schools and the total number of calls and the number of calls about discipline, exceptional children’s services, personnel, guardianship and discipline and the statistically significant positive correlation between student free and reduced lunch program participation percentages and calls about discipline in small schools can be argued to be evidence that education continues social structure division. As free and reduced lunch program participation percentages increase, calls from parents with concerns about specific issues, including discipline increase. The positive correlation of parent calls and total calls and many call types and free and reduced lunch program percentages are evidence that education continues social structure division.

**Research hypothesis H.2c.**

H.2c *Parent calls are a source of resistance to the assumption that schools are culturally neutral.*

The data results summarized for hypothesis H.2b also applies to hypothesis H.2c.

In small schools, as student free and reduced lunch program participation increases, the number of calls about discipline also increases. There is a statistically significant positive correlation between free and reduced lunch program participation percentages and calls about discipline. In large schools, as the percentage of student participation in the free and reduced lunch program increases, the number of calls about transportation, exceptional children’s services, personnel, guardianship, discipline and the total number of calls increases due to a
statistically significant positive correlation between free and reduced lunch program participation percentages and these types of calls and total calls.

Hypothesis H.2c was confirmed because as free and reduced lunch program percentages increase in small schools, parents call more about discipline; and as free and reduced lunch program percentages increase in large schools, parents make more total calls to district offices and call more about several issues, including transportation, exceptional children’s services, personnel and discipline. These parent calls made in relationship to free and reduced lunch program percentages could be argued to be a source of resistance to the assumption that schools are culturally neutral. It could be argued, as well, that parents are calling because schools are not culturally neutral and there are specific problems they want district office staff to know about.

**Qualitative Results**

**Overview of the Schools and the Primary Documents for the Qualitative Phase of the Study**

The qualitative data offer a deeper view into the nature of parent calls to district offices. The primary documents for the qualitative aspect of the study consist of narrative notes for 362 calls that came into one region of an urban school district in the Southeastern United States during the 2010-2011 school year. The region is representative of the schools in the district in that every type of school, including high schools, middle schools, elementary schools, an alternative school and a school for children with special needs are in the region.

For purposes of analysis, the schools are divided into higher socioeconomic schools, mid-range socioeconomic schools and lower socioeconomic schools based on free and reduced lunch program participation percentages or, that is the percentage of the student
body qualifying to receive lunch free or at reduced prices. The free and reduced lunch data for categorizing the schools for the purposes of this study are data from February 2009, because in the district, decisions regarding which schools qualify for special programs based on financial need for any given year are determined by free and reduced lunch program participation data from the previous February.

Due to an uneven number of high schools in the region and because the quantitative data show that the number of calls is correlated to the size of schools with large schools receiving more calls than small schools, there are three categories of schools for this phase of the study. Calls from the alternative school and the special needs school are considered in the overall analysis, but not in any of the socioeconomic categories of schools due to the small size of the schools and their transient populations. For purposes of the qualitative phase of this study, the schools categorized as higher income are schools with a free and reduced lunch program participation percentage of less than 40%, schools designated as mid-income have a free and reduced lunch program participation of between 40% and 46% and schools designated as lower income have a free and reduced lunch program participation of between 46% and 100%. These percentages are used in order to have equal distribution of the schools within higher and lower socioeconomic categories.

There are an equal number of elementary schools, middle schools and high schools in both the higher income group and the lower income group; and there is a smaller number of schools in the mid-range income group with each of the three grade level types represented. Narrative documentation created by office staff when calls came in, often containing direct quotes from parents, and notes taken as the concerns were explored and resolved, either in
further dialogue with callers or in follow-up with schools, make up the 362 parent call primary documents analyzed in the qualitative aspect of the study.

**Qualitative Results Related to Quantitative Questions**

All 362 calls are complaints, requests, accusations and threats with any praise or compliments embedded within narrative also including discourse addressing issues of concern. Information about the content of the calls discovered through qualitative analysis is conveyed through reflection on and summary of the categories of identification of meaning in the narrative text or the codes or labels applied to the text in analysis. All calls have an impetus for the call. Figure 1 illustrates the circumstances or events behind parent calls to district offices. The words in the graphic illustration are codes assigned to segments of text in the narrative documentation. The first numbers in the parentheses appearing near the codes indicate the frequency of the codes or the count of the number of links to quotations for the code or the number of times sections of text from the narrative documentation are marked with a specific code. The second numbers in the parentheses indicate the density of the codes or the count of the links or noted connections between the particular code and other codes or memos, which are notations in the analysis.
Figure 1. *Impetus for Calls to District Offices/Codes for Concerns Initiating Calls.*

**The coding process.**

In the process of coding, passages of text on numbered documents with narrative data are selected and coded according to the prevalent meaning identified in the text with inductive codes. The codes that emerged from examination of the data are discipline concerns, complaints about teachers, concerns about lack of communication with the school and expression of concern over health issues of either the student involved or the family appearing in the documents most often. Accusations and complaints of unfair treatment, uncaring school personnel, rude staff members, and unprofessional conduct by school staff appear predominately in the documentation of the calls, as well.
Also appearing often are safety concerns, requests for class assignment changes or school assignment changes, complaints about bullying either by another student or a teacher, complaints about out of school suspension and concerns about exceptional children’s services (for students with special needs and identified disabilities). Many parents also express concern about grades, lost opportunities or potential lost opportunities, make requests and argue for policy changes or make accusations of policy violations.

The next step in the analysis of the data for this study is the division of the call data into groups of cases or documents by schools and then the division of the schools and their respective data into socioeconomic categories. Analysis of the number of times a code occurs, of the times the code occurs with other codes and linking or networking codes follows.

While the general number of times particular codes are used and the number of times codes occur together are both interesting, the specific number of times that documents are coded with these labels is not included in this discussion because in qualitative analysis, the number of times codes are used is a bridge to understanding and a guide toward what might merit further analysis, not an answer to questions in and of themselves.

**Characteristics of the schools.**

Characteristics of the schools do influence the nature of the calls parents make to district offices, both with regard to what the parents are calling about and the manner in which they express their concerns. Codes marking accusations of lack of communication by school staff, discussion of discipline issues, particularly out of school suspension, appear more often in the analysis of documentation of calls from parents of students in lower income schools than in analysis of the narrative notes from higher or mid-range income schools.
Worry and loss or potential loss of opportunities appear most often in notes expressing concerns of parents of students in higher income schools.

Parents of students in mid-range income schools discuss safety, make accusations of unfair situations or treatment and mention the School Resource Officer (an officer from the police force or the sheriff’s office assigned to the school) more often in their calls than do the parents of students in higher or lower income schools. Both parents of students in lower income and higher income schools, as well as parents of students in mid-range income schools discuss health concerns of their students or themselves when they call.

While parents have an impetus for contacting district offices and often make accusations, they also often have specific requests or demands. Figure 2 illustrates the codes representing types of requests parents make to district offices. Again, the first number in the parentheses appearing near the codes indicates the groundedness or the number of links to quotations for each code. The second number in the parentheses indicates the density of the code or the count of the links/noted connections between the particular code and other codes.

Figure 2. Types of parent requests coded for quotations from narrative text.
Research Question 3

R.3. Is there evidence of a discrepancy in ability to advocate for children between parents associated with higher socioeconomic status and those associated with schools with lower socioeconomic status?

Evidence of a discrepancy in the ability to advocate for their children between parents associated with higher socioeconomic schools and lower socioeconomic schools can be identified in the qualitative data. While parents from all types of schools utilize elements of discourse in their conversations with district office staff, the manner in which parents ask for what they want can be quite a bit different. Parents from higher income schools make accusations and argue with reference to some sort of documentation more often than parents of students from lower or mid-range income schools. An example of a parent from a higher income school advocating for his child while making reference to documentation can be seen in the following quotation. The parent is speaking about his child’s teacher:

He is openly against studying academics and b) does not care for children, but puts his own interest over educating children. His action is completely inconsistent with the district’s strategic plan! I wonder how he can be a certified professional teacher….

The father of a student in a higher income high school is able to express his dissatisfaction with his son’s teacher with passion while making reference to the district’s strategic plan. The data show that parents of students in higher income schools use documentation to back up their arguments more often than parents of students in lower income schools do.

Evidence in the data show that parents of students in higher income schools advocate for their children about grades more often than parents of students in lower income schools, as do parents of students in mid-range income schools. The parent in the quotation below is expressing concern about her daughter’s grade in a course in a higher income high school:
I am not one of those parents that feel the total blame is on the teachers. And yet under the circumstances, my daughter is not to take the total blame either! I am aware of some teachers and counselors thinking that she is “lazy.” To that I say they need to look into other techniques to teach the material.

The parent argues that the teachers need to learn to teach differently. A parent at a higher income elementary school calls about a “90 on a spelling test,” and another says that a three (out of four) “is not an accurate reflection of” their child’s “achievements” and that his son’s “reading assessment at the beginning of the second grade exceeds the matriculation requirements for the end of second grade,” leaving him and his wife “perplexed.” The parent continues:

If he earned only a 3 reading at a level 30-34, then should we assume that those who are reading on grade level earned a score of 2 or less? Since we know that such is not the case, then we are left only with the assertion that the 3 is not an accurate reflection of his achievements. Conversely, if another student is reading at a level 20, which is consistent with the grading rubric, and that student also earns a 3, there is an obvious inequity in the grading system.

The parent concerned about his reading score knows what the reading levels are and puts forth a logical argument regarding why his son should not have received a three in reading.

Parents from higher income schools put forth powerful arguments and often make references to documentation to support their arguments regarding the concerns they call about. The following parent is upset because her daughter’s car was towed:

There were 3 students parked in the visitors’ parking spots that obviously were there practicing Lacrosse. I watched them leave and photographed their cars with parking permits. I made sure my photos had a time on them. Why did you not have them towed?

Parents of children at schools designated as lower income are more likely to call about discipline than grades, while parents of students at higher income schools are less likely to call about discipline than grades. The techniques parents use to advocate for their children in higher, mid-range or lower income schools are different; and the needs of their children that
parents advocate for are different, too, with parents of students in higher income schools speaking more often about grades and opportunities and parents of students in lower income schools talking more often about discipline and lack of communication. A parent of a student in a lower income middle school advocates for her child about a grade by first addressing discipline in the segment below. In the text, ISS means in-school-suspension. The parent calls to express that her child should not have in-school-suspension and seek an explanation regarding why her child received a disciplinary consequence. She expresses her belief that his punishment is for going to the bathroom when, according to her, he had a note from a doctor indicating that he should be allowed to go to the bathroom frequently. She says,

What is interesting is that we have to get a note from the doctor and he is still not allowed to go. Why the note in the first place? I believe privacy issues have been violated by requiring the note. If he was HIV positive no note is required.

She does not refer to external documentation such as the strategic plan or a reading level scale, she refers to a note she supplies from the doctor and takes a leap in her dialogue to the assumption that if her child was HIV positive, he would not need a note. The parent also discusses ISS and makes an argument against her son’s in-school-suspension. Her concerns about her child’s grades follow her concerns about his assignment to in-school-suspension. She addresses his grades in the following quotation. ADD refers to Attention Deficit Disorder.

What I found interesting is the fact that no one began working with ---, assuming ADD was an issue. --- received an F in class because of homework not being turned in and yet during the later meeting, we grab his notebook and the assignments weren’t handed in but were completed.

Another parent from a different lower income middle school says she wants her child taken out of the school; she says she doesn’t believe anyone is concerned about her child and
that other students are picking on him, calling him a punk and telling him “they are going to put a pink dress on him.” She says, “Everyone treats him like crap and his grades are dropping, and he’s losing weight.” The parent of a student in a lower income elementary school calls about her daughter’s grade, saying, her child’s “project wasn’t accepted because it didn’t come with an object.” The narrative from the call appears in the text below:

Parent said she was never told that an object needed to be provided. She sent a note out on October 26 with her number included in the note (in the agenda). Parent has been calling and leaving notes with the teacher…and states she has never received a call back.

The parent did not clearly articulate what the project was or what the “object” was that she said her child did not have. The staff member’s notes from another caller from a lower income middle school illustrate another extreme in the expression of parents’ concerns. The notes follow:

She wants to know what her scores are.
She wants to know when remediation and practice is.
She wants to know when the re-tests are.
She wants to know why she did not receive a letter or if she will receive a letter.
She wants to know if her child is going to finish 7th grade.
This is a very concerned and very nice parent who is very worried.

The caller simply says what she wants and utilizes emotion to communicate, keeping her request simple and not using any documentation for support. A parent from a lower income elementary school wants to know if it is permissible for the teacher to require her child to walk laps at recess. The notes from the call are below:

Student missed a homework assignment. The teacher informed the child that she would have to complete the assignment during lunch if it’s not completed. The policy is that if they don’t make it to a certain color for the day they have to walk a certain amount of time walking laps. Wants to be sure that there is positive enforcement. Has meeting next Wednesday with teacher and principal. Child has ADHD. Both parents work in the school system, mother is a substitute….
While the parent does share some details, the parent does not have any documents or references except for specifics she can communicate about what she knows and she and her family have experienced. She, like most parents from lower income parents represented in the narrative documentation, couches her questions and requests within politeness and any evidence and documentation are from personal experience, not district level documents.

Parents utilize a variety of tools of persuasion in their calls to district offices. Figure 3 illustrates what some of these tools are.

Figure 3. *Persuasive tools and techniques utilized by parents contacting school district offices.*

The discrepancy in ability to advocate for their children between parents from higher income schools, mid-range income schools and lower income schools is often due to differences in ability to utilize persuasive tools.
In general, the data support a positive response to Research Question R.3. There is evidence of a discrepancy in ability to advocate for children between parents associated with higher socioeconomic status and those associated with schools with lower socioeconomic status. The data do show a discrepancy in ability to advocate for their children between parents of students in higher income schools and parents of children in lower income schools. In their arguments for their children, parents of students in higher income schools use their skills such as the use of external documentation or documentation from the school system itself, arguing with knowledge, arguing for policy changes and using legal language, all skills that could be said to be a part of their cultural capital. Parents of students in lower income schools often argue from their own perspectives, with references to their own experiences, making direct requests for what they want without use of many of the persuasive tools of argument shown in the data from parents of students in higher income schools.

**Research Question R.3.1**

*R.3.1 Is there evidence in the data regarding the calls that parents vary in “their skills at using the cultural capital to gain advantages in particular situations” (Dumais, 2006, p. 87)?*

There is evidence in the data that parents vary in their abilities at utilizing their cultural capital. Several higher income school callers talk about their connections or their involvement in the schools. For example, a parent from a higher income school calls after his son “took the test and got a 70%.” He said, “At this time I realized that an hour or more per night of studying was not helping him to be successful. At this time he had a D in the class. I knew we need an alternative to this class.” The parent then goes on to use cultural capital in his argument for his son to be assigned to another class:

My son has a G.P.A. of around 4.6. He has never been in trouble at school; he is a member of the honor society, national technical honor society, beta club, member
of the state championship golf team, volunteers as a peer tutor at the high school and a reading tutor at his elementary school, and has received many honors and awards such as student of the month, AP scholar award, academic all conference team, and MVP of the golf team. Prior to this class he only had one C on his transcript.

Another parent who wants his child accepted into a particular higher income school let the district office know that the father was a forensic scientist who teaches at the Center for Missing Children and helps high school seniors with their senior projects. Parents who did not want their daughter in a higher income school suspended after she had a knife at school, drew on their cultural capital in saying so. They told staff at a district office that their daughter volunteers for Habitat for Humanity and the soup kitchen, goes to religious services in the mornings, is part of the Red Cross Club, has scholastic honors and is part of the school’s honor society. Another parent from a higher income high school wants his son, and other children at the school, as well, to be allowed to graduate without completing a senior project. He drew on cultural capital in his argument, saying:

One of my sons was valedictorian of his high school. He’s gone on to great things by any measure, and he is in his second year of a graduate program in the Divinity School at Duke. My younger son is also a very diligent student who is bright, but who is even more of a hard worker…an overachiever. He has high goals, and he presses himself to excel to move him towards those goals. That’s why his current twelfth grade schedule included four AP courses and two honors courses. He’s not a slacker, but now that we are into it, I see this Senior Graduation Project as an unnecessary drain on his finite time and resources.

Of the parents calling from lower income schools, one parent says she has been on the School Leadership Team and one parent says that both parents work for the school system, one of them as a substitute. In the data analyzed, no other parent from a lower income school is identified as having made reference to connections or involvement with the school or other organizations. Parents from mid-range income schools, however, do utilize their cultural capital by describing their connections. One parent explains that she works as volunteer in
the front office of the school; another caller from a mid-income school who wants his son assigned to a school well after the application date explains that he has had “more than a few lengthy discussions with ------- who now serves on the Board of Elections”…and, referring to his son, he says, he and the member of the Board of Elections discussed “the options we are looking at to address his disaffection with his education to date.”

The parent also tells district office staff the position that he holds a position of leadership in the community. Not only does the man advocating for his son mention connections he has, he also explains that he and the person who serves on the Board of Elections both agree that what he is requesting is what his son should have.

A mid-range income middle school parent says, “Realizing the importance of parent involvement and having a background in education herself, my wife spends a fair amount of their time involved in our children’s schools and has spent more time in the last five months dealing with many incidents that have occurred at --- Middle School.” This father communicates his wife’s connections and her service to the school system, both aspect of the family’s cultural capital.

In general, the data support a positive response to Research Question R.3.1. There is evidence in the parent call data that parents vary in their ability to use cultural capital to gain advantages when making requests. Data show that parents associated with higher income schools are very adept at using their cultural capital. Parents of students in higher income schools list attributes, awards, organizations, associations and connections both of themselves and their children. They list courses their children take, relay their children’s grade point averages and list their children’s goals. They describe their involvement in schools and positons in the community. Data from the calls of parents of students in mid-
range income schools also contain descriptions of parents’ positions of leadership in the community and their connections with other community leaders. Data from calls of parents of students in lower income schools seldom contain lists of attributes or descriptions of connections or school and community positions.

**Research Question 4**

*R.4. Do calls provide evidence or examples aligned with Bourdieu’s concepts of interest, doxa, hysteresis, social class, cultural capital, misrecognition, and/or symbolic violence, either through the number and general types of calls associated with schools fitting specific profiles or in the narrative documentation of calls?*

The terms in the question above are considered within the conceptual framework of Bourdieu. Definitions of the terms are based on readings by and about Bourdieu and about Bourdieu’s findings, theories and philosophy follow:

*Interest* is a medium of economic action individuals take to maximize their own profit with or without awareness of their own impulse for benefiting themselves.

*Doxa* is a set of values accepted and promoted in a social space or cultural arena which are accepted as being established, natural and necessary. There is an expectation of the practice of and submission to those values.

*Hysteresis* is the phenomenon of an individual being out of touch with time and place and disconnected from the society around him or her; hysteresis is a disconnection between habitus or a person’s ways of behaving and the social space in which they find themselves.

*Social class* is a term for clusters of individuals in similar locations in social space with possession of similar levels of material, cultural and social resources.
Cultural capital is a term for ownership and practice of culturally accepted and established behaviors, values and attributes.

Misrecognition is treating artificially and socially created values as natural and authentic.

Symbolic violence is violence that may not be recognized as such because it is not physical and may be insidious. Symbolic violence may take the form of denied resources or limitations in the encouragement and support of aspirations, lack of attention or withholding of opportunities.

One mother’s story.

The notes from a call from a parent of a student at a lower income elementary school follow:

The person told her that it was not a good day to enroll the kids and to bring them on another day at 9:00. She says that when she went she was late and that the person told her that she had been expecting her at 9:00. She says that the person is rude. She says that she is disabled and so it is hard for her to go anywhere. She says she took the children back later and was told that the free lunch form would take some time to process. She says that she did not want her kids to sit there hungry and watch other kids eat and that they have food from the food bank at home so she was waiting to take the kids back to school until the forms were processed. She says that a social worker came to her house and asked why her children were not in school. She says she felt that her kids were not welcome at the school and that no one acted like they wanted them there. She says that when the social worker came to visit she did not know the kids’ teachers’ names. She says that she was told to call transportation and that transportation told her it would take 5 days before a bus would pick them up. She says there is no way for her to get the kids to school and she needs help.

This caller’s story is an example of doxa because, according to the parent’s story, the school placed a high value on being on time and on the children being in school as if those practices are inherently and naturally to be held in high esteem. The parent expresses that it is hard for her to go anywhere and also that she chose not to send her children to school so that they would not be there without food. Assuring that the children do not “sit there hungry
and watch other kids eat” is of higher value to the parent than her children being in school. This mother’s story also illustrates the concept of misrecognition in that if the events occurred as the parent says they did, the school district employees’ treatment of the values of being on time and being in school are as if they are natural and authentic values that all people must embrace, misrecognizing those values or practices as being of high worth. In addition, this situation is illustrative of interest. It is possible that the school officials do not want the family at the school because of their own interests. This case is also representative of the effects of social class and a lack of cultural capital. The parent describes her lack of resources and does not demonstrate cultural capital. While she does appear to be a survivor who is making decisions based on what she has and what she sees as the best way to provide for her children, survival skills being a kind of capital in themselves, the data regarding the parent do not show possession or practice of behaviors, values and attributes valued in the social space of the school, evident because the parent is at such odds with the school personnel. It should be noted that the parent has capital of some type in order to call the school district office. If the events occurred as the parent describes them, this mother’s story is representative of symbolic violence, as well. The parent relates that the school was not very helpful to her in the beginning.

**Interest.**

A parent of an elementary school student was upset because he wanted to know why he didn’t receive a phone call about what they were going to do with the field trip money (which is $10). He said that he works 7 days a week and thinks everyone else should too—so the principal could have called over the weekend to inform him what was going to happen with the money. He said the principal called and informed him that the children will be
going on a trip to the movies. He asked what if he didn’t want the children to see the movies. He said that the principal rudely corrected him because he did not know that his children weren’t in school Friday (he’s a truck driver and was away). The parent says “she got foul-mouthed” and he says he “got foul-mouthed” with her. He wouldn’t give her his name because he thought she would harass his children. He said the principal is a “jackass.”

Perhaps the teacher and principal found it in their best interests to make a decision about how to spend the field trip money after the trip was cancelled. This case could also be argued to be representative of misrecognition because the parent values working seven days a week and assumes that others should, too, and because the school values a trip to the movies and assumes the parents will, as well. The situation could be said to be one of hysteresis because the parent’s values, behaviors and beliefs are not aligned with those of school staff. For example, he works seven days a week and thinks they should, too.

Another example of interest is the case of a parent of a student in a higher income middle school who calls to say that a group of girls at the school want to wear spirit shirts for cheerleading they made to school but they were told that they could not wear the shirts because they were not purchased from the school.

**Doxa.**

A parent of a student at a higher income high school has a concern about rules that have been put in place for students’ use of internet resources. He says,

This is nonsense about .com being a red-headed stepchild to .net, .org or any other domain name suffixes. There is simply no way to generalize. This is particularly so when you understand that .com, .net and .org are all three open market available suffixes. In other words, you and I or anyone (and I do mean anyone) can, in a few short minutes for a cost of a few dollars, register any domain he wishes with a .com, .net or .org suffice. These are not policed in any way. I would have no problem with limiting the total number of web sources that students can use of for them to have to get advanced approval for any and all, but treating .com differently
and making the assumption that .net and .or are trustworthy is to actually teach out
students something false. I think we can all agree that we don’t want to disseminate
false or misleading information.

This parent is accusing the school of misrecognition. He is he is saying that the school is
enforcing a value system as natural and correct which, he argues, has no merit.

**Hysteresis, social class and misrecognition.**

A parent of a student in a lower income elementary school says a boy called her
daughter “sexy.” She says they sent her daughter to the principal to talk about the word and
that the principal told her that sexy meant “beautiful” and that it is not a bad word. Later that
day her daughter called another student sexy because she was told it meant beautiful, but then
she got in trouble because she said sexy. The parent concluded, “In Spanish sexy is a bad
word, but in English it isn’t.”

The situation described above is one in which the parent appears to be trying to make
sense of the situation but ultimately determines that she needs to reach out to a school district
office for assistance. In the end, the parent appears to be trying to apply a dual consciousness
to the situation. This case could also be identified as misrecognition because, according to
the parent, the principal appears to be stating and acting on a set of values that are assumed
by the principal to be correct; and the principal is putting forth an explanation in support of
the values she embraces as if they are based on fact and are natural. This situation is also an
example of hysteresis because while the parent and the child show that they are attempting to
navigate the social terrain, they appear to be caught in a position of being at odds with their
current environment.

Another parent of a lower income elementary school says that a boy called her
daughter names and that they suspended her daughter because she told the boy she was going
to take a marker and hit him. The notes from the call say “The parent is wondering why they
would suspend her child for defending herself.” In this case, the value of not fighting, not
fighting back in defense of oneself and not threatening another are accepted and promoted as
being established, natural and necessary. This case is an example of hysteresis because the
parent and child’s values and behaviors are not aligned with those of the school, and the
parent’s expectations are at odds with those of school officials. This situation could also be
argued to be an example of misrecognition in that the assumption appears to be made that
these rules are natural and should be in place.

A parent of a student in a lower income high school says her daughter told her she
had to sing in a chorus performance; so she took her to an event at the school. The parent
says,

There were dance groups. The students were sliding across the floor,
humping the ground. There were guys that had chairs in the middle of the floor and
started dancing on them the same way a girl would. Some girls had on fishnets and
shorts. The students barely had any clothes on. They looked like whores and sluts.
There was a boy who was dressed up like a girl with a blouse and skirt.

The parent says that she approached an assistant principal after the show and he gave her the
“brush off” and “didn’t take the matter seriously.” She said the principal wasn’t even at the
performance and that he should have been there. This case could also be argued to be
misrecognition because there are values at play in this situation and those values are
considered to be established or natural. The chorus teacher valued the performance as it took
place, but the performance was misaligned with the values of the parent. The situation is also
representative of symbolic violence in that the parent perceives that the assistant principal
dismissed what she had to say.
In another case that is illustrative of hysteresis, a parent of a student at a lower income high school calls and says that a teacher at the school told the students that she is a lesbian. She says that she doesn’t approve of the teacher telling everyone her sexual orientation and believes it is none of the students’ business. The parent says that she talked to the teacher and the teacher said it was fine that she made the announcement, and the parent says that the teacher was rude to her on the phone. She says she is going to ask the parents on her Facebook page if they know there is a teacher announcing that she is a lesbian. She says the teacher, who is an art teacher, gave her daughter a C even though she can draw. The parent’s habitus or ways of being herself and what she hears about going on at her daughter’s school are not in harmony, creating hysteresis.

A parent of a student in a lower income middle school calls and says that his wife called frustrated because to have a conference with one teacher she was told that she has to have a conference with all of their child’s teachers. He says his child brought home three zeros, but it seems like they’re “getting the run around.” In many middle schools in the district, parents are encouraged to meet with the entire team of teachers, usually three or four teachers, when they have a conference about a student. The parent who called the district office did not know this policy and the disconnection between the parents and the school are an example of hysteresis. This case could also be argued to be misrecognition because the school places a high value on all teachers being present for a conference even if the parent only wants to see one teacher, and the value may be being conveyed as both natural and established.
**Cultural capital and social class.**

Some results from the qualitative analysis of the narrative data from parent calls to district offices related to the concept of cultural capital and social class are presented in response to Research Question R.3.1. Data are shown to indicate that parents vary in their ability to utilize cultural capital to gain advantages in certain situations.

**Symbolic violence.**

There are many examples of symbolic violence in the data. Here are a few:

A parent of a student at a lower income middle school calls and says her child was in a long term suspension hearing and that the assistant principal in the hearing called her a liar and called her son a drug dealer.

A parent of a student at a higher income high school describes the teaching techniques of his daughter’s teacher. He says,

> I think comments like “You can’t jumble them all like this. It makes no sense” and “Why is this here?” and “What is going on here? And “What are you doing?” and “We’ve talked about this once already” and “What is this” are being received as critical and demeaning rather than helpful. If a student is not understanding a concept, then I would think that guiding advice would be more helpful than comments like this all over every test. I think this may have something to do with why my daughter is so quiet in class.

The parent is describing symbolic violence executed by his daughter’s teacher.

A parent of a student at a lower income middle school says that she feels like the principal is “rude.” She says that she has not liked the way the principal talked to her “on a number of occasions” and says that her concern about the principal is one she has had before and that is that she thinks “she does not interact with her as if she cares and she acts like she is not concerned.”
A parent of a child in a lower income elementary school says that she waited in the office for an hour to speak with the principal and “got nothing.” She says she just wanted to know why her son was suspended and for how long.

A parent of a student at a lower income elementary school says that she was trying to enroll her daughter and tried to talk to the principal and that the principal said she was trying to “get her school started.” She says that the principal said, “Take your child back to your old school if you want.” She says, “It made me feel like she doesn’t want my child, and when I signed her out, that’s the reason I put in...I wrote, ‘The principal does not want her.'”

Another parent from the same elementary school says her child ended up getting into a fight with a “bully.” She says the other student started it. Her child was suspended for three days for fighting. She says she wants to know what will happen when the children go back to school because the principal “brushes things under the carpet instead of dealing with the issues and keeping them from happening again.”

A parent of a student at a lower income elementary school says that she is having a “very hard time getting what she needs at the school.” She says the doctor says her daughter’s vomiting is due to stress and that the principal keeps “putting” her “off.”

A parent of a student at a lower income elementary school describes her experience at school, the notes from the call follow:

Her daughter has ADHD, and her daughter’s teacher is always embarrassing her in class. She says that the year before she was not notified that her daughter was not getting to class until 9:00. She says she did not find out until the Christmas concert. She says that this year her daughter has come home 3 times and said that the teacher has said inappropriate things to her. She says the teacher told her to get “that crap” off her desk and she says the teacher was talking about her daughter’s messy work she was turning in. She said her daughter never gets to go to Fun Friday and that she always has to flip her card. She says that her daughter was yawning and the teacher said she was sticking out her tongue and the teacher said she was “sick of” her behavior and “I’m not doing this all year.” She says when she told the teacher, “I
know you said I’m sick of it” and the teacher said, “Why don’t you try teaching 25 kids.” The parent said she didn’t train to be a teacher. The teacher said she was going out for surgery and maybe they would get a new teacher.

A parent of a student at a higher income elementary school explains that there is a special end of the year celebration at her daughter’s school. She says that children are being excluded from the celebration. She said she does not know what the requirements are to be able to attend the special celebration but that she complained about it two years ago, and it is still the same. She says that the celebration makes kids suffer. She says that she wants to know why some children have to sit in their classrooms while other children get to have a party.

A parent of a student at a higher income middle school says the band director did not let his daughter “play all of the songs at --------- because she ‘was not good enough’ so she took that as the last straw and quit band even though she enjoyed playing the flute.” This is another case of symbolic violence.

A parent of a student at a lower income middle school says “I did not feel welcomed at all. So when I was finally asked by a member of the front office staff how they could help me, of course I made it very clear why I was there.”

A parent of a student at a higher income high school asks her child’s teacher for a copy of her progress report, but she says the teacher wouldn’t give it to her. She says she feels he should have given her the progress report instead of giving her such a difficult time. She says that she “feels privacy laws were invaded because the teacher called her ex-husband to inquire with him about her wanting information for her child and asking if it’s okay to get the information. She says her ex-husband doesn’t need to know who she speaks to and the teacher also informed the child about the issues going on. She says that the teacher told her
that he gave a copy of the progress report to her daughter and that if she wants it, she should get it from her.

While symbolic violence takes many forms and it could be argued that what feels like or seems like violence to one, may not seem like violence to another, the parents who took the initiative to contact district offices often indicated a level of hurt themselves or conveyed a sense that hurt had been endured by their children, just as one might see after some sort of violence.

In general, the data support a positive response to the research question asking if calls provide evidence or examples aligned with Bourdieu’s concepts of interest, doxa, hysteresis, social class, cultural capital, misrecognition, and/or symbolic violence.

In summary response to Research Question R.4., data in the narrative documentation of calls do provide evidence of Bourdieu’s terms and theories. For example, illustrations of the concept interest are evident in the data because parents describe some school personnel appearing to consider the interests of the school or their own convenience over that of the parents or students. The parents, too, are shown to be in pursuit of benefits for their own children. Data show evidence of doxa, too, with values of being on time and in school touted as natural and necessary. Also, within the narrative documentation there are data providing evidence of parents questioning why their children receive punishment for what the parents describe as the children defending themselves; and there is also evidence of the value of not fighting, whether while defending oneself or not, being upheld as established and natural. These examples of doxa are illustrations of misrecognition, as well, because in these cases these values are treated as natural and established. The story of the parent upset because her child was called “sexy” and then told that “sexy” means beautiful, for the child to then find
herself in trouble because she calls another child “sexy” is an example of both doxa and misrecognition. The parent’s perspective and behavior is not aligned with that of school personnel, creating a hysteresis. Hysteresis is evident, also, in the case in which a parent complains about the dance routines at the chorus concert. The parent’s values are out of synch with those of the chorus director. Symbolic violence is evident when the school administrator dismisses the parent’s concerns. Parent call narrative data are fully illustrative of symbolic violence with, for example, parents perceiving dismissal of their concerns by school administrators, a parent expressing that she believes the principal made it clear that she did not want her children at her school and a parent saying that she was called a liar by a school administrator. Examples of social class divisions can be found in both what parents ask for and the manner in which they ask for it, as can examples of the use of cultural capital by parents of students in higher income schools and mid-range income schools and a lack of cultural capital on the part of parents of students in lower income schools. Examples of social class divisions and the use of cultural capital are shown in the data results presented in answer to Research Question R.3.1. Regarding Research Question R.4., evidence of the applicability of Bourdieu’s concepts to the situations described in the parent call data can be identified. Evident in the data are examples of interest, doxa, social class, cultural capital, hysteresis, misrecognition, and symbolic violence.

**Research Question R.4.1**

*R.4.1 Is there evidence of a tension between parental habitus and the practices of school personnel as communicated by callers from lower income schools?*

_Habitus_ is the presentation people make of themselves through philosophy, practices and particular actions based on their sense of who they are and their perceptions of the
behaviors that they feel comfortable with as the type of person they see themselves to be.

The search for evidence of a tension between parental habitus and the practices of school personnel in the narrative data is made through looking at the quotations coded in the process of qualitative analysis as attendance, discipline, fear, lack of communication, out of school suspension, rude school personnel, unfair, unprofessional conduct and uncaring school personnel.

Many of the situations appearing as results related to Research Question 4 are related to habitus because the way that people see themselves and present themselves affects their perceptions of situations that occur and of others around them; however, following are a few examples of situations in which a tension between parental habitus and the practices of school personnel are predominant.

A parent of a student at a lower income middle school calls and says she “disagreed to have a conference” with the teachers because she feels they “have it out” for her child. The notes from the call say, “She feels that they are adding stuff to the issue because they do not want her child to be in the school.” Refusing to have a conference is in conflict with the manner in which the school operates and might be related to the caller’s habitus or perception of herself and her child in contrast to her perception of the school and school staff. She believes, for example, that the teachers are against her child.

A parent of a lower income middle school says that her son told her that a boy was bothering him. She says that she told him to ignore it “unless the boy put his hands on him.” She says, “At the bus stop this morning the boy hit him and they fought.” In this case, the parent’s philosophy, which is arguably part of her habitus, is that her child should ignore another child’s aggressiveness until unless the other child “put his hands on him.” This
philosophy the behaviors supported by this perspective are not aligned with the policies of school personnel, and a tension develops which results in the caller’s child being suspended because school policy does not allow children to fight back, but only allows a child to do what he has to do to get away from the perpetrator.

In another case, the parent of a lower income elementary school student says that the school does not call her back and that they “ignored my notes and shit.” She says that the principal hung up on her. The notes for the call indicate that when asked about this incident the principal said she hung up because the parent was cursing. The parent then cursed when she called district office, indicating that cursing is part of her habitus, a habitus which is at odds with the practices of school personnel. Of course, this case could be argued to be an example of doxa and misrecognition, too, because the value system that discourages cursing appears to be assumed to be both natural and correct.

In summary, in response to Research Question R.4.1, in the narrative call data there is evidence of a tension between parental habitus or parents’ ways of being themselves and the practices of school personnel. There are examples of parents seeming to be at odds with school staff, such as a parent expressing that the staff is out to get her child and refusing to have a conference as a result and a parent cursing and then becoming angry because the principal hung up on her.

**Research Question R.4.2**

*R.4.2 Do middle class parent calls illustrate a sense of entitlement (Lareau, 2002)?*

For purposes of this study middle class parents are considered to be parents of students from higher income schools. Working class parents are the parents of students in lower income schools. Parents of students in mid-range income schools could be argued to
be more likely than those in higher or lower income schools to represent a wide range of socio-economic demographics.

Only one of the 362 cases in the qualitative facet of the study is identified in which a parent specifically states that he and the child’s mother are asking for an exception. A parent of a student at a mid-range high school asks for his child to be reassigned to a higher income high school. In an effort to secure a meeting with a district level official, he says,

We are again requesting consideration for a transfer to --- High School. We fully realize that it is a late request and that the Board does not meet for hearings after a certain date. We are truly hopeful that an exception can be made and that this can be considered as a special circumstance for ----’s future health and well-being. Either or both of us are willing to meet with anyone to discuss our request in more detail if that would be helpful.

This parent from a mid-range income school knows what he wants would be an exception and acknowledges that fact, but asks for what he wants anyway.

Other parents who call district offices know what they want to ask for, as well. A parent from a higher income elementary school calls to say he thinks the district should change the time school starts, explaining that his children struggle to get up in the morning. A parent from another higher income elementary school calls to say that she had problems with the previous principal so she wants an appointment with the new principal and the supervisor of the school before the school year starts. Another parent from a higher income school calls to say she wants another personal care assistant assigned to her child the next year. A parent from a higher income high school makes demands as he talks about a teacher:

I request the district investigate the matter to the fullest extend to prevent -----, who does not care for children, from doing harm to our children. I also request a clarification of the educational and legal basis on which he requires student musicians to take his class every year and uses form-signing to hold the children as pawns. Is it legal?

The parent’s words suggest that the parent is entitled to a report because he asks for it.
When looking at data to determine whether or not the complaints and concerns of middle class parents, or in the case of this study, the parents of students in public schools identified as higher income based on low free and reduced lunch program participation percentages, convey a sense of entitlement, the data from mid-range and lower income schools are a good measure of comparison to the requests of higher income school parents.

Parents from the mid-range schools in the study, ask for things they expect to receive also; but the nature of their requests are somewhat different. A parent from a mid-range income high school asks, for example, for her child to be moved into an honors class because she does not do well on standardized tests, but is capable of doing the work. The father of a child in a mid-range income middle school asks that the school staff follow the guidelines set out in the student handbook. He says,

We are asking that you please follow the student handbook policy and either allow ------ to complete his missed work from November 5 or mark the assignment as exempt (and send us a modified progress report). From this point forward, we will ensure that ---- asks for missed work even though we believe a process should be put in place for him and every student to receive missing work automatically when returning from an excused absence….

One parent of a student in a mid-range income middle school calls because when his son was suspended and was not allowed to go on a field trip, the school did not return the four hundred dollars he had paid. His son’s suspension was for pulling another boy’s pants down as a prank. The parent asks for what he wants in the manner of a request, rather than a demand. He is asking for a refund for something, a field trip in this case, not something out of the ordinary. His request, like the one before it in which the parent simply asks for a system for children to get make-up work after excused absences could be argued to be unlike some of the requests of higher income parents that do have a sense of entitlement about them.
Another mid-range income school parent, in what might or might not be called a request with a sense of entitlement, wants a class assignment change for his son because his brother had a teacher with “high standards” at the school and he wants his younger son to have that teacher, as well. Another mid-range income school parent called about something much more dramatic. Her son had been Tazered by the School Resource Officer at the school, and she wants very specific things:

The assault on a government official dropped. An apology to her son from the officer. Maybe an opportunity to address the officer. She thinks maybe the ten day suspension is excessive. She would like her son’s work sent home with her nephew.

Both the language used to ask for things and the things asked for by higher income parents and mid-range income parents share similarities, although not completely alike. Parents of students in lower income schools both ask for different things and ask for them differently. A parent from one lower income middle school asks for her children to be “reassigned to a school not highly impacted by poverty,” and a parent from another lower income middle school calls to say that the school bus stop needs to be nearer where the children in her neighborhood live because the stop is too far from their homes. She says the parents can’t watch their children with the stop so far way and that her son got in a fight at the bus stop and was suspended. Another lower income middle school parent asks that the forfeiting of the football team’s first four games of the season be “reconsidered” because the coaches did not know the player who ineligible did not qualify to play and “the boys were understandably disappointed, some were even crying.”

The parent of a child in a lower income elementary school called to say that the lateness of the school bus in the mornings is causing two problems for his family. He says the bus does not always arrive at school in time for his child to eat breakfast and that there
are days when he has to be “at work prior to 7:30 a.m. and these delays make this impossible.” He says, “I don’t want to lose my job because a school bus is continuously late.”

Higher income school parents’ requests for an exception in school assignment outside of Board of Education policy, a change in school start time, a report regarding a teacher’s behavior and a meeting with a district level administrator and the new school principal before the principal is named, for example, could be argued to come from more of a sense of entitlement than the requests from parents of students in a mid-range income schools for placement in an honors class for a child who does not test well on standardized tests, easy access to make-up work for a student after an absence, a refund of field trip fees or an apology from a School Resource Officer along with a reduction in suspension or the requests by low income school parents for a school bus to come on time so that a child can eat breakfast at school and the parent will not be at risk for losing his job due to waiting for a late bus, for a bus stop nearer home so that the children don’t fight out of sight of their parents, or even for the forfeiting of football team wins to be reconsidered because children are disappointed and crying.

In response to Research Question R.4.2, the data show that calls to school district offices by middle class parents, or for purposes of this study, parents of students from higher income schools, illustrate a sense of entitlement. In addition, the data show that some parents of students in mid-range income schools appear to have a sense of entitlement. Both the requests some of these parents make and the manner in which they make them often convey a sense of privilege. In contrast, requests of some parents of students in mid-range income schools and parents of students in lower income schools are often of a different nature and
are asked in a more solicitous manner. The example of the higher income parent asking for school to begin later in contrast to the parent of a student in a lower income school asking that the school bus come on time is evidence of a dramatic difference in requests.

**Research Question 4.3**

*R.4.3 Do working class parent calls show a resistance to authority and/or a sense of powerlessness or fear (Lareau, 2002)?*

Results in the qualitative data analysis indicate that working class parent calls, or in the case of this study, calls from parents of students in lower income schools as indicated by high free and reduced lunch program participation percentages, do show a resistance to authority. In one case, a parent from a lower income middle school calls about her son’s teacher and said,

> The teacher has taken his money ($1) and is bribing her child (i.e. “I want you to do well in class but if you don’t behave in class you will not be able to get it back”). He has been suspended for 3 days because he was out of class, walking the halls and being disruptive. She doesn’t believe the teacher should be bribing and giving her child a contract to behave.

Another parent from the same school calls to say that he believes a teacher “is picking on” his son “and constantly goes out of her way to bother him. Another parent from the same school says that her child’s teacher is ignoring him. She says,

> he raised his hand to ask a question, she ignored him—she was walking around the classroom—he just sat down in a random seat and kept asking his question; she kept ignoring him.

A parent from a lower income elementary school calls the district office to say that she is upset because her child is always on “red” (a color indicting misbehavior on the part of students in some classrooms). The parent states that the teacher “is always sending notes home to her about what her child is doing.” A parent from another lower income elementary
school says that her child’s teacher is not very good but that the principal thinks the teacher is great “because she is Nationally Board Certified.” The mother of a student in a lower income middle school calls about a disciplinary situation. In the passage, ISS indicates in-school-suspension. The parent says,

Child was given ISS for non-compliance and having a phone. The teacher approached her in ISS when she was supposed to be just giving her the work and told her that the issue was not over and that they needed to discuss it. The student refused to talk about the issue and said that she needed to discuss it in front of her mother; yet the teacher approached her daughter in ISS and told her that she should have made better decisions.

The parent says she feels “they are antagonizing” her daughter. Another parent from the same school calls because her child was not allowed to wear pink socks to school for breast cancer awareness because pink socks are not in the dress code, and a parent from another lower income middle school calls to say that when a student says that her child said, “I didn’t do anything wrong” or “What did I do wrong” and that his statements should not be considered “noncompliance.” The parent of a child in a lower income elementary school calls to say she is “appalled at benchmark practice tests,” and she expresses that they “create anxiety” for her children. She says that “practice does not make perfect” and that the testing at schools “is a little appalling.”

A parent from another lower income elementary school calls with concern when the schools announce to parents that they may elect for their children not to watch the speech about education by President Obama. The parent argues that the school did not have the authority to allow parents to choose for their child not to watch a speech by the president and that it amounts to “ideological segregation.”
Another parent from the same lower income elementary school argues that the school did not have the authority to decide that children would not have recess on days when they have PE (physical education class) so that students will have more instructional time. She says that children need a period of “monitored free play” every day and that the school should not be allowed to take free play away to increase instructional time on any day, even when students have physical exercise in PE.

In addition to a resistance to authority, calls from the parents of students in lower income schools as indicated by high free and reduced lunch program participation percentages also indicate a sense of powerlessness and fear. For example, the parent of a child in a lower income middle school calls about her son who has been in trouble both at school and at home. The notes from her call follow:

Son has been in ISS (7 times) and OSS (4 times). Son is constantly in trouble, stealing, and very disrespectful to administration. She wants help with getting her child in order. He was kicked out of a program for teenagers. He likes to play with lighters, lights his fingers on fire and urinated on a boy’s bed at the program and hates it. When he shoots me or others, everyone will be involved. Now no one is implementing any consequences that matter.

A need for assistance and a sense of fear are both clear in the statements of the parent.

Another parent from the same lower income middle school expresses his sense of powerlessness. His children are absent from school, and he is actually asking the school system for assistance in assuring his children are in school,

Daughter has missed 61 days this school year. She lives with her mother and the parents are divorced. He has been working with the social worker on this attendance issue and feels it is not being aggressively addressed. This parent has another daughter and has been working with the social worker at her school, as well. The social worker at --------School has been more aggressive and as a result his other child has only missed approximately 33 days.
Another parent of a student from a different lower income elementary school calls because she feels like the school is not working with her to obtain the assistance her child needs:

Parent has spoken with teacher and principal trying to work with them to get help for her student. Family doctor requested ADD testing to be done by school system...still has not been scheduled. Parent feels her student is not learning under the current teacher. She has requested a classroom change. This is not happening and it’s now close to year end and students’ grades have plummeted. Parent is now contacting the district office for assistance.

The parent expresses that she has been trying all year to obtain assistance for her child, and her sense of powerlessness is coupled with frustration in not being able to have her child moved from one classroom to another. According to the notes for the case, on a follow-up call, the parent says that she is having a very hard time getting what she needs from the school, that her child has always made the A/B honor roll, but got a C in math. She says that she has gone for conferences and has gone to the pediatrician, but is not getting the help she needs from the school. She also says, “The classroom environment is chaotic.”

In another case, the parent says she wants her child assigned to another school, saying the problem is that school staff didn’t really listen to her and that they told her not to bother going to the district office because they couldn’t do anything. The parent says there are gang-related activities and children beaten up at the school and that “the principal is on a throne.” She says she wants her children “transferred to a school that is not highly impacted by poverty.” Her description of the principal as being on a throne and her sense that school staff did not listen to her suggest a resistance to authority and a sense of powerlessness.

In answer to Research Question R.4.3, calls to district offices by working class parents, or for purposes of this study parents of students in lower income schools sometimes show a resistance to authority and a sense of powerlessness or fear. For example, parents of students in lower income schools often express resistance to discipline, for example, a parent
saying her elementary school child’s teacher always sends home notes about her child’s behavior; others call about suspensions, testing or even to say they do not know what to do next, expressing both powerlessness and fear.

**Research Question 5**

R.5. *Do parent calls have the patterns associated with a middle class practice of “concerted cultivation” or working class/poor parents’ view of children’s development as an “accomplishment of natural growth” within them (Lareau, 2003, p. 3)?*

Concerted cultivation, discussed by Annette Lareau, is the middle class phenomenon of an emphasis on structured activities and a focus on the promotion of and participation in opportunities for children. Concerted cultivation often includes organizing family life around these activities as both philosophy and practice in the development of children. Lareau describes the child development philosophy and practices she identifies among parents with less economic means as the “accomplishment of natural growth” (Lareau, 2003, p. 3).

The parent call data do provide evidence related to these concepts. The code “opportunity loss” was applied to segments of text in which parents spoke about either currently lost opportunity or what they perceived as potential lost opportunity. These lost or potentially lost opportunities range from participation in athletic activities to the potential loss of acceptance to a particular college due to low grades in a class. The opportunity loss could be the privilege of wearing a particular cord at graduation or having homecoming dance in a manner that the parent expresses is appropriate. More than half of the quotations coded as opportunity loss were from parents of students in higher income schools.

Parents of students in higher income schools call in pursuit of special school assignments for their children, express concern about college applications and ask about
summer enrichment. A parent of a child at a higher income elementary school says her child was given the wrong words to study for the regional level competition for the National Spelling Bee. A parent from a higher income high school complains that having the homecoming dance at a baseball park means that the girls will miss out on their homecoming experience and will have to wear “clumsy overcoats” after spending “hundreds of dollars on dresses.” Another parent from the same high school expresses his concern that a teacher at the school is keeping his son from being able to participate in the city’s orchestra by withholding a recommendation letter.

Parents from a higher income high school call about grades, about a child needing to retain her EC (exceptional children’s) services for assistance in an AP (Advanced Placement) course and to complain about a teacher who told a student he needs to put twice as much time into class and needs to make a decision between his class and golf.

One higher income parent is concerned about athletic scholarship activities and how grades in his son’s senior year might affect those; another wants her child to have the opportunity to enroll in an online course because he is not doing well in the class taught by the instructor at the school. One parent calls because she wants her son to be allowed to wear a special cord on his graduation gown indicating his community service, and another calls because she wants her son to be allowed to participate in the school play even though he cursed over the loudspeakers at open mike night and disrupted the play by wearing an inappropriate and out-of-character shirt on stage the previous year.

A higher income middle school parent calls because he wants his child enrolled in the program for academically gifted students. The parent says that the district is too focused on standardized test scores and that his child should not be excluded from the program due to
several percentage points on a test. One parent calls after withdrawing her child from a higher income middle school and deciding to teach her at home because she wants her child to participate in the band program at the school she no longer attends. Cheerleading leads to calls with one parent expressing that her daughter was excluded from the team unfairly and another saying that her daughter’s inadvertent tardiness to class lead to in-school-suspension on game day and then to being suspended from the cheerleading team.

A higher income elementary school parent calls because his first grade daughter is excluded from the school’s fundraising activity because she did not bring in money. He says,

In these hard economic times, we had to make a choice whether or not we could give more money in addition to what we already do with the book fair, box tops, canned food drives, teacher appreciation days, etc. Ultimately, we decided not to give any more money that we do not have for this fundraiser which has had very bad ramifications on our daughter’s life. For the first time she was excluded from something which is completely contrary to how we have raised her. We have raised her and will continue to raise her to be inclusive of all, regardless of money, race, religion, sex; but we feel the education system today taught her that without money, you can’t do things.

A parent of a student in a mid-range income high school has many complaints about cheerleading, but ultimately complains because the team did not have the opportunity to go to cheerleading camp; and another parent from the same school calls to say that cheerleading tryouts have been held up because two girls were injured. Another parent from a mid-range income high school calls about volleyball, another about football. One parent calls from the mid-range income high school to complain that her daughter was not able to take all the courses necessary for qualifying for a scholarship at the technical community college, and the parent of a mid-range elementary school calls because her child missed school pictures.

A parent of a child in a lower-income middle school says that her child enrolled in the school and that chorus and band tryouts took place already. A parent of a student at a lower
income middle school calls because her child was not allowed to participate in cheerleading because of dress code infractions, and another parent from the same school says the data manager said her daughter could not try out for cheerleading because of attendance. Another parent from the same lower income middle school calls to say that her child was not allowed to participate in the end of the year celebration because she had an overdue library book. The “parent states that the book was in the child’s locker but returned” three weeks previously. The parent said that the money for the end of the year celebration her daughter is not allowed to attend was not refundable. The parent says she signed a form that said her daughter could not attend if she got into trouble but that it did not say anything about overdue books.

A parent of a student at a lower income elementary school says her child won the science fair at the school and that there was a form she needed to turn in for her child to participate in the district level science fair. She says that when she tried to turn the form in, she was told that it was too late. The parent says that there was not deadline on the form so she did not know when it was due and asks if anything can be done about the situation. A parent of a student at another lower income elementary school calls because her daughter always gets in trouble and does not get to participate in “Fun Friday.” A parent from that same elementary school complains because on days when the students have PE (physical education class), the students do not have recess; and she believes that students need free play.

While the opportunities that parents from higher income schools seek are greater in number and more often academic in nature and could be argued to be a part of concerted cultivation, parents in higher, mid-range and lower income schools seek sports activities and organized activities at school for their children.
In response to Research Question R.5., the data show some evidence of middle class parents, or for purposes of this study, parents of students in higher income schools, make quite a few calls about opportunities they want their children to have. These opportunities vary from asking for special school assignments and class changes to requests for a change in venue for the school’s homecoming dance or the inclusion of all children in the fundraising celebration and discussion of potential athletic scholarships. There is very little evidence, however, that parents of students in lower income schools seek for their children to develop without cultivation and opportunities. In fact, parents of students in mid-range and lower income schools call about opportunities for their students, as well.

**Research Question 5.1**

*R.5.1 Do working class parents ask for students to be able to do less and middle class parents ask for children to be able to do more (Lareau, 2002)*?

Quotations from narrative documentation of parent calls coded as “opportunity loss” is related to the question of whether working class parents ask for students to be able to do less and middle class parents ask for children to be able to do more; however, excerpts from documents coded “work load” specifically address the question. The parent of a child in a lower income elementary school complains about the number of tests that students take at school and a parent from another lower income elementary school calls about the amount of homework. A parent of a student in a mid-range income high school calls because his son becomes “virtually immobilized” once he has fallen behind in his completion of this assignments. Three parents of students in a higher income high school call because they do not believe their children should be required to complete a senior project for graduation, arguing, in part, that no other high schools require it.
Overall, data do not provide evidence that parents from lower income schools call and ask that their children be allowed to do less and parents from higher income schools call and ask that their children be allowed to do more; although, data do indicate that parents from higher income schools call more about opportunity loss or potential opportunity loss, as indicated in results provided for Question R.5. The fact that parents of students in higher income schools call over twice as often about opportunity loss than the parents of students in lower income or mid-range income schools do and a close look at the concerns the parents call about indicate that higher income parents seek for their children to participate in organized activities; however, the only data yet identified in the narrative documentation that lower income school parents seek for their children’s development to be through an uncultivated growth process is the caller who asks for children to have recess with free play every day.

The data do not provide clear evidence that parents of students in higher income schools ask for their students to do more while the parents of students in lower income schools ask for their students to do less. The calls from parents of students in higher income schools often involve requests related to the potential loss of opportunity such as sports, band or orchestra or regarding grades and courses needed for scholarships, but there is little to no evidence that parents of students in lower income schools ask for their children to do less. In fact, while parents of students in higher income schools make calls about lost opportunities or potentially lost opportunities a bit more often than parents of students in lower income schools, calls in which parents talk about activities and opportunities for their children do come from every type of school in the study.
Research Question 5.2

R.5.2 Do children’s wishes propel middle class parent calls (Lareau, 2002)?

Data indicate that parents call for a variety of reasons. Some of these calls do seem to be based on the wishes of children. The parent of a student in a higher income high school calls to ask for his child to be allowed to skip art class to take math and a parent from a higher income middle school calls because his daughter wants to make and sell team spirit shirts and his daughter was told that no one can wear the shirts because they were not purchased from the school. Another parent of a student from a higher income high school calls because her son wants to participate in the school play and he was excluded due to cursing in the microphone previously. Many parents call about their children’s discipline, but whether they call because they want the suspension time shortened or removed or call because their child wants changes in the suspension is unclear. Do the parents of higher income high school students ask for the senior project to be eliminated because their children do not want to do it or because their parents do not want them to have to do it? Does the lower income middle school student’s parent call about the forfeiting of the team’s first four football games because he is concerned and disappointed, because he wants to fulfill his child’s wishes, or because he is saddened when seeing the football players cry? Does the higher income student’s parent call to ask for the homecoming dance to be moved inside because he wants his daughter’s dance to be like his? He says, “It has been some time since I was a teenager, but we always had our dances inside.”

Parents from all types of schools call about their children’s participation in student activities, but whether their own desires or the wishes of their children propel their requests is
impossible to determine from the narrative data. If the children have asked their parents to
call, their parents do not say so.

Emerging Themes

Several emerging themes presented themselves in the qualitative analysis of the
narrative data for the parent calls. The results related to some of these themes have been
presented in response to the questions this study sought to answer. The data presented in this
chapter involve parent requests, complaints, accusations, and concerns regarding opportunity
loss, lack of communication, discipline, grades, conflicts with school personnel and concerns
about the actions of school staff. Also shown in the qualitative analysis results are requests
for class assignment changes and school assignment changes. There is evidence of
differences in the concerns and requests and in the methods and abilities of parents to
advocate for their students between the parents of students in higher, lower or mid-range
income schools. In addition to data related to these topics, are data regarding calls about
bullying and arguments for policy changes. In addition, there is one emerging theme that is
not directly related to the questions of this study for which the data have not been shown, and
this emerging theme is too prevalent in the data to be ignored. The topic of health came up
with about the same level of frequency as did discussion of discipline, complaints of lack of
communication, and complaints about teachers, the other most common topics present in the
calls. Health issues and concerns are more prevalent in the qualitative call data than
discussion of grades. Since there was not category for calls about health in the electronic
database dropdown menu selections, the fact that many parents discuss either their children’s
health, their own health or that of family members did not present itself in the quantitative
data.
Health.

Many parents talk about health concerns, those of their children, themselves and their parents.

A parent of a student at a mid-range income school shares that she has a benign brain tumor and has to have chemotherapy once a week. She says that her son has Long QT syndrome. Numerous parents talk about their children’s Attention Deficit Disorder, sometimes when discussing discipline issues or academic concerns. Parents also talk about psychologists, the difficulty in arranging homebound education for an undiagnosed illness, drug addictions, eating disorders, stress and anxiety, medical conditions that necessitate numerous trips to the bathroom, attempted suicide, fears about potential suicides, bi-polar symptoms and diagnoses, missed medicine, autism, seizures, diabetes, high blood sugar, low blood sugar, insulin, psychiatric evaluations, weight loss, schedules for medications, cerebral palsy, headaches, stuttering, absences due to sickness, kidney disease, Asperger’s, lice, psychological therapy, diarrhea, medical fragility, pediatricians, injuries, mental health assessments, hospitalizations, urgent care, emergency room visits, deaths of relatives, cancer, anxiety, Autism and the flu.

Conversations about health by parents of students in higher, mid-range and lower income schools.

The schools in the qualitative aspect of the study were divided into higher income schools, lower income schools and mid-range income schools based on the percentage of student free and reduced lunch program participation. The higher and lower income groups have an equal number of schools and the mid-range income group only has only one high school, one middle school and one elementary school. Even though the higher and lower
income groups have an equal number of schools, a little less than half of the primary documents in the qualitative aspect of the study were from parents of students in lower income schools, a little less than a third of the documents were notes from calls by parents of students in higher income schools and a little less than a fourth of the documents were from parents of students in mid-range income schools. This distribution is aligned with the fact that the total number of calls in the quantitative aspect of the study increases in correlation with increases in free and reduced lunch program percentages. Health appeared about one and a half times more often in the calls from parents of students in lower income schools than mid-range or higher income schools and in a smaller percentage of the calls from parents of students in higher income schools than in either lower or mid-range schools. Parents of students in higher income school mention health less often in their calls than other parents.

The conversations of higher income parents when health was mentioned were most often also about grades. Higher income parents also talked about health in conjunction with exceptional children’s services more often than other topics. There were higher income parents who talked about health in the context of discussing complaints about teachers, discipline and school reassignment. The concept of health also appeared in higher income parent calls in conjunction with some calls coded as expressing anger.

Mid-range income parents also mentioned health along with the topic of grades. They also talked about health along with discussion of bullying more often than other topics. Mid-income parents also talked about health along with discussion of discipline and fear, when arguing for policy change, when saying that something was unfair and when making accusations of unprofessional conduct on the part of school personnel; however, they
mentioned health in conjunction with these topics less often than they mentioned it with the topics of grades or bullying.

The parents of students in lower income schools also talked about issues related to health more often in conjunction with discussion of grades than when talking about other topics. Parents of students in lower income schools also talked about health when talking about exceptional children’s services, discipline and unprofessional conduct by school personnel more often than when talking about other topics. They also discussed health issues when describing lack of communication on the part of school personnel, making complaints about teachers, saying that school personnel was rude and asking for school reassignment more often than when discussing other topics.

An example of a call about both grades and health is the call from the grandmother of a student in a mid-range income school. She says her grandson is deaf in his right ear and that the doctor wants him to sit in the front of the class. She says he has always has had trouble in school, that he stutters, has a speech problem, that he does terrible on state tests and that she wants him moved to a slower class.

A parent of a student in a higher income school shard her concern about her child’s grades, saying that until he became sick he had been a “straight A” student. She then expressed what she perceived as a lack of understanding on the part of a teacher. She says that the teacher said in a meeting, “Why don’t you quit school and come back another year? There are children here who are very sick who are working their butts off.”

Summary of Qualitative Results

There is evidence in the data that parents vary in their ability to use cultural capital. In requests for their children, criticism of school personnel and arguments about policy,
parents associated with higher socioeconomic status utilize cultural capital, listing attributes, awards and connections as they ask for what they want. Sharing details about their children’s grade point averages and courses they have taken, parents of students in higher income schools describe their involvement in schools and their positions in the community. Parents of students in lower income schools are more likely to use their own stories to ask for what they want than they are to name connections. Parents of students in higher income schools utilize external documentation, knowledge and legal language while parents of students in lower income schools often argue from their own perspectives and make direct requests for what they want without use of many of the persuasive tools of argument used by parents of students in higher income schools.

Evidence of interest can be found in the notes regarding interactions between parents and school personnel present in the call data. Parents pursue benefits for their children while some school personnel appear to consider the interests of the school over those of the parents or students. Examples of the concept of doxa are also in the parent call data with school rules and values treated as if they are natural. Parents question the punishment their children receive for defending themselves, but not fighting, even fighting back, is a value treated as both natural and established within the schools. Misrecognition, as well, is evident in these cases in that the values upheld by the school are misrecognized or mistakenly seen as standard or normal. Evidence of the phenomenon of hysteresis is present in the call data, as well. For example, an example of hysteresis is the case of the child who was called “sexy,” told by the principal that it meant beautiful, to find herself in trouble later for calling another child sexy. In this case, the parent’s perspective and behavior is not aligned with that of school personnel. Symbolic violence is evident when school administrators dismiss parents’
concerns. Symbolic violence, also, is illustrated in the call data when, for example, a parent says she was called a liar by an assistant principal and with parents calling because their children are suspended from school. Social class divisions are evident in these examples and in both what parents ask for and the manner in which they ask for it. In addition, in the narrative call data the tension between parental habitus or behaviors and practices and the behaviors and expectations of school personnel are evident. For example, a parent says the staff is out to get her child and refuses to have a conference with the teachers because of it.

Parents of students from higher income schools, illustrate a sense of entitlement. Both the requests some of these parents make and the manner in which they make them often carry a sense of privilege. In contrast, the requests of some parents of students in mid-range income schools and the parents of students in lower income schools are often of a different nature and are asked in a more solicitous manner. Calls by parents of students in lower income schools sometimes show a resistance to authority and a sense of powerlessness or fear. For example, parents of students in lower income schools often express resistance to discipline, one parent, for example, saying that her elementary school child’s teacher is always sending home notes about her child’s behavior, others call about suspensions, another about testing, and some parents from these schools call and communicate that they do not know what to do next for their children.

Concerns about health were an emerging theme in the qualitative data. Many parents mention health in their calls to district offices. Parents of students in lower income schools mention health more often in their calls than parents of students in higher income and mid-range income schools do; however, parents of each of the types of schools who do talk about health talk about it most often in conjunction with discussion of grades. Parents also often
talk about health when they talk about exceptional children’s services or make complaints about school personnel.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

This study was an examination and analysis of parent calls to district offices completed through the lens of an educator and cast in the perspective of social science. Findings and conclusions from the study will help educators mitigate potential misunderstandings about schools by parents. This chapter begins with a statement of the problem and is followed by a review of the methodology, a summary of the results and a discussion of the findings. The discussion includes an interpretation of the findings, discussion of the relationship of the current study to previous research, recommendations for educators and suggestions for additional research and a summary and conclusion.

Overview of the Study

Discoveries regarding parent calls to district offices are available to both inform school communication with parents and benefit educators in their work with students and families. Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of cultural reproduction was the conceptual framework for the study. The study was guided by Bourdieu’s argument that “the educational system, which appears to be meritocratic on the surface, actually perpetuates and exacerbates existing inequalities because it has a hidden value system” (Dumais, 2006, p. 86). Parent calls in this study were looked at as possible resistance to the notion that schools are culturally neutral.
An examination of the concerns expressed by parents to staff in school district offices of a large urban school system produced accurate, empirical evidence regarding the timing and content of calls parents made. The analysis of these calls in relation to characteristics of the schools the calls were about offers insight into how the socio-economic make-up of schools’ student bodies and the achievement levels of the schools correlate with the frequency and nature of the calls.

The Problem Statement

There are many studies and discussions regarding schools; however, an analysis of parent calls to district offices of school systems has been absent from the dialogue; and discussion of parent calls to district offices within the literature has been anecdotal, if present at all. This study addressed the problem of determining the nature and frequency of calls to district office staff by parents and guardians of students. The calls examined in the study were calls in which the parent expressed a concern rather than simply asking a question about schedules, calendars or other details.

The Methodology

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of parent calls to district office staff in an urban school district in the Southeastern region of the United States by identifying relationships between the frequency and nature of parent calls to district offices and the time in the school year and various characteristics of schools. Calls and patterns in calls were examined in relation to times in the school year and to characteristics of the schools about which the calls were made.

The study of parent calls to district offices was a mixed methods study. Quantitative data were analyzed in order to compare characteristics of schools based on
student data with the number of parent calls regarding particular topics made to district office staff throughout the course of a five year period. Over the past ten and a half years in an urban school district in the Southeastern United States, parent calls to district offices were recorded in a database. In addition, narrative documentation of these calls was kept in notebooks, organized by school. The five year period analyzed was chosen because the narrative data for approximately a fourth of the schools in the district is secure for this period and because there were 5,369 calls to district offices during this period, a manageable number of calls. The quantitative analysis was linked to a qualitative content analysis of parental complaints of a selected sample of the calls made to the district.

The urban school district in the Southeastern United States in the study is only an example of the many school districts which serve students; however, due to a scarcity of research on this topic, analysis of one district becomes an informative case (Van Maanen, 1988), one that reveals aspects of the kinds of calls parents make and what they discuss when they want to talk to someone in the school system outside their child’s school about concerns they choose to talk about rather than what someone asks them.

The study began with a quantitative approach as the primary method followed by evaluation and interpretation of the quantitative results. The quantitative data analysis of the narrative documentation of selected calls was followed by qualitative analysis.

**Quantitative Data Analysis**

The quantitative aspect of the study was a correlation study. The researcher looked for relationships between variables through the use of correlation coefficients. Basic information about all calls that came into district offices was entered into an electronic database. Correlation research offers understanding regarding patterns of relationships among
variables to show, in the case of this study, illuminated any relationships between characteristics of schools and the socioeconomic make-up of schools as reflected by free and reduced lunch percentages and the topics and the frequency of parent calls and between the number and nature of parent calls and the calendar year,

School free and reduced lunch program participation, student achievement levels, school size, other similar data about schools, the time in the calendar year calls were made and topics parents called about were chosen as variables based on the assumptions that parental concerns emanate from a particular social class perspective, that parental concerns mirror such class distinctions, that schools are not culturally neutral places, that there is a parallelism between parent calls and the concepts of Bourdieu and that there is parallelism between parent calls and the school calendar.

The quantitative data were analyzed by identifying variables and looking for relationships between them through the use of correlation coefficients. In addition, the Pearson method of computing correlation was used to determine the extent of any relationships between variables.

**Qualitative Data Analysis**

In addition to an electronic database containing basic information about calls, narrative documentation of the calls was kept in notebooks organized by school. The quantitative data for parent calls for a period of five years were studied, and documents regarding the calls were analyzed through a qualitative approach. The documents analyzed were narrative accounts of the same calls in the database. The qualitative follow-up to the quantitative study allowed for exploration into the complex aspects of the calls as
expressed by the callers themselves. The qualitative approach to the study was a narrative analysis examining the stories that some callers chose to share with district office staff.

Narrative documentation was selected through maximum variation sampling, focusing on cases that offered calls regarding a variety of concerns stemming from situations in different schools. Meaningful passages of narrative text were identified within the documentation for selected calls from the five year period in the study. These sections of narrative data were labeled with inductive codes in order to note and organize the information. Bourdieu’s theoretical framework was a lens for looking at the emerging categories of data in the documentation. Sorting and categorizing of the data in a process of qualitative methodology with identification labels assigned to similar phrases and topics made possible the organization of the data. Emerging themes were reflected on in relation to the research questions and the schools the parents called about and were analyzed and discussed through a theoretical lens based on the concepts of Bourdieu. The researcher identified distinguishing characteristics of the concerns expressed by parents of children in schools and identified how the nature of the calls varied based on characteristics of schools and the socioeconomic make-up of schools’ populations as indicated by the free and reduced lunch program participation in the schools the children of callers attended.

Summary of the Results

Quantitative Results

Timing of calls.

5,369 parent calls came into the school district during the period of the study throughout the months of August through June each year over a period of five school years
beginning on August 1, 2008, and ending on June 30, 2013. 5,321 of these calls had data for month and call type; however, data regarding the school year associated with the calls were present for all 5,369 calls. The number of calls recorded in the electronic database decreased over the five year period from 1,317 in the 2008-2009 school year to 877 in the 2012-2013 school year.

In looking at the nature, time of year and frequency of the calls, it should be noted that since the call data analyzed is for 11 months of each year, 9.09% of total calls or each call type per month would indicate an even distribution of the calls across the months. In quantitative analysis it was determined that the largest number of calls for the five year period studied were about personnel. Of the 1,425 calls, 186 calls or 13.1% of the 1,425 calls about personnel came in during May over the five year period of the study. The second highest number of calls were calls about discipline with 1,025 calls. 135 or 13.2% of the 1,025 calls about discipline came in during March over the five years. The category with the third highest number of calls were calls identified as other, with 931 calls over the five year period. 120 or 12.9% of these calls coming in during September over the years. The fourth highest category of calls were those categorized as instructional with 525 calls. 79 or 15% of these calls came in during August during the period of the study. There were 346 call noted as being about student assignment, the category with the fifth highest number of calls with 97 or 28% of these calls coming in during August throughout the years of the study. The sixth highest number of calls were calls about safety with 301 calls. 27 or 12.3% of these calls coming in during February over the five year period.

The timing of calls was found to be correlated with months of the year with more calls coming in during September toward the beginning of the school year (with schools
following the traditional calendar beginning school in August). Patterns of calls according to
the months of the school year were indicated in the data for particular types of calls, as well,
with more calls about personnel during May, more discipline calls during March, more calls
identified as other during September, more calls about instruction and student assignment in
August, more calls about safety in February and 44.9% of calls about transportation coming
in during the months of August and September each year.

**Characteristics of schools.**

**Features of teachers.**

Characteristics of schools related to teachers were analyzed in relation to types of
calls and no statistically significant correlation was found between the percentage of teachers
with advanced degrees in schools and the number of calls to district offices about those
schools. A statistically significant positive correlation was identified between the percentage
of teacher turnover and calls to district offices identified as other and about safety,
instruction, student assignment, calls identified as non-complaints and total calls. As teacher
turnover increased in schools, calls about these topics increased; however, there was a
statistically significant negative correlation between increases in teacher turnover in schools
and calls about attendance. As teacher turnover increased in schools, the number of calls
about attendance decreased. Calls about SMOD (Standard Mode of Dress/student uniforms),
about discipline and calls identified as other were found to have a statistically significant
negative correlation with the percentage of teachers with National Board Certification. As
the percentage of teachers with National Board Certification increased in schools, the number
of calls about SMOD and discipline and the number of calls identified as other decreased.
There were fewer calls identified as other in schools when the percentage of teachers with
less than four years of experience increased due to a statistically significant negative correlation between teachers with less than four years of experience in schools and the number of calls to district offices identified as other; however, a statistically significant positive correlation was found between teachers with less than four years of experience and calls identified as non-complaints and about SMOD. As the number of teachers with less than four years of experience increased in schools, the number of calls identified as non-complaints and about SMOD increased, as well. In schools as the percentage of teachers with more than 10 years of experience increased, the number of total calls and the numbers of calls identified as other, calls identified as non-complaints and calls about SMOD decreased. There was a statistically significant negative correlation identified between teachers with more than ten years of experience and total calls and these types of calls.

**Proficiency levels when all schools were considered together.**

Regarding academic proficiency of students as measured by standardized tests and its relationship to types and frequencies of parent calls to district offices, it was found that there was no statistically significant correlation between overall proficiency of students in schools and any type of calls or total calls when all schools were considered together without controlling for size.

**Crime rate when all schools were considered together.**

In considering the crime rate of schools as an independent variable, the results of the analysis indicated that as crime rates increased in schools as indicated by increasing numbers of crimes per 100 students, there were more total calls and more of every type of call except calls about guardianship, transportation, EC and maintenance because the crime rate in
schools and the total number of calls and these call types were found to have a statistically significant positive correlation. Suspension rates were also utilized in analyzing the call data in the study; and it was discovered that as suspension rates increased in schools as indicated by an increase in the number of incidents of out-of-school suspension per 100 students, there were increases in the total number of calls and in calls of every type except guardianship and maintenance due to a statistically significant positive correlation between the suspension rate in schools and total calls and all call types except calls about guardianship and maintenance.

School size.

Size was considered as a factor, the number of parent calls the district received from parents of schools and the size of schools was found to have a significant positive correlation. Larger schools received more total calls and more of every type of call except guardianship and maintenance than smaller schools.

Crime rate while controlling for school size.

Upon looking at the crime rate in schools while controlling for size, it was found that in small schools as the crime rate increased, the number of calls identified as other or non-complaints, the total number of calls and calls about discipline and SMOD (Standard Mode of Dress/student uniforms) increased, as well. A statistically significant positive correlation between the crime rate and these types of calls in small schools was identified. In large schools as the crime rate increased as indicated by increases in the number of crimes per 100 students, the total number of calls and the number of all types of calls except calls about guardianship, maintenance or EC (exceptional children’s services) increased. A statistically
significant positive correlation between total calls and most types of calls and the crime rate in large schools was identified.

*Out of school suspension while controlling for school size.*

In analysis while controlling for size and considering OSS (out of school suspension) as the independent variable, the results indicated that for small schools, as OSS increased, the total number of calls, the number of calls about safety, personnel, discipline and SMOD (Standard Mode of Dress/student uniforms), calls identified as other and calls identified as non-complaints increased. A statistically significant positive correlation between the suspension rate and these types of calls by parents of students in small schools was identified. In large schools as the suspension rate increased as indicated by increases in the number of incidents of suspension per 100 students, the total number of calls and the numbers of every type of call except calls about legal issues, guardianship, maintenance or EC (exceptional children’s services) increased, as well, due to a statistically significant correlation between these call types and the suspension rate in large schools.

*Proficiency levels while controlling for school size.*

Considering proficiency while controlling for size showed that in small schools, there was no statistically significant correlation was found between overall proficiency, math proficiency or reading proficiency and any type of call or the total number of calls. In large schools, as overall proficiency increased, there were decreases in the number of calls about personnel and discipline and in the total number of calls. A statistically significant negative correlation was identified between overall proficiency in schools and these call types. In small schools, no statistically significant correlation was found between math proficiency and
any type of call or the total number of calls; but in large schools when math proficiency increased, there was a related decrease in the total number of parent calls and, specifically, in calls identified as non-complaints, calls identified as other and calls about safety, discipline, instruction and student assignment. In large schools, total calls and these types of calls were found to have a statistically significant negative correlation with math proficiency. In large schools, as reading proficiency increased, the number of calls about personnel issues and the total number of calls decreased, and a statistically significant negative correlation was found between reading proficiency and calls about personnel and the total number of calls.

**Title I status.**

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was calculated on types of calls/total calls about schools and Title I status. The results of the test indicated no statistically significant relationship between the Title I status of schools and the total number of calls or the number of any types of calls.

**Free and reduced lunch percentages with all schools considered together.**

When not controlling for size, the percentage of student participation in the free and reduced lunch program was found to have no statistically significant correlation with any type of call or with the total number of calls; however, results were different when controlling for size. In small schools, as the percentage of student participation in the free and reduced lunch program increased, the number of calls about discipline also increased due to a statistically significant positive correlation was found between free and reduced lunch program participation percentages and calls about discipline in small schools. In large schools, as the percentage of student participation in the free and reduced lunch program
increased, there was an increase in the number of calls about transportation, EC (exceptional children’s services), personnel, guardianship, discipline and the total number of calls. A statistically significant positive correlation was identified between free and reduced lunch program participation percentages and these types of calls and total calls from parents of students in large schools.

*Overall proficiency in schools while controlling for socioeconomics.*

When controlling for socioeconomic factors by splitting the school file, it was shown that in high socioeconomic schools, as overall proficiency increased, the number of calls about safety, discipline, maintenance, and SMOD (student uniforms) decreased. These call types and overall proficiency were found to have a statistically significant negative correlation in high socioeconomic schools (as determined by low free and reduced lunch program participation percentages). In low socioeconomic schools (as identified by high free and reduced lunch program participation percentages), overall proficiency, reading proficiency and math proficiency were found to have no significant relationship to the number of total calls or the number of any type of call except in the case of math proficiency increases in low socioeconomic schools. Math proficiency was found to have a statistically significant negative correlation with the number of calls identified as non-complaint calls in low socioeconomic schools. Non-complaint calls decreased as math proficiency increased in low socioeconomic schools. There was no statistically significant correlation identified between student proficiency levels and any other type of call in low socioeconomic schools. In high socioeconomic schools, as math proficiency increased, the total number of calls, the number of calls identified as other, the number of calls identified as non-complaints and the number of calls about safety, personnel, student activities, discipline, instruction and SMOD
A statistically significant negative correlation was found between these call types and math proficiency in high socioeconomic schools. In high socioeconomic schools, as reading proficiency increased, the number of calls about safety and personnel decreased. A statistically significant negative correlation was found between reading proficiency and these call types in high socioeconomic schools.

**Crime and suspension rates while controlling for socioeconomics.**

Considering the crime rate and the suspension rate while controlling for socioeconomic factors by splitting the school file, it was determined that in high socioeconomic schools, as the crime rate increased as indicated by the number of crimes per 100 students or as the suspension rate increased as indicated by the number of incidents of suspension per 100 students, there was an increase in calls identified as other, calls identified as non-complaints and calls about legal issues, safety, personnel, student activities, discipline, attendance, instruction, student assignment, SMOD (student uniforms) and the total number of calls. A statistically significant positive correlation was identified between the crime rate and the suspension rate in high socioeconomic schools and total calls and these call types. Calls about EC (exceptional children’s services) were not found to have a statistically significant correlation with the crime rate in high socioeconomic schools, but calls about EC were found to have a statistically significant correlation with the suspension rate in high socioeconomic schools. Calls about transportation and maintenance were found to have no statistically significant correlation with the crime rate or the suspension rate in high socioeconomic schools. In low socioeconomic schools a statistically significant correlation was identified between the crime rate and increases in calls identified as other and about safety, student activities, discipline, attendance, instruction, SMOD and the total
number of calls. These types of calls increased in low socioeconomic schools as the crime rate increased. In low socioeconomic schools, there was a statistically significant positive correlation between the suspension rate (as indicated by the number of suspensions per 100 students) and increases in calls identified as other, calls identified as non-complaints and calls about legal issues, transportation, safety, personnel, student activities, discipline, attendance, instruction, student assignment, SMOD and the total number of calls. In low socioeconomic schools, as the suspension rate increased, there were increases in these types of calls and the number of total calls.

**Qualitative Results**

**General description of the call content.**

Of the 362 calls examined through qualitative analysis in the study, all of the calls were found to be complaints, requests, accusations and threats with any praise or compliments included in relationship to requests. In addition, all 362 calls had a clear impetus or reason for the call. The calls examined in the qualitative aspect of the study had varying concerns and requests expressed by the parents, including class assignment change, grades, promotion, policy change arguments, transportation, money, loss of credits, bullying, discipline, safety, enrollment, work load, opportunity loss, attendance, the School Resource Officer, school reassignment, exceptional children’s services and complaints about a teacher or school administrator. In general, the information gathered in the qualitative aspect of the study regarding the frequency of particular call topics was similar to that discovered in the quantitative part of the study. Discipline and complaints about school personnel were discussed often by parents in calls. In addition to these topics, parents frequently discussed health issues when calling, their health, that of their children or even that of their parents.
Since health was not one of the categories district office staff could choose in the dropdown menu when entering the calls into the electronic database, parent discussions of health by parents were not identified in the quantitative aspect of the study; however, health emerged as a theme in the qualitative analysis.

**Differences in persuasive tools used in calls from parents of students in higher income schools and lower income schools.**

While all parents shared some details in their stories when they called district offices, the persuasive tools parents used when they called and the way they made their requests tended to be very different between the parents of students in higher income schools (as indicated by lower free and reduced lunch program participation percentages) and parents of students in lower income schools (as indicated by higher free and reduced lunch program participation program percentages). Parents in higher income schools often used documents or references in their arguments, while parents of students in lower income schools relied on specifics from their own experiences. Parents utilized a variety of tools of persuasion in their calls to district offices ranging from legal language used more often by parents of students in higher income schools to direct and succinct requests for what they wanted by parents of students in lower income schools. Parents from higher income schools tended to use documents and make references while parents from lower income schools talked about their own experiences. Describing awards, positions in the community and connections are examples of the use of cultural capital by parents of students in higher income schools and absent in the conversations with parents of students of lower income schools who called district offices. The parents of students in higher income schools often utilized cultural capital as a persuasive tool, but the parents of students in lower income schools seldom did.
Discrepancies in ability to advocate between parents of students in higher income, mid-range and lower income schools.

Evidence was identified in the data of discrepancies in ability to advocate for their children between parents from higher income schools, mid-range income schools and lower income schools. Socioeconomic designations were based on free and reduced lunch program participation percentages with higher income schools having lower free and reduced lunch program participation, lower income schools having higher free and reduced lunch program participation and mid-range income schools having mid-range free and reduced lunch program percentages.

In their advocacy for their children, parents of students in higher income schools used their skills for turning external documentation or documentation from the school system itself into evidence for an argument, arguing with specific knowledge related to the topic or seeking policy changes and using legal language, all skills that could be said to be a part of their cultural capital. Parents of students in lower income schools often argued from their own perspectives, with references to their needs and those of their children, making clear requests for what they wanted without use of many of the persuasive tools of argument shown in the data from parents of students in higher income schools. Personalization occurred in the requests and complaints parents made with parents from higher income, mid-range income and lower income schools all often sharing details either of the applicability of their arguments to their situations, to their stories or to the stories of their children in calls made to district offices about schools. Information about challenges or aspirations were a part of calls from parents of students in schools of all income levels.
Differences in the ability to use cultural capital between parents of students in higher, lower or mid-range income schools.

There were differences in the use of cultural capital in calls parents made to district offices. In requests for their children, criticism of school personnel and arguments about policy, parents associated with higher socioeconomic schools utilized cultural capital, listing achievements of their children and naming people they knew themselves, as they asked for what they wanted. Sharing details about their children’s grade point averages and courses they have taken, parents of students in higher income schools described their involvement in schools and their positions in the community. Parents of students in lower income schools were less likely to name connections and were more likely to emphasize need or a perceived lack of fairness in their stories by listing difficulties they faced when asking for what they want than are the parents of students in mid-range income or higher income schools.

Illustrations of Bourdieu’s concepts in parent call data.

Evidence of the viability of Bourdieu’s concept of interest were identified in the content analysis of calls from parents to district offices. Some school personnel appeared to consider the interests of the school over those of the parents or students; and, in general, parents did not attempt to hide their pursuit of benefits for their children. Examples of Bourdieu’s concept of doxa were also identified in the parent call data with school rules and values treated as if they were natural and to be expected. In schools, not fighting, even fighting back, was described as evident as a value upheld as established and natural; however, parents questioned the rationale for punishing their children for what they often called self-defense. Values in place at schools were described as being represented as standard and normal, but instances in which school values were upheld in this way could be
argued to be examples of *misrecognition*, instances in which the values upheld by the school were misrecognized or mistakenly seen as the naturally expected rules of human behavior. Evidence of *hysteresis* was identified in the call data, as well, with details regarding misalignment between behavior and expectations of behavior between parents or students and other students or school staff.

Parents told stories of school administrators dismissing their concerns, of feeling unwelcome, of being called names and of suspensions they said they did not understand. All of these incidents could be argued to be examples of *symbolic violence*. *Social class* divisions were evident, too, in parent calls to district offices both in what parents asked for and in the way they asked for what they wanted. In the narrative call data the tension between behaviors, practices and expectations of school personnel and parental *habitus* or behaviors were evident with, for example, a parent perceiving that staff was against her child, a parent saying she did not feel her children were welcome, a parent cursing school staff and other descriptions of disconnections.

**Identifying a sense of entitlement in some higher income parent calls.**

A sense of entitlement was identified in the data regarding parents of students from higher income schools (as identified by lower free and reduced lunch program participation percentages), both in the way parents from higher and mid-range income schools asked for what they wanted and in the requests these parents made. A sense of privilege can be identified in demands for reports or, for example, in a request described by a caller, himself, as an exception. Counter to the demands or appeals of parents who conveyed the anticipations of the privileged, the requests of some parents of students in mid-range income
schools and the parents of students in lower income schools were often of a more solicitous nature.

**Identifying resistance to authority and a sense of powerlessness and fear in some parent calls.**

A resistance to authority and a sense of powerlessness and fear was also identified in call data for parents of students in lower income schools (as identified by higher free and reduced lunch program participation percentages). For example, a parent of a child in a lower income elementary school complained that her child’s teacher sent home frequent notes about her child’s behavior and other parents from lower income schools sometimes called to say that they were not sure what to do for their children.

**Discussion of the Findings**

**Interpretation of the Findings**

**Decrease in calls to district offices.**

Parent calls to district offices decreased over the five year period of the study indicating that either calls are being entered into the electronic database with less fidelity by district office staff or parent calls in the district have actually decreased. Parent calls may have decreased in the district due to changes in other data. For example, since the second highest number of calls are calls about discipline, if discipline decreased, calls would decrease, as well. If there were less personnel problems in schools, calls would decrease in relationship to those changes; however, other possible reasons for a decrease in the number of calls to district offices include the possibility that parents are receiving more information in other ways or parents are losing their inclination to call. A lowering of parent inclination to call could be due to parents feeling less authorized to call, not knowing what office to call.
or thinking that making the call will not bring them assistance or resolution and or help them get what they want.

**Top call topics.**

Over a fifth of the calls coming into district offices over the five year period of the study were about personnel, indicating misunderstandings and lack of connections between parents and school staff. Guidance for school personnel in how to work with parents, better information for parents about schools and school staff, authentic and positive opportunities for school staff and parents to make connections and better information for school staff about parents could mitigate some of the concerns regarding personnel. The second highest number of calls were calls about discipline, and in many of these calls the parents said the discipline was unfair or asked for it to be changed. The fact that almost a fifth of the calls coming into district offices were about discipline during the five year period of the study points to a need for better communication about discipline at the school level. Parents need a better understanding of rules and more follow-up from schools regarding how students can recover from being suspended.

**The cyclical nature of parent calls.**

Parent calls to district offices were found to be cyclical in nature with particular types of calls coming into district offices during particular months of the year across the five year period of the study. For example, parents made 44.9% of the calls about transportation to district offices during the months of August and September. 28% of calls about student assignment came into district offices during August. Since the call data analyzed was for 11 months of each year in the five years of the study, 9.09% of total calls or of each call type per
month would indicate an even distribution of the calls across the months; so these percentages represent a disproportionate number of calls. 15% of the calls about instruction were made to district offices during August. 13.2% of discipline calls came in during March, 13.1% of personnel calls came in during May and 12.2% of calls about safety were made to district offices in February. These percentages indicate cycles in calls, and due to the fact that particular types of calls came into district offices during particular times of the year, particular types of parent calls can be anticipated and special communication and educational opportunities can be prepared for both school personnel and parents. The patterns in calls indicate a need for better communication between schools and parents about particular topics during specific times of year.

**Parent calls and proficiency levels.**

Several types of calls to district offices by parents of students in higher income schools decreased in correlation with increases in student proficiency levels and, specifically, the total number of calls decreased in correlation with math proficiency increases in higher income schools, both in direct contrast to the nearly total lack of correlation between proficiency levels and parent calls in low socioeconomic schools. These discrepancies between higher income schools and lower income schools and the relationships of proficiency levels and parent calls by parents of students in these schools is evidence that parent calls follow patterns related to characteristics of social class.

The fact that a correlation was identified; albeit a negative one, between student proficiency levels and parent calls to district offices in higher income schools and not in lower income schools suggests that parents in lower income schools may not know the importance of student proficiency levels or that these parents may have more concern about
other issues in their own lives or at their children’s schools than they do about student proficiency levels; additionally, these data could indicate that in higher income schools when there are higher proficiency levels there are fewer problems parents want to discuss with district office staff.

**Free and reduced lunch program participation percentages.**

Parents called district offices about some issues of concern in relationship to student free and reduced lunch program participation percentages. As free and reduced lunch percentages increased in small schools, the number of calls about discipline increased. As free and reduced lunch program percentages increased in large schools, calls about transportation, exceptional children’s services, personnel, guardianship, discipline and the total number of calls increased. The fact that in large schools when free and reduced lunch percentages increased the number of total calls increased is evidence that lower income parents call district offices more than higher income parents do, indicating that parents of students in lower income schools care about their children’s educations and reach out for assistance they want to talk about, calling district offices more than parents of students in higher income schools.

The statistically significant positive correlations in large schools between student free and reduced lunch program participation percentages and the total number of calls and several types of calls and between student free and reduced lunch program participation percentages with calls about discipline in small schools are evidence that education continues social structure divisions. As free and reduced lunch program participation percentages increased in large schools during the period of the study, so did calls from parents with concerns about specific issues, including discipline, and the total number of calls, indicating
problems in lower income schools and demonstrating a continuation of social structure division by schools. Calls from parents of students in lower income schools can also be seen as evidence that these parents feel supported in making calls to district offices.

The correlation between parent calls and free and reduced lunch program percentages in large schools can be argued to be a source of resistance to the assumption that schools are culturally neutral because these calls can be interpreted as an indication that there may be more problems and situations in lower income schools that parents want district office staff to know about. Parent callers are unhappy, speaking up about what they don’t like at their children’s schools and asking for assistance from someone beyond the school. The increase in calls from parents in large schools in relationship to increases in free and reduced lunch program percentages indicates dissatisfaction about situations at their children’s schools by parents of children at lower income schools; yet, these calls have no positive correlation to decreases in student proficiency levels, evidence that parents in lower income schools have other concerns such as transportation, exceptional children’s services, personnel, guardianship and discipline on their minds. The total number of calls to district offices were found to have a statistically significant correlation to student free and reduced lunch program percentages in large schools, and these parent callers may be unhappy because of inequities in schools. They also could be unhappy due to difficulties they face that they want the schools and the school system to help them address.

**Content analysis of parent call data.**

The qualitative examination of some of the calls to district offices provides substance to the analysis, filling out the outline of the picture of parent calls provided by the quantitative analysis. Knowledge of the actual content of calls provides a deeper perspective
of both the context and the details of parent calls to district offices, providing a more complete representation of the calls parents make. In conjunction with the quantitative analysis of calls, the qualitative analysis provides more complete information about both the parents who call and the concerns they call about. While the quantitative aspect of the study provided information about the timing and topics of calls and allowed for analysis of the types of calls that parents make in relationship to characteristics of the schools their children attend, qualitative analysis allows the stories of the callers to be heard. Through qualitative analysis, it was determined that of the 362 calls that came into one of five regions of the urban school district in the study in one year, all of the calls were complaints or requests. The calls were not compliments, and any compliments that were made in the calls were made in conjunction with a request.

Content analysis of the parent call narrative data revealed that the calls examined in the qualitative aspect of the study were expressions of discipline concerns, complaints about teachers, concerns about lack of communication with the school and details about health issues of either the student involved or the family. Accusations of unfair treatment, uncaring school personnel, rude staff members, and unprofessional conduct by school staff appear in the documentation of the calls, as well. These data indicate that many parents experience a struggle against schools and school staff instead of a partnership with them.

Parents called about safety concerns, to make requests for class assignment changes or school assignment changes, to report what they described as bullying either by another student or a teacher, to seek changes in out of school suspension and to ask questions about exceptional children’s services. Many parents also expressed concern about grades, lost
opportunities or potential lost opportunities, made specific requests and argued for policy changes or made accusations of policy violations.

Both parents of students in lower income and higher income schools, as well as parents of students in mid-range income schools discussed health concerns of their students or themselves when they called, often in conjunction with concerns about grades; although, parents of students in lower income schools mentioned health issues more often in their calls than other parents did. Parents of students in mid-range income schools discussed safety, made accusations of unfair situations or treatment and mentioned the School Resource Officer (an officer from the police force or the sheriff’s office assigned to the school) more often in their calls than the parents of students in higher or lower income schools did.

Parents as advocates.

In general, differences in the ability to advocate for children by parents of students in higher income schools and parents in lower income schools are evident in the data. The persuasive tools used by parents of students in higher income schools often involved documents or references as rationale and background for requests, and parents of students in lower income schools were more likely to rely on specifics from their own experiences in making requests or registering complaints. Parents of students in higher income schools used legal language when calling district offices more often than parents of students in lower income schools, and parents in lower income schools made clear requests without describing awards, positions in the community and connections like parents of students in higher income schools often did. There were clear differences in the ability to use cultural capital to advocate for their children between parents of students in higher income schools and parents of students of lower income schools who called district offices.
Parents of students in higher income schools and mid-income schools argued for changes in policies, and parents of students in lower income schools described their needs and those of their children with fewer references to policies and less use of many of the persuasive tools of argument shown in the data from parents of students in higher income schools. Parents from all types of schools shared information about their experiences and their perceptions in their calls; and since they chose what they wanted to talk about themselves, rather than answering questions decided on by someone else, these calls became valuable revelations of what parents think about. Parents shared details about their children’s grade point averages and courses they have taken and talked about their children’s plans for college. Parents of students in higher income schools described community connections while parents of students in lower income schools emphasized need or a perceived lack of fairness in describing their difficulties and concerns.

**Concepts of Bourdieu.**

Evidence of the concepts of Pierre Bourdieu’s were evident in the call data with both school personnel and parents often appearing to look out for their *interests* or, in the case of school personnel, either their own interests or the interests of the school. The fact that, from analysis of the perception of events shared by parents, rules and values were presented as if they were normal and understood is an example of Bourdieu’s concept of *doxa*. For example, a ban on fighting in schools, even fighting back, was conveyed as being communicated as a natural value; however, parents argued that their children should not be punished for what they described as self-defense, not seeing the school rules as natural at all. The manner in which school values are represented could be argued to be examples of *misrecognition*, as well, instances in which the values were shared as ordinary and expected.
when they were actually developed and not natural rules of human behavior. *Hysteresis* can also be seen in the data, in the presence of tension between parents’ presentation of themselves and the actions and expectations for behavior the parents perceived in school staff. A disconnection between expectations and values between parents and school staff was often present in the documentation of parent concerns shared with district office staff.

Symbolic violence in schools is insidious with neither parents nor school personnel generally aware it is there. Some parents described feeling unwelcome; and whether they were truly unwelcome or not, their perceptions resulted from what they sometimes described as dismissal on the part of school administrators, their children’s out of school suspensions and statements made by school staff. One parent said the principal asked her why she did not take her children back to their old school, another said a teacher suggested her sick child come back another year and another said an assistant principal called her a liar. Other parents described difficulties getting make-up work from teachers after absences, struggles with schools and teachers about grades and concerns about class assignment or school assignment. These experiences of dismissal, exclusion, rejection, insensitivity, name-calling, lack of cooperation and low expectations are examples of symbolic violence which creates or exacerbates disconnections between parents and schools and between students and schools.

Both what parents asked for and the way they made their requests were representative of social class divisions. In the stories parents told, there was often evidence of a difference between the *habitus* of parents or their way of presenting themselves and the behaviors and practices of school staff. The differences in the requests made by parents of higher income parents and mid-range and lower income parents and in the tools that they use, are evidence of differences in social class division and in the way the parents present themselves, or
habitus. In addition, differences in the habitus of some parents of students in lower income schools and school personnel were also evident in the data with one parent, for example, arriving late to an appointment and explaining that it is difficult to get places on time, refusing to have a conference with teachers, saying that a teacher was “antagonizing” her daughter by attempting to talk to her about a discipline issue, expressing that a sense of appall over benchmark practice tests and another parent of a student in a lower income school saying the girls at a high school concert dressed in “fishnets” looked like “whores” and “sluts.”

**A sense of entitlement.**

The parents of students in higher income schools and the parents of students in mid-range income schools often communicated a sense of entitlement in their requests to district office staff in both what they asked for and in the persuasive tools they used to make their requests while the requests of some of the parents of students in mid-range income schools and of the parents of students in lower income schools, in general, were less like demands and were more solicitous in nature. In addition, calls from parents of students in lower income schools sometimes had words and phrases that conveyed a sense of powerlessness and fear, such as, for example, the call of a parent who said that her child lights his fingers on fire and she did not know what to do. These differences in the requests and the manner in which the requests are made could be argued to indicate differences in not only the parents, but in the schools and the cultures of the schools, themselves. Parents of students in higher income schools may be said to exist in a context, perhaps both at home and at school, which leads them somehow to expect to receive what they want. The *habitus* of these parents is more aligned with that of school officials, and evidence can be found in content analysis of
the call data. Parents of students in higher income school often utilized documentation and often even documents generated by the school system, itself, in their requests. While the parents of a student in a higher income school asked for school to start later because he was having a difficult time getting his children up for school, the parent of a child in a lower income school asked for the school bus to be on time so that his child could eat breakfast at school and so that he would not lose his job due to arriving at work late because he waited on his son’s school bus.

The Study of Parent Calls in Relationship to Previous Research

Parents and School Personnel Can Learn from Each Other

The fact that the largest number of calls parents made to district offices were about personnel reflects an important theme in the literature regarding schools and parents. Parent involvement literature recognizes the misrecognition of middle class parent involvement in students’ educations as definitive (Epstein & Jenson, 2004) with a discussion of a link between student achievement and parent involvement and the importance of high teacher expectations of parents (Chrispeels, 1991). Parent call data illustrates that parents of students in schools with high free and reduced lunch program percentages and parents of students in schools with low free and reduced lunch program percentages call district offices, evidence that level of income does not cause parents to lack concern with their children’s educations. Parents of students in both lower and higher income schools made calls about personnel.

Parent involvement literature emphasizes the need for teachers to learn from parents about families and their educational experiences (Davies, 1997; Epstein, 2001) and the need for schools to consider changing to accommodate parents rather than asking parents to
change for schools (Epstein & Janson, 2004). The fact that more parent calls come in about issues related to personnel than other types of calls illustrates the disconnection between some parents and schools. The tension between the habitus of some parents and the behaviors and expectations of school personnel supports the idea that schools should change for parents rather than forcing parents to change for schools.

**Proficiency Levels vs. Basic Needs**

While there is a lack of research regarding teachers being evaluated for interactions with parents (Chrispeels, 1996), studies indicate that educators need to learn more about families of students and suggest that this could be accomplished through narrative research (Auerbach, 2002). Teachers need professional development in communicating with parents and encouraging their involvement, and schools need to assure that the needs of families are met before parents are able to turn their focus to increasing their involvement in schools (Lopez, Scribner and Mahitibanichcha, 2001). The absence of almost any statistically significant correlations between student proficiency levels and parents of students in lower income schools and the sense of powerless and need conveyed in the calls of some students in lower income schools speaks to the fact that parents need assistance in meeting the needs of their children and their families before responding to the proficiency levels of students on standardized tests. Lopez, Scribner and Mahitibanichcha build on an on-going social science dialogue regarding the necessity of meeting basic needs before addressing other concerns, and the differences between the calls of parents in higher income schools and parents in lower income schools support this concept. Schools need to change so that they are able to address the needs of parents so that the involvement of parents of students in lower income schools and of more parents of students in mid-range income schools can be less need-based.
and more goal-oriented, like the concerns of parents in higher income schools who address
often speak about lost or potentially lost opportunities in their calls to school district offices.

Parents may influence students academically (Epstein, 2001); so it is important that
parents understand student proficiency levels as measured by standardized tests and know
how to work with schools and with their own children regarding students’ achievement. The
fact that student proficiency levels in lower income schools have very little relationship to
parent calls to district offices coupled with the idea that parents may influence students
academically indicates a need for educating parents about the importance of proficiency
levels.

Types of Parent Involvement and Advocacy

The literature also identifies and defines types of parent involvement, variations in
parent involvement along cultural and/or socioeconomic lines, differences in parenting styles
and the possible distinctions in outcome these differences may predict, (Davies, 1997;
Epstein & Janson, 2004; Spera, 2005). The differences in the persuasive tools that parents
use when they call and the differences in the abilities of parents to use cultural capital to
advocate for their children discovered in the qualitative aspect of the study suggests a need
for assistance to parents in advocating for students, as well as school staff recognition of
various types of parent involvement in their children’s educations.

Parent expectations influence student achievement even though parents may not know
their own influence (Rubie-Davies, 2010), types of parent involvement differ depending on
the resources parents have (Epstein, 1971; Lareau, 1989), and the resources a child actually
benefits from may not be predicted by what a parent has available due to the fact that parents
may differ in their levels of involvement due to differing circumstances and beliefs (Muller, 1995). Parents need assistance in knowing how to make a difference in their children’s success in school. The fact that parents call district offices about their children’s school assignment, class assignments, grades, work load and discipline and the fact that many parents discuss health issues when they call district offices indicates a desire on the part of parents to assist and advocate for their children. If parents knew that their early involvement could make a difference and if they received training in how to advocate for their children, some of the parents who call district offices might work with the schools at earlier points in their children’s educational experiences instead of waiting until frustration mounts and disconnections between students and schools and between parents and schools result in suspensions and other problems. In addition, the differences in the use of cultural capital for advocating for their children between parents of students in higher income schools and parents of students in lower income schools may not be due to an absence of an cultural capital on the part of parents of students in lower income schools, but could be due to differences in ability to utilize the cultural capital they do have or differences in beliefs regarding whether doing so is appropriate or would be useful.

**Higher Income Schools, Proficiency Levels and Parent Calls**

In higher income schools as indicated by free and reduced lunch program participation percentages, parents in the study contacted district office less as student proficiency levels increased, supporting the fact that studies indicate that parents of students who do well on tests do not contact schools as often (Muller, 1995). As more students did well on tests in higher income schools in the study, parents called district offices less.
Habitus and Cultural Capital

Parent involvement at the elementary school level is associated with student success (Hawes and Plourde, 2005), according to studies. Empirical research indicates that the involvement of parents of students in low achieving schools can mitigate the negative effects of poverty on academic achievement (Jacobs and Harvey, 2005), that parent involvement has a positive effect on academic achievement and is affected by demographics, habitus, and cultural capital. Researchers find that differences in habitus or beliefs and behaviors are linked with differences in parent involvement and that when a family has cultural capital, they are able to obtain more cultural capital (Lee and Bowen, 2006). The qualitative aspect of this study of parent calls supports the concept that parent interactions with schools and parent advocacy for children are affected by habitus and cultural capital. Some people are able to utilize their social capital and some are not, depending on the setting (Lareau and Horvat, 1999); and, as illustrated in the qualitative analysis of parent calls, disconnections between parents and schools which may be due to differences in habitus and discrepancies in ability to advocate for their children and in use of cultural capital in advocacy exist.

Lower Income Parents and Exclusion

In her research, Auerbach finds that educators are often not aware of what minority parents do, higher SES parents are more likely to advocate for their children, the narrow perspective of the family-school partnership model excludes many parents, and differences in social position have an effect on the roles parents develop for themselves with regard to schools (Auerbach, 2007). In the quantitative aspect of analysis of parent calls to district offices, evidence was found that parents of students in lower income schools calls district
offices about their children. A correlation was identified in the data between the total number of calls and the number of calls of specific types and increases in free and reduced lunch program participation percentages in schools, evidence of the fact that lower income parents do advocate for their children; however, in the qualitative aspect of the study differences in the ability to advocate for their children and in the issues parents advocate about are very different. Content analysis of parent calls identified cases in which parents shared experiences of feeling excluded or dismissed by schools, and the distinct differences between parents and the conversations they had with district office staff suggest that there are so many distinctions between parents that it would be impossible for one type of parent involvement, such as the family-school partnership model, to fit the needs and abilities of all parents and families. Also evident in the parent call data is support of Auerbach’s statement that social positions affect parents’ perceptions of their roles with regard to schools, the way that parents describe their circumstances and tell their stories show differences in parents’ roles, and the differences along socioeconomic lines in parents’ use of persuasive tools, their advocacy for their children and what they request for their children are support of Auebach’s concepts.

Auerbach also finds that educators need to seek to understand how parents feel, directly examine how race and socioeconomics affect relationships, and that educational leadership programs need to include focus on strategies to develop the parent engagement skills of potential principals (Auerbach, 2007). Both the quantitative and the qualitative aspects of this study of parent calls to district offices support the idea that educators need more education in how to help all parents feel welcome at school. Principals, too, need
continued education regarding interacting with parents of a variety of demographic backgrounds.

**Social Class Divisions, Bourdieu and Lareau**

Bourdieu’s theories inspire researchers to determine how education perpetuates inequality. Lareau and Horvat argue that social capital is valuable when it helps parents comply with school expectations, and they find that even though educators think they treat parents the same, they do not. The school staff described by parents in the calls to district office staff in the study probably thought that they were treating all parents the same way; however, the interactions that the parents describe suggest otherwise.

Both differences in what parents ask for and their ability to advocate for what they want exist between the parents of students in lower income schools and higher income schools in the study of parent calls to district offices. These differences are aligned with theories developed in previous studies. Lareau’s 2002 article regarding the findings from an ethnographic study establishes that middle class parents are involved in “concerted cultivation” by working to develop their children’s abilities through activities (p. 747) and that fear is behind the distrust and insecurity of some parents. They determine that middle class parents are more capable of convincing others to do what they want or give them what they need. Parents of students in higher income schools were considered middle class parents in this study of parent calls to school district offices. In the qualitative phase of the study, it was found that many of the parents of students in higher income schools expressed concern over lost or potentially lost opportunities for their children. These parents were also able to advocate for their children utilizing persuasive tools and their cultural capital. Fear
and distrust on the part of parents of students in lower income schools is evident in the parent call data, as well, as they often shared their perceptions of not being welcomed by school personnel.

Lareau says that her book identifies often invisible ways social class affects children and their opportunities, and she says social class affects children invisibly because “Americans are much more comfortable recognizing the power of individual initiatives instead of acknowledging “the power of social class” (p. 7). She also says that middle class parents intervene in their children’s schooling while working class and poor families rely on educational professionals. She says that sometimes working class and poor parents seem to agree in school meetings but may actually disagree with the school vehemently later, particularly with regard to discipline. She notes that educators want both support from parents’ interaction with them and, when children have educational problems, strong personalities capable of firm directions. It could be that some of the parents who called district offices about their children seemed to agree with the circumstances or with the disciplinary consequences when they were in meetings at school and then changed their minds; however, that is not clear. It is clear is that parents who called district offices seeking changes in their children’s disciplinary consequences or in other aspects of their children’s educational circumstances felt a need to seek what they wanted at a district level rather than at the school level.

**Distinctions**

The disconnections evident in the parent call data between the habitus of some parents and their perceptions of school staff indicate a misalignment or lack of understanding
between parents and school staff. Anderson states that there is a contradiction between the perceptions of educators and students in urban schools in that educators do not feel that the families of their students encourage academic achievement; yet, the students do have the perception that their parents support them and their school (2011). The parent involvement literature is largely about crossing boundaries and linking worlds, defining types of parent involvement, the positive influence of parent involvement on student achievement with acknowledgement of the effects of demographics and setting on that influence, and various ways that parent involvement affects schools and students. The distinctions between the lives of students and their families, both between each other and between families and schools was evident in the qualitative analysis of the call data; and the need for educators to work to link these worlds and become open to a broader perspective of parent involvement is clear.

Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron argue in *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* that educators do not know they are perpetuating society’s divisions and specify linguistic capital and social capital as contributing to the perpetuation of societal inequities. In *Distinction*, Bourdieu establishes an argument for the power of cultural capital and its effect on educational possibilities. In an argument based on analysis of a survey of over 1200 people, he says that individuals and groups participate in remaining in their station in society and in the reproduction of society through their habitus or behaviors and practices. The distinctions in the ability of parents to use persuasive tools and cultural capital in their advocacy for their children evident in the qualitative analysis of parent call data supports these findings
Susan Dumais grasps Bourdieu’s concept of habitus and his ideas about the ways that others respond to family’s behaviors in her 2006 article. She supports Bourdieu’s cultural capital theories, and she finds support for the idea that children from higher status homes have advantages as they move through educational systems in the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study data she analyses. Bourdieu’s cultural capital theories are supported, as well, by the data in this study of parent calls to school district offices. In general, the parents of students in higher income schools are better able to advocate for their children; and they often use their cultural capital in doing so. In the content analysis of parent calls to district offices in the qualitative aspect of this study, evidence of the effects of differences in that habitus of parents and school staff was identified not only in the behavior of school staff, but in the behavior language, and requests of the parents, themselves.

**Increasing Parents’ Cultural Capital**

In a qualitative study, also in 2005, C. Delgado-Gaitan finds that some parents are troubled by not being able to help their children with homework and that parents’ cultural capital can be increased through simple actions. These simple actions can be put in place by schools and school systems in order to mitigate difficulties that children may face by lessening the difficulties their parents may experience in attempting to advocate for their children or even making differences in the connections that parents have with their children’s schools. L. Handsfield and R. Jimenez contributed to this conversation through an ethnographic study, finding evidence of the validity of Bourdieu’s term misrecognition, the labeling of something as normal or preferred when it is simply part of the higher status culture. Bourdieu’s work is also important as a foundation for a 2010 study by E. Toshalis. Toshalis questions whether teachers are taught in their pre-service training to motivate
students or control them, making a strong case for a connection between the behavior of
teachers and Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic violence.

**Symbolic Violence and Similar Cultural Reproduction Concepts**

Webb, Schirato and Danaher review Bourdieu’s concepts and their application to
schools and provide definitions and examples for Bourdieu’s concepts; and Schubert
continues the discussion of symbolic violence, arguing that the concept could be used to
support multiculturalism. Nash acknowledges the importance of socialization theories and
the concept of symbolic violence in a 2003 article, and Rob Moore joins the conversation in
2004, focusing on habitus and social capital, as well as the cultural field and power positions
within it. Nash continues the discussion through writing about access to knowledge; and he
links Bourdieu to Bernstein regarding issues of knowledge and power, recognizing
Bernstein’s description of language as a code. Differences in access to knowledge were
identified in the qualitative aspect of the study of parent calls to district offices in the many
cases in which parents of students in higher income schools utilized documentation and
knowledge in their arguments and parents of students in lower income schools did not.
Additionally, examples of symbolic violence were identified in the call data through the
qualitative analysis.

In a 2008 book, chapters by various authors define and explain Bourdieu’s theories
and concepts, including habitus, field, capital, symbolic violence and more. The terms and
theories are accessible in the edition; and in the conclusion Grenfell, the books’ editor,
broadens the discussion to look at Bourdieu’s approach to research, which includes looking
at a field, the power relationships within that field and the relationships of those who compete for authority within the context, as well as the habitus of those involved.

In this study of parent calls to school district offices, evidence of the viability and applicability of the concepts and terms of Bourdieu, including interest, doxa, hysteresis, social class, cultural capital, misrecognition and symbolic violence were identified.

**Recommendations for Educators**

This examination and analysis of parent calls to district offices completed through a mixed method analysis of data and viewed through the lens of an educator offers findings and conclusions with the prospect of helping educators mitigate potential misunderstandings about schools by parents. Following are recommendations to educators. Some recommendations are suggestions for systems and programs for school districts, professional development for school personnel, educational opportunities for parents, educational leadership training for principals and suggestions specific to the district providing the data for the study.

**Suggestions for systems and programs for school districts.**

1. This study offered interesting information about parent calls to district office, and as a result it is recommended that school districts have a system and process in place for documenting parent calls into district offices or district offices of school systems. While having a database for documenting calls and having personnel dedicated to entering data or taking notes on parent calls may come at a prohibitive expense in smaller school districts, it may be that there are already individuals taking these calls and that it will be a matter of developing a process for documenting the calls.
Whether such a database is already in place or will be new to a district, it is recommended that if possible the database have characteristics and functions that would lend it to both quantitative and qualitative analysis.

2. It is recommended that if expense allows, that designated district office personnel be assigned to work with parents who call in order to create a district-wide culture of listening to parents. The fact that parents talk about health when they reach out to district offices is important for educators to note. Seminars, workshops and support groups with a focus on health would provide information, avenues for expressing concerns and opportunities for meeting others who may be experiencing similar difficulties and could be of support. It is recommended that frameworks and systems for parents to share with school staff about themselves and their families be put in place.

3. The fact that parents often mention health when calling school district offices suggests a possible need for school districts to look at funding for nurses. Parents clearly have health issues and concerns on their minds, and it could be that their concerns could be better addressed at the school level if more funding allowed for more medical information, resources and access to knowledge of connections at the school level, perhaps through more funding for nurses.

4. Since the largest number of calls to district offices about safety were made during February over the five years, it is recommended that a greater focus on safety in general and on communication with parents about safety take place in the winter months.
5. Parents may not indicate interest in proficiency levels of their students because there are too many other aspects of their lives that need addressing. It is recommended that school districts do what is possible within available resources and expenses and through identifying additional resources to offer families education, resources, connections, forums and guidance for working through challenges in their experiences and for making their lives and the lives of their families as much easier and more productive as possible so that more stakeholders, including the parents of children in lower income schools, will be able to focus on student achievement and proficiency.

Professional development for school personnel.

6. The largest number of calls were about personnel and content analysis illuminated instances of disconnection and of symbolic violence between school staff and parents and between teachers and students. School staff need training in communication and improving interactions and communication with parents and with students. School staff need training in the concept of symbolic violence and how to recognize it in their own behavior and that of others. In addition, educational sessions so that parents and school personnel can learn about each other and opportunities for connections between school staff and parents need to be provided.

7. Since a higher percentage of the calls about personnel come in during May, there is indication of a need for staff workshops for rejuvenation and building of morale to take place in the early spring. Since the school year ends in May or June in many schools, perhaps the stress of preparing for the end of the year affects both staff and parents. Teachers would benefit from explicit training regarding handling stress.
8. The second highest number of calls were calls about discipline; so it is recommended that interventions and alternatives to suspension continue to be explored as well as alternatives to other traditional discipline; however, it is also recommended that school staff have professional development in building relationships with students, creating a positive classroom environment and school culture, communicating with parents and students about discipline and how symbolic violence on the part of educators contributes to disciplinary infractions.

9. Parents can teach educators about their lives and their children’s lives by telling their stories to school staff, including teachers and principals. The stories parents tell can help educators understand what parents expect from schools, how they like to be involved and the best ways to communicate. Students will achieve more in schools when they see a connection between their parents and the school and school staff. It is recommended that structures be put in place in schools to provide opportunities for parents to share their stories with school personnel.

**Educational opportunities for parents.**

10. More communication needs to take place between schools and parents regarding discipline—both before a child is assigned disciplinary consequences and after, including more thorough information about suspension. Parent and school collaboration after discipline is assigned is recommended. More information to parents regarding rules—especially regarding fighting and self-defense and bullying situations is recommended; however, it is recommended that the rules be presented as rules that have been developed and are supported by the policies of the school and the school system rather than as if they are natural and assumed to be understood.
11. Information sessions for parents regarding particular issues in particular months aligned with the topics that parents call about are recommended. As summer ends and the school year begins, school personnel is very involved in preparing for the school year; but it would benefit parents for schools to have more information sessions for parents about topics like transportation, student assignment, discipline, and tips for communication with teachers. It is recommended that more information be given to parents about the school assignment process and about the process of assigning students to classes.

12. It is recommended that more information be given to parents about standardized tests and their importance, not simply individual reports of their students’ work, but information about proficiency levels and what they mean and what can be done about them—for individual students and for the school.

13. Information sessions for parents in how to advocate for their children are recommended so that the parents of students in lower income schools will be able to develop some of the skills and persuasive tools utilized by some of the parents in higher income schools.

**Educational leadership training for principals.**

14. On-going training is recommended for principals in how to develop school cultures that are welcoming and invitational and in how to communicate with parents.

15. Education about the concepts of Pierre Bourdieu, particularly symbolic violence, is recommended to create sensitivity and awareness of this insidious phenomenon and Bourdieu’s other theories and concepts and their effect on students and education.
16. Multicultural educational opportunities are recommended as a means of combatting symbolic violence, doxa, misrecognition and the effects of social class and as a means of providing opportunities for individuals of all demographic backgrounds to provide leadership and expertise in positions of respect to oppose symbolic violence.

**Suggestions specific to the district in the study.**

17. It is recommended that analysis be completed in the district providing the data for the study to determine if there has been an actual decrease in the calls that come into district offices or if there is a lack of fidelity in documenting the calls. If it is determined that the calls are being documented with fidelity and that the number of calls has actually decreased, exploration of the reasons for the decrease is recommended. If there is a lack of fidelity in documenting calls, it is recommended that specific district office personnel have their time dedicated to answering, documenting, and working to resolve parent concerns.

18. District staff who answer parent calls need both initial training and refresher training to assure that documentation of and responses to calls are consistent.

19. An updating of the database for recording parent call data is recommended. A single database could have dropdown menus for basic information such as date, call type, school identification, etc. similar to those in the current system; however, it is recommended that more choices be available for office staff to use for categorizing calls since the third highest number of calls were categorized as other. Another section of the same database could be available for entering narrative data, emailing principals and others with parts of that narrative data and scanning in any pertinent documents. Such a database would lend itself to qualitative content analysis to
determine what parents talk about when they choose to reach out because something is on their minds and an updated system would lend itself to easier analysis of both a quantitative and qualitative nature.

20. Most of the calls had little documentation of the resolution of the concerns of the parents. It is recommended that there be a system in the database for marking the completion of the parent calls so that a quantitative analysis could be done regarding how particular situations are resolved could be completed.

21. The narrative documentation for some areas of the district and for some years seems to be missing. It is recommended that any narrative call data currently in existence be secured for further study. Data in which individuals freely choose what they want to share appears to be rare. Generally data are generated when surveys are completed or people are interviewed with the issues addressed guided by the interviewer or survey designer. Data created by people themselves when they share what they want to talk about with no prompting from others promises to offer insight into the perspectives of parents on many topics related to schools and school districts.

**Suggestions for Additional Research**

Based on the quantitative and qualitative study of parent calls to district offices in an urban school district in the Southeastern United States, the following recommendations are made for future research:

**A ten year look at the quantitative data in the study.**

1. It might be of interest to complete a quantitative analysis of all of the calls for the entire ten year period covered by the electronic database in the district providing data
for the study or of other similar databases in other districts; although, it should be noted that more data may not lead to different results.

**More qualitative analysis of parent call data or open-ended surveys of parents.**

2. The qualitative aspect of the study revealed compelling stories of parents and students and qualitative analysis of more parent call data promises to be revealing.

3. There is a lack of research on parent calls to district offices, and the data these calls provide is of particular interest because the parents are able to talk about whatever is on their minds rather than being guided in the topics of discussion by topics decided on by a researcher; so identification of and analysis of other databases related to parent calls to district offices is recommended. Open ended surveys of parents in which the parents express the concerns on their minds could also allow parents to discuss topics they have on their minds without being led by others’ topics.

**Calls identified as other in the district of the study.**

4. Qualitative analysis of the calls identified as other would provide information regarding the topics and content of a large number of the calls that came into the offices of the district of the study during the five year period. This research is recommended because calls identified as other had the third highest number of calls in the quantitative aspect of the study. 931 of the 5,369 calls that came into the district during the five year period of the study were identified as other.

**Health concerns of parents.**

5. The evidence of parents’ inclination to discuss health concerns in calls to school district offices about other issues indicates need for further research to learn if parents would benefit from education, support groups or other resources related to health and
to determine if parents think school officials need to learn more about health concerns affecting students and families. Interviews, surveys or other qualitative approaches could be utilized, possibly offering data about any need for more funding of nurses.

**Characteristics of schools.**

6. A study of schools with high teacher turnover to identify challenges and problems in those schools is recommended because parent calls about safety, instruction and student assignment, calls identified as other and as non-complaints and the total number of calls have a statistically significant positive correlation with teacher turnover; and parent calls to district offices about attendance have a statistically significant negative correlation with teacher turnover.

7. Looking at the correlation between increases in National Board Certified (NBC) teachers and decreases in calls about discipline to determine if NBC teachers are more likely to find positions in schools with lower discipline problems or if they have an effect on discipline or on parents’ understanding of discipline is recommended.

8. The efficacy of principals could affect whether or not concerns of parents are resolved at the school level and the number of calls that parents make to district offices, and research to explore any possible correlations between characteristics of principals in schools and calls to district offices about those schools is recommended.

**Summary and Conclusion**

**Call timing and types.**

Parents call school district offices in an urban school district in the Southeastern United States to ask for what they believe their children need. Parent calls that came into the
district of the study were shown to be cyclical in nature, with parents calling district offices more during the month of September over the five year period than any other month. More calls were about personnel than any other topic with more personnel calls made to district offices in May. The second highest number of calls made to district offices were discipline calls, with more discipline calls coming into district offices during March over the five year period of the study. Many calls about transportation, student assignment and calls identified as other were made to district offices during September of each year of the five years, along with quite a few calls about discipline, as well. These patterns in calls indicate a need for professional development for school staff and education and information sessions for parents about the particular topics at the times of year when more of each type of call were made over the years.

**Differences along socioeconomic lines.**

There are discrepancies in the abilities of parents to advocate for their children along socioeconomic lines; however, parents call about the discipline of their children in correlation with suspension rates regardless of socioeconomic demographics of their children’s schools. Parent calls in large schools also have a correlation with the crime rate.

The total number of calls and calls of several types were found to be correlated with free and reduced lunch program percentages in large schools, and with discipline calls in small schools, providing evidence that lower income parents show concern for their children; however, calls of parents of children in lower socioeconomic schools have almost no correlation with the proficiency levels in their children’s schools. Yet, the calls of parents of students in higher income schools are correlated to proficiency levels. There were
statistically significant negative correlations identified between proficiency levels and parent calls in higher income schools, suggesting that parents of students in higher income schools make calls in relationship to proficiency levels and may have more educational concerns.

**Qualitative confirmation and expansion.**

Qualitative analysis of narrative call data confirmed that lower income parents call district offices more than higher income parents, just as the correlation studies indicated. Of the narrative documents that were analyzed, although, the number of higher and lower income schools were equal, there were more calls from parents of students in lower income schools than from parents of students in higher income schools. In addition, content analysis of narrative documentation of parent calls showed that while all parents discussed grades and often discussed them when mentioning health, lower income parents talked about health issues more often. While all parents told stories and made requests when they called, higher income parents often talked about lost opportunities or potential lost opportunities while lower income parents often talked about discipline. Discrepancies in ability to advocate for their children were evident between parents of students in higher income schools and parents in lower income schools. Parents of students in higher income schools showed more ability to utilize cultural capital in making requests than parents of students in lower income schools did. Higher income parents described connections and listed awards and attributes in making requests while lower income parents were more direct in listing their needs. A sense of entitlement could be identified in calls from parents of students in higher income schools while a resistance to authority and a sense of powerlessness and need could be found in the call data from calls of parents in lower income schools.
Bourdieu’s concepts.

Illustrations of Bourdieu’s concepts emerged in content analysis of the call data. Symbolic violence was evident in exchanges between parents and school personnel; the effects of differences between the habitus of lower income parents and the school staff presented themselves; the use of cultural capital by higher income parents was clear; social divisions illustrated by differences in the details of conversations by higher income parents and lower income parents was evident; misrecognition of rules and practices that were developed but were treated as if they were natural and to be expected was identified in the data, as well. Recommendations are made for further studies of parent calls to school district offices since in these calls, parents choose the topics they want to discuss, giving researchers the opportunity to learn what parents of school children are thinking about when no prepared questions lead the discussions.

In addition, recommendations are made for further research to learn more about what parents choose to share when they call district offices to express what they want to talk about, for educational opportunities for both school staff and parents regarding topics of calls and for making authentic connections with each other to help parents feel welcome in schools and help school staff better understand parents and their needs and their hopes for their children.

Conclusion.

Low expectations of students in lower income schools by their parents as suggested by a lack of correlation between proficiency levels in these schools and calls from parents to school district offices; disconnection between the habitus of some parents and school
expectations, behaviors and school staff and the effect of these differences in habitus on the expectations parents have of their children and of schools; misrecognition of rules and practices in schools as natural when they are created and imposed; and insidious symbolic violence perpetuated on students and their parents in the school environment are serious problems within the context of education which are evident in results of the correlation studies and the content analysis of the call data from parent calls to district offices over the five year period of this study. These phenomena and problems both contribute to and provide evidence of the perpetuation of social divisions and support of the cultural reproduction of the stratification of society by schools and school staff even when schools and school personnel actually intend to create and support a meritocratic society. Addressing these concerns will require both further research and specific, explicit and concentrated effort on the part of social scientists, educational leadership programs, educators, parents and students, themselves.
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