

## **Race Impact on Family Involvement**

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### **Abstract**

This study was conducted to promote family involvement within the Head Start community. Previous studies showed how family involvement is affected by race. The purpose of this study was to review and answer whether the child's racial background had effects on family involvement. Research has proven there are numerous ways families are involved with their children, because of cultural differences and their own family background (Curtis et al. 1996; Xia et al.2021; Zarate, 2007). For this study, mixed methods were used to analyze the Head Start family's level of family involvement and enjoyment. This survey was sent home to children ages three to five. Some themes that were shown in the results were bonding, time, and learning. Data was found that families of a minority status had more family involvement reported than those of white families. These results reject the idea that minority families have less family involvement.

## **Introduction**

Family involvement is something that is not talked about a lot in society. Longwood University students were assigned to create projects to help promote family involvement in the central Virginia area. Students were assigned a Head Start center in central VA, to give to the children so it can promote and increase family involvement within their family. Family involvement is important because children are the future, and it is important for the well-being of the child. It is important for the children to experience these family connections and bond with children.

In this research paper, there is evidence of a correlation between race and a family's involvement in a child's life. Having parents support their children can help improve the child's life and education (Arnold et al.,2019). This study needed to be completed to fully correlate how race plays a factor in family involvement, and how stereotypes and stigma have twisted society to believe family involvement in one race is greater than another. The purpose of this study is to bring more awareness to the need for family involvement in children's lives.

## **Literature Review**

A way families can help their children to grow and thrive is through family involvement. Before defining family involvement, we must understand the difference between family involvement and family engagement. Family engagement is how families can engage and interact with the child regarding their education, as opposed to involvement as the way parents educate and be active participants in their child's life (Family Engagement, 2010) The studies discussed below are qualitative studies, but some are quantitative to accurately take account of the questions the researchers wanted to answer. This review will examine different

scholars' views of family involvement impacting education and how they may affect different backgrounds. This role of family involvement can be a parent speaking up for their child through issues, helping a child with homework, and assisting with other things the child may have in their life.

The definition of family involvement is an overview of what scholars define, but it lacks cultural awareness and practices. Different cultures have their own meaning of being actively involved in their child's education. In Chinese cultures, they view being involved by using their modest practices to encourage educational success. Latino families use their own way of defining family involvement by separating education and life. All these factors are important to view when making a definition of family involvement with inclusion (Curtis et al. 1996; Xia et al. 2021; Zarate, 2007).

### **Definitions of Family Involvement**

According to researchers, parents who are involved with their children's schooling and their academics are more likely to have a better chance of successfully passing their classes (Bricker, et al. 1979; Parks, 2018; Arnold et al., 2008). Bricker's discussion is focused on how effective this theory would work for disabled children's parents, but the study did not show a large difference between a disabled child, and a non-disabled child. For future reference, a good way to view these differences could be by doing a study at different locations to make sure the school was not an added variable to the results. Small locations like towns and rural cities, usually have a small community population which makes it easier for parents to make connections. When a parent and teacher live in the same proximity to each other, the more they have an opportunity to connect. With these connections, teachers could be able to help students who need help by extra tutoring, or informing parents of the child's problem so parents can

begin to get involved. Since these community connections benefit the children, their grades and scores should make a positive impact on the children's test scores. Additional work done by Arnold et al. (2008) studied how these resources can impact children's literacy scores. They found that the literacy scores are improved because of these additional resources they have. A trend specifically found in this resource was how this community is primarily based on the families' socioeconomic status (Arnold, Doctoroff, Ortiz & Zeljo, 2008).

### **Race and SES**

Jamal (2019) acknowledges how socioeconomic status and class can affect parents' involvement with their child's education. Children of different socioeconomic status have less advantage over those who have a high level of socioeconomic status. This studied specifically how Muslims deal with their parental involvement with education, but along with information from other scholars, it details the different ways that other races and ethnicities handle family involvement with respect to their cultures (Xia, 2021; Zarate 2007). These studies could improve by comparing their methods and results of their child's success to the modern views of family involvement with one of the factors being the parent's socioeconomic status. Each of these ethnicities has its own idea of parental involvement which raises the question of which method is more beneficial and effective for the child. Critiques for these authors would be considering that some families were not able to come off resources easily like others and pitch a proper solution for those families (Parks, 2018 & Fantuzzo et al., 2004). Another critique would be for the researchers to have data to compare whether children with resources scored better than the ones without resources, with an added variable of the family helping the child.

In conclusion, before diving into the concepts and understandings of family involvement, we must have a clear understanding of what is defined as involvement of families

and engagements. Parents can help their child's education, not only by making connections with their child's teachers but also by teaching the child at home. The success of a child can start at home (Prossack,2021). Also examined how a parent's socioeconomic status and race could affect parent involvement. When a parent is more involved in their child's work and education it can help improve their lives and family involvement in the child's life. Each child deserves to have an equal opportunity to education, but considering these variables, it takes dedication and work for the parent to ensure their child is good educationally.

## **Data and Methods**

### **Instrument**

A survey questionnaire was created by eight members of the Social Research and Program Evaluation Team at Longwood University. This survey consisted of 15 questions, 12 close-ended questions, and three open-ended questions. The first question on the survey asked respondents for informed consent. Any respondents who answered "no" to the informed consent could not see any other questions. The survey included questions that measured family involvement, family enjoyment, evaluation of SMART objectives, and demographics. The survey was sent online through Qualtrics. Head Start teachers e-mailed to guardians, and children brought home books with a QR code attached for guardians to fill out.

### **Sample**

The non-probability sample for this study was based on 17 children (ages three to five) who attend Head Start in rural Virginia. Head Start is a federally subsidized preschool for families with economic needs. Family Fun Time activities were sent home with the children. The activity was called Haunted Runway. Haunted Runway was a fun, creative, activity for children to do with families to promote creativity with children, while also promoting child's

cleaning skills. During the activity, children were measured based on their ability to create a Halloween costume from five pieces of clothing. Also during this activity, children demonstrated their cleaning abilities by cleaning behind themselves after the activity was completed. With the Family Fun Time activity, a children's book with an attached QR code was sent encouraging families to take the online survey after they completed the activity. Teachers sent a reminder e-mail to parents to complete any outstanding surveys. This resulted in four questionnaires being completed. Overall, there was a 4% response rate. Therefore, data from previous years (2019 and 2022) on Family Fun Time activities were added to the analysis. This resulted in 66 completed surveys for analysis (four from 2023, 20 from 2022, and 42 from 2019).

### **Quantitative Analysis**

Quantitative analysis of completed surveys (from 2019, 2022, and 2023) was based on the close-ended questions. For this study, the dependent variable is family involvement. The item from the questionnaire that was used to operationalize this was, "On a scale from 0 to 10, how much did this activity encourage your family to work together?" (0=not at all, 10=a great amount). The independent variable for this study is determining whether the families' race is a factor in parental involvement. This is operationalized using the item "What is your self-identified race?" Answer choices for this item are, "Native American or Alaskan Native", "Asian", "Black or African American", "Hispanic or Latino/Latina", "White", "Some other race", and "Prefer not to say." Descriptive statistics were used to analyze these variables.

## **Findings**

### **Quantitative Findings**

In this section, quantitative data is presented from the survey research. Quantitative research is used to help back up our findings and conclusions in the paper.

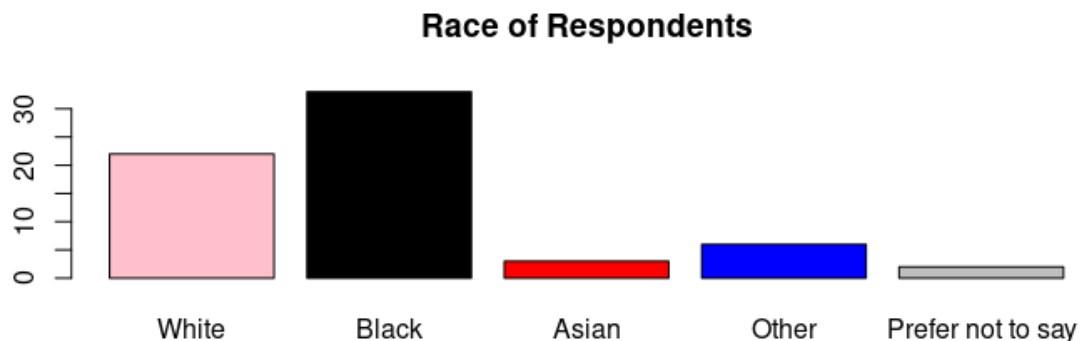
Table 1.

Mean and Standard Deviation of Family Involvement	
Involvement	-
Mean	7.20
Standard Deviation	2.60

Note. N=66

The mean of Family Involvement is 7.20 out of 10. The standard deviation is 2.60. The dependent variable is the self-ranked ability to confirm or deny if they did the family involvement activity with the child. This was measured by the question “How involved was the family on a (scale of 1-10; 1 = being not at all, 10= being a great amount).

Figure 1.



Note: N=66

This graph shows the comparison in family involvement between the races of the respondents. In the sample White parents had a result of 22 respondents. Black parents had 33 respondents. Asian parents had 3 responses. Parents that responded as others had 6 respondents. Parents who preferred not to say had 2 respondents.



Table 2.

Means and Standard Deviation of Race in Family Involvement		
Race	Mean	SD
White	6.68	3.20
Black	7.24	2.31
Asian	8.67	2.31
Other	8.17	2.31
Prefer not to say	7.00	1.41

Note. N=66

For family involvement, the mean was highest in the race of Asians at 8.67 out of 10. White had a mean of 6.68. Black had a mean of 7.24. Those who chose others had a mean of 8.17, which is the second highest. Parents who preferred not to say had a mean of 7.00. As for standard deviation is the highest in race category white as 3.20.

My independent variable is to measure whether race influenced levels of family involvement. Overall, with a mean of 7.2 most parents who were included in the study were involved with their children. In conclusion, minority families reported more family involvement than white families.

### **Qualitative Findings**

The study received 43 respondents who responded to our open-ended survey questions. While coding the answers to the survey, I have picked out three different themes found in the responses. These three themes identify common likes that parents expressed in the survey.

These common themes come from surveys from 2019, 2022, and 2023 survey responses. Since we didn't get a lot of feedback from our 2023 respondents, we are analyzing three different years' worth of results from past family fun time activities.

One common theme that parents mentioned in their open-ended survey answers was bonding. 18 out of 38 parents mentioned the increased family involvement during the family fun time activities. Most activities were interactive and fun so multiple people in the family could participate and enjoy the activities with the children. A few of the respondents mentioned how they enjoyed having bonding time with the family. Respondent 19\_03, explained something they enjoyed about the family fun time activity was “time spent together and being able to do crafts. It opened the door for other simple activities.” Another parental example of the family enjoying their family fun time activity was respondent 19\_05, who stated “Our family was able to bond. We learned that we can learn and have fun at the same time.” This was one of the reasons why we planned family fun time activities to be fun while informational as well. The last example of how family fun time activities produced family bonding, respondent 22\_03 stated” Our family really enjoyed how simple the activities were and how much our child enjoyed them, even completing some with siblings.” This presented the theme of bonding because of these activities; many were interactive enough for other people in the family to join along and play with the child spending more time together.

The second theme that was noticed throughout the qualitative study was the information of Learning. The theme of learning was shown 22 out of 38 times in our data. Many parents informed us in the open-ended questions of how their child displayed a new skill to them after completing these activities. Many objectives that we had in our projects were for the children to achieve a child development goal that was manageable and accessible to them. Respondent 22\_06, stated how their child learned how “to follow directions.” This statement demonstrated the theme of learning by simply stating how their child learned that in order to complete the activity they had to follow directions to finish the activity correctly. Another example of

parents noticing their child learning was respondent 22\_10, who stated her child learned “numbers, letters, how to take turns, also a little bit of reading too.” This activity was good for helping children learn skills that are not only beneficial at home but at school as well. The last example is respondent 19\_19 stated, “My family gained quality time and it helped my child understand things about feelings & and what to be thankful for.” This statement stood out because the parent mentioned how the child learned socioemotional skills, that they may begin to learn in school.

The last common theme shown in the study is the expression of time many parents mentioned they had to do activities with their children. In the open-ended questions, time was displayed 11 times out of the sample of 38. This was another reason for the family fun time activities, to help parents set aside intentional time to spend with their child to create a safe learning and loving the environment while doing the activity. A few of the responses are ways to help show how time increases family involvement. The first example of time is from respondent 22\_4, who stated “they enjoyed time spent together, the talks and learning.” This displayed how children and parent relationships are important and parents need to be involved so they have had that experience with the child. Another example that is displayed is respondent 19\_10 response which said “...yes because been a busy mom of two it’s hard to come home and try to think of something to do. Working full time is no joke, which makes planning and organizing activities to do with children hard, which is why family fun time activities were so effective since they were simple activities for the family to do together. The last example of time being a theme is respondent 19\_17, who stated that “their child enjoyed working together and having family time.” Family time is important to families because it helps make meaningful activities that families want to complete together.

In this section, it entails the main themes that were present in the qualitative close-ended section. The three themes found were learning, bonding, and time. Out of all of these three themes, learning was one of the most impactful themes and results shown in this study. Although there were a few more common themes that were shown in the studies, these few codes that were found helped with the data to show that family fun time activities increased family involvement.

### **Conclusion**

The original purpose of this study was to measure family involvement and to see if the activities sent home would promote family involvement. From the study people of color and minority parents have the most family involvement reported. The stigma of people of color being less involved in their children's lives is proven untrue. There could have been a stigma tied to the socioeconomic status of parents and parents of color, but through the findings, they rejected this notion. From the qualitative data received, there were three themes of learning, time, and bonding which parents recorded in their surveys. This is important because it shows how there are multiple things of enjoyment for the activity given.

Researching race involvement in family involvement is important, so you can know change where it may lack. Society has set standards for parents, which could bring a parent who is trying their best down. The increase in family involvement is the increase in the child's well-being. To continue the promotion of family involvement, society should push for more parent and child involvement in communities. Free and small-fee activities for families to attend together so they can spend quality time together help push the agenda of ultimate involvement.

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