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Saudi Parents' Perceptions About Their Role In Their Children's Education In American Elementary Schools

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SAUDI PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THEIR ROLE IN THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION IN AMERICAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

by

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my loving parents,

Moneerah Alauthymeen and Saleh Alhabeeb,

and my husband, Suliman, who have been

there for me through life's ups and downs.

I also wish to dedicate this dissertation to my super kids,

Deem, Lujain, and Mayar who have decided,

after seeing me through my Ph.D. journey,

that they do not want to earn their own Ph.D.s.

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The completion of this study has been an arduous journey for me. My hope is that this study will contribute in some small way to the involvement of all parents in the education of their children.

Ebtesam Alhabeeb

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Educational researchers have long been interested in the effects that parental involvement may have on students' academic achievement. Research from the United States and other nations has found that higher levels of parental involvement are positively associated with students' academic achievement (Abd-El-Fattah, 2006; Greene & Long, 2011; Hango, 2007; Holloway, Yamamoto, Suzuki, & Mindnich, 2008; Jeynes, 2012; Li, 2012; Nam & Park, 2014; Thompson, 2013; Ye & Jiang, 2014). However, effective parental involvement is subject to various factors, and one factor with a strong influence that might mediate the effectiveness of parental involvement in children's education is a cultural mismatch between home and school (Öztürk, 2013; Purcell-Gates, 1997; Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, & Quiroz, 2001; Turney, 2009; Wang, 2008; Wong & Hughes, 2006; Yoder & Lopez, 2013).

The general population of American society is becoming increasingly diverse; therefore, the student body in public schools is also becoming increasingly diverse. However, teachers in these schools remain predominantly white and middle class (Nieto, 2009). This is not a problem in and of itself, but such a mismatch between family demographics and school demographics often creates situations in which cultural differences are evident and sometimes cause conflict (Lee & Bowen, 2006). Such differences and conflict can divide the home and the school into two separate spheres. Parents who hold different beliefs than their children's schools regarding their roles and responsibilities are likely to work independently instead of working together with their children's schools in mutually supportive ways. This might contribute to increased

discrepancies between home and school, and students may be forced to switch between their home and school Discourses in order to ease the tension between the two.

Language, race, and ethnicity have important implications for children's culture, identity, and well-being. Children from diverse backgrounds often show large variations in their well-being, including their school performance and academic attainment. In addition, variations in English home literacy practices can affect the nature of home-school relationships (Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2002). The influence of these disparities is often evident in minority children's literacy development (Thomson, 2010; Suizzo et al., 2014). In other words, the learning outcomes of children from non-dominant cultures (e.g., non-white, non-middle class) can be influenced by the degree to which their families are or are not able to operate within their schools' Discourse. Parents from non-dominant cultures may lack knowledge regarding how to interact with "the system" of schooling, which includes not just speech/literacy, but also "ways of thinking, valuing, and behaving" (Gee, 2007, p. 174). This lack of knowledge can cause parents to be neglected or misjudged by schools because the schools might mistakenly believe that such parents lack interest or do not want to be involved in their children's education.

Due to America's pluralistic society, it is difficult to completely identify and describe the overarching culture in the United States (Banks & Banks, 2007; Milner, 2010). Because there are four dominant minority groups nation-wide (African-American, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American) in the United States, the family patterns and literacy practices of these dominant groups (as well as the white majority) are likely to be considered by schools as they approach multicultural education. However, there are other

minorities (sub-populations) that are rarely recognized. One of the sub-populations in the United States is the Arab minority group, and, particularly for this study, Saudi scholarship families.

According to the most recent annual report by the Institute of International Education (2013), the Saudi scholarship program is the fourth-largest college scholarship program for foreign students in the United States, smaller only than programs for students from China, India, and South Korea (Jiffry, 2013). Upon arrival in the United States, most scholarship recipients enroll in English language programs to improve their English proficiency so they are prepared to study college-level material in English. Such programs can take anywhere from one to two years. After the completion of their English language programs, students enroll in college- or university-level courses to complete their bachelor's degree (four additional years of study), their master's degree (two additional years of study), or their doctoral degree (three to six additional years of study, with the possibility of an extension) (Saudi Arabia Cultural Mission (SACM), n. d.).

When Saudi students come to the United States, they experience language challenges not only as they get prepared to complete college-level work, but also as they engage in interactions outside of their academic programs. Many Saudi students come to the United States with their families, and given the fact that most Saudi families studying in the United States are typically young in age, they commonly have children in elementary school. This can pose several potential problems. For example, it may be difficult for Saudi parents to enroll their children in American schools if they have not yet mastered the ability to speak and read English fluently or near fluently. Dealing with the education system to ensure their children receive the appropriate education can be very

challenging because it requires understanding and communicating in a language in which they are not yet proficient.

In addition, due to the cultural minority status of Saudi children in American public schools, these children are at risk of becoming disadvantaged students in the sense that their sociocultural and academic needs are frequently unrecognized by their schools. Also, their home and school communities are often in conflict, which causes the transition between the students' two Discourses to be more challenging. The cultural discrepancies between the Saudi and American educational systems, and the differences between the common literacy practices in both countries, may make it difficult for Saudi parents to understand their expected roles in their children's education. These discrepancies may influence how Saudi parents provide educational support for their children. In addition, how schools assist Saudi students with their unique needs impacts the success or failure of these children in their new schools.

Research indicates that cultural conflict plays a key role in shaping the relationship between cultural minority parents and teachers (Trumbull et al., 2001; Turney, 2009), as well as shaping the educational experiences of minority children (Li, 2012; Wang, 2008, p. 124). The disadvantage of being a cultural minority for Saudi parents is that, while schools in the United States depend on parents to become effectively involved in their children's education (Taylor-Dunlop, 2009), the degree to which and ways in which Saudi parents are accustomed to being involved are likely to differ from the expectations of American schools due to differences in cultural and educational norms. It is crucial to understand that parents from diverse cultures and

backgrounds will likely become involved in their children's learning in ways that are different from mainstream American society.

Overview of Theoretical Framework

The conceptual theoretical framework of this study is derived from and built upon two different, but related works: Gee's (2007) theory of big "D" Discourses, and Epstein's model of six types of parental involvement (Epstein, 1995; Epstein et al., 2002; Epstein & Jansorn, 2004).

Gee (1989) presented a theory of Discourses in which Discourses with a capital *D* go beyond language in use to involve the "ways of being in the world; they are forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, and social identities, as well as gestures, glances, body positions, and clothes as to take on a particular role that others will recognize" (p. 7). Accordingly, Gee (2007) theorized the existence of two types of Discourses: a primary Discourse that one obtains from home-based culture and practices, and Secondary Discourses that one develops through social interactions in settings beyond one's home environment, such as schools and workplaces. "Pulling off" the secondary Discourses requires an understanding of practices that go along with each secondary Discourse. However, such an understanding cannot be reached naturally when the practices of secondary Discourses vary greatly from the primary Discourse, or are in direct conflict with primary Discourse practices. Mastery of secondary Discourses, Gee (2007) believed, "…comes about through acquisition, not learning" (p. 179). Acquisition occurs when some of the features of the school (the dominant Discourse) are adopted by the student's primary Discourse (by the student's early practices at home), which the student's parents have usually mastered. These practices are facilitated by the lesser

conflict that both the student and his/her parents feel when acquiring and using dominant Discourses.

Many families are able to prepare their children for school Discourses by bringing some school practices (secondary Discourse characteristics) into their homes (Gee, 2007), such as reading stories at night to their children (Heath, 1982). These families typically come from cultures similar to that of most American schoolteachers (primarily white and middle class). Though the two Discourses are different, they are similar enough that it is not overly taxing to meld them. However, when the cultures of school and home are dissimilar, melding the two Discourses can be much more problematic. While most school practices are aligned with white middle-class families' culture, some of these practices might not exist or may be in direct conflict with minority families' primary Discourses. For example, some families may be reluctant to read stories at night to their children (the modeling reading strategy) if they believe that their children should practice blending and decoding reading independently, or if they cannot read to their children in English. This is problematic because cultural minority children from such families may not have literacy practices at home that match the practices of children from the mainstream society, and such differences in literacy practices may impact not only their academic success, but also their overall well-being and ability to compete in society (Hammer, Miccio, & Wagstaff, 2003).

Although there will likely be some degree of discord between most home and school Discourses, Gee (2007) asserted that some children experience more overt and direct conflicts between home and school Discourses and their ways of being. For example, some African-American students bring a home social interaction style into

school in which participants frequently speak at the same time and over each other. In such instances, students often speak while the teacher is speaking as a response to their feelings about the teacher's comments. They do not mean to be rude, but rather they are acknowledging, disagreeing, or agreeing with what the teacher is saying in a way that is socially acceptable in their primary Discourse (Trumbull et al., 2001). Such conflicts with the expectations of school discourse, for turn-taking and not interrupting, might cause misunderstandings of the children's normal reactions and practices, but their behavior reflects the ways of being in their primary Discourse.

Epstein and colleagues (1995, 2002) offered what they considered to be a comprehensive parental involvement model built on the "overlapping spheres of influence" theory (Epstein, 1995), which presents three overlapping circles representing family, school, and community. The model was inspired by the idea of caring for students and locating them in the center of the overlap between the three spheres of influence (school, family, and community). The model was based on two assumptions. First, if children feel cared for and are encouraged to work hard as students, they are more likely to do their best to learn. Second, if educators view children simply as students, they are likely to see the family as separate from the school. On the other hand, if educators view students as children (putting them in the center of the overlapping of influence), they are likely to see both the family and the community as partners with the school in children's education and development. Epstein's framework identified six types of parental involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community (Epstein, 1995; Epstein et al., 2002; Epstein & Jansorn, 2004).

While the proposed study aims to explore the role of cultural differences in parental involvement, integrating the two theories and their practices in school is a valuable framework for this study because the study specifically aims to understand how the mismatches between the two Discourses influence Saudi parents' six types of involvement in their children's education. Integrating Gee's theory of Discourses with Epstein's model of parental involvement is crucial for two reasons. First, while Gee's theory helps identify to what extent Saudi parents "pull-off" their children's school Discourse, Epstein's model provides the framework to investigate this, particularly because most American schools utilize parental involvement programs that correlate with Epstein's parental involvement model (Epstein, 1995; Epstein et al., 2002; National Center for School Engagement, 2007; National Parent Teacher Association, 1997). Second, based on Gee's theory of Discourses, the degree of overlap between Epstein's three spheres of influence (community, family, and student) is determined, at least in part, by how alike the Discourses of the school and the child's family are. To illustrate, when families are part of a minority culture, Epstein's three spheres of influence are more likely to be divergent, with much less overlap and thus a smaller intersection in the middle for the child. When the cultures of school and home are dissimilar, Gee (2007) explained that melding the two Discourses can be much more problematic than when the two cultures are similar.

In light of Gee and Epstein's work, cultural differences between the perceptions of Saudi parents and mainstream schools (the two Discourses) regarding the ideal educational role of Saudi parents could separate the circles. This separation could alter Epstein's model in ways that may inhibit its effectiveness for improving cultural minority

parents' involvement in their children's schools. It is likely that Saudi parents' practices and perceptions about their role in their children's education are qualitatively different than the parental involvement practices commonly found in mainstream schools. It is well-understood that cultural conflict can affect learning; therefore, these perceived differences might influence Saudi children's English literacy development in various ways. This study focused on exploring this issue.

Purpose of the Study

I aimed in this study to gain insight into Saudi parents' involvement in their children's education while they are temporarily living in the United States as they pursue higher education. In particular, this study explored the perceptions of Saudi parents about their role in their children's education in the United States by exploring the following research questions:

- What are Saudi parents' beliefs about their roles in their children's education?
- What do Saudi parents understand, in general, about the education system in the United States, and how it might be navigated?
- How do Saudi parents perceive and describe the nature of the Saudi family-school relationship?
- What are the cultural differences in schooling in Saudi Arabia and the United States that might influence Saudi families' contributions to their children's English literacy development?

Significance of the Study

Parental involvement plays an important role in children's success in literacy learning (Heath, 1983; Li, 2012; Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002), and a wealth of research

has been conducted in the United States to examine the importance of parental involvement in children's educational success. This study is built on findings from a number of previous studies linking academic achievement to parental involvement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sander, 1995; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001; Jeynes, 2003, 2005, 2012; Wilder, 2014), home literacy (Chu & Wu, 2010; Davis, 2013; Heath, 1983; Purcell-Gates, 1997; Shin, 2009), and parents' perceptions and understanding of their educational roles (Deslandes & Rivard, 2013; Durand, 2010; Herrell, 2011; Jackson, 2010; Nam & Park, 2014). Many of the previous studies concentrated on how parental involvement levels influence children's literacy development (Adamski, Fraser, & Peiro, 2013; Gonzalez, 2013; Milly, 2010).

Many of the existing research studies address parental involvement and children's academic success in general, and those that were conducted with minorities primarily focus on the role of African-American culture on parental involvement (Abdul-Adil & Farmer, 2006; Davis, 2013; Hicks, 2012; Huang & Mason, 2008; Jeynes, 2005; Temple & Reynolds, 2007). Studies conducted on immigrant populations mainly focus on Hispanic and Latino families (Astwood, 2009; Bastidas, 2011; Cooper, Crosnoe, Suizzo, & Pituch, 2009; De-Gaetano, 2007; Marschall, 2006; O'Donnell & Kirkner, 2014; Suizzo, 2014; Walker, Ice, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2011), or Asian immigrants (Chin, 2009; Huntsinger & Jose, 2009; Ji & Koblinsky, 2009; Pearce, 2006; Ye & Jiang, 2014). However, the voices of Arab families and temporary United States residents are extremely limited in educational research. Studies that address Saudi students are even more limited (Shaw, 2010). This may be because many more Hispanic

and Asian persons immigrate to live and study in the United States than do Arab/Middle Easterners, including those from Saudi Arabia.

Within the limited educational research conducted with the Saudi population in the United States, most of these studies focused on college- and university-level students (Al-Jasir; 1993; Al-Khedaire, 1978; Alfauzan, 1993; Dumiati, 1987; Hall, 2013; Heyn, 2013; Jammaz; 1972; Shaw, 2010). The only study that addressed the educational experiences of elementary-level Saudi children is a qualitative study conducted by Al-Mekhlafi in 1998. In Al-Mekhlafi's study, the social and learning experiences of two Saudi students with limited English proficiency (LEP) who were enrolled in an elementary school in Florida were explored. However, no existing research examined Saudi parents' involvement in their children's education. It is particularly important to pursue this line of research due to the steadily increasing number of Saudi children who are attending school in the United States while their parents take college and university courses.

This study helps fill this gap, and it provides a data-supported understanding of Saudi parents' involvement in their children's education, in particular, and gives some insight into Arab immigrants, in general. This study is crucial because it adds another perspective to the existing literature about immigrant parents' involvement in their children's education, and it helps to address the absence of Saudi families' voices regarding issues of multicultural and literacy education for students in grades K-6.

Scope of the Study

The focus of this study is Saudi children enrolled in American public schools in grades K-6 who are visiting the United States for a short period of time while their

parents focus on higher educational attainment. Specifically, the study attends to Saudi parents' perceptions, knowledge, and practices of involvement as stakeholders in their children's education, particularly in their English reading, writing, and literacy development.

Definition of Terms

In order to gain a full understanding of the impact of cultural differences on Saudi parents' involvement and children's literacy education outcomes, the meaning of the terms *parental involvement, literacy learning, home literacy practices, and international students* should be defined.

Parental involvement is defined in a variety of ways. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2004 defined parental involvement in a general way that can be used in situations in which there are cultural differences. NCLB stated that parental involvement is "the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving students' academic learning and other school activities" (U.S. Department of Education, 2004, sec. 9109(32)).

Epstein defined parental involvement as six types of partnership with the school and community: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community (Epstein, 1995; Epstein et al., 2002; Epstein & Jansorn, 2004). Gonzalez (2013) supported Epstein's definition by defining parental involvement as the "support and participation of parents at home, in the community, and at the school site that directly and positively affect the educational performance of all children" (p. 101). For the purposes of this study, *parental*

involvement is defined as parents' participation in and anticipation regarding their children's schooling and literacy development in and out of school.

Although the most widely used definition of *literacy* is "the ability to read and write decontextualized material" (Heath, 1983, p. 396), the definition of literacy varies depending on the century and the subject area. For the purposes of this study, *literacy learning* is defined as the ability to read, write, and communicate in correct and comprehensible ways.

The term *home literacy practices* has been defined in various ways based on researchers' perspectives. In the context of parental involvement and parental literacy practices, Turan and Akoglu (2014) explained that Burgess (2002) defined home literacy as the "various resources and opportunities provided for children, and the skills, talents, and inclinations of parents, who determine the presentation of these opportunities" (p. 154). Building on this definition, home literacy, as defined for this study, includes all print and other formats of learning materials provided at home; and the activities that are presented in the home, such as reading to the child or listening to the child read; that enhance language, motivate learning, and involve the parents (Martin, 2006, p. 8).

According to the UNESCO's Global Education Digest (2006), the term *international students* refers to internationally mobile students who are crossing borders for the specific purpose of studying, and are now enrolled outside their country of origin (p. 178). This definition does not include international students who are foreign and come to the United States for business or medical purposes and are now enrolled in American schools, and it also does not include students who are immigrants, refugees, or undocumented students.

All Saudi international students enter the United States with either an F-1 or an F-2 visa. An F-1 visa is a residency status that permits international academic students to enter the United States to pursue a full-time course of study at an undergraduate or graduate level. Such students are required to leave the United States once they complete their academic courses, and they are not eligible to work outside of their college or university campuses. The F-2 visa is given to dependents of F-1 visa holders and the visa allows them to enter the United States, enroll in K-12 general education, and take classes part-time in English language institutes, but they are not allowed to work or enroll in full-time academic courses (Visa Coach, 2010).

Overview of the Methodology

A mixed-methods research approach was utilized in this study. A self-administered survey and focus group interviews were used to obtain rich and in-depth data and to strengthen the validity of the evidence. The survey sample included 212 Saudi parents who were invited through the Saudi Arabia Cultural Mission (SACM) public social media (Facebook) page. The data that emerged from the survey were analyzed statistically using general descriptive statistics and Exploratory Factor Analysis. In addition, 20 Saudi mothers were interviewed in four focus groups. The raw data extracted from the focus groups underwent a comprehensive analysis using Template Analysis as one approach of Thematic Analysis methodology (King, Cassell, & Symon, 2004). The two data sets were triangulated in an integrated manner to support and rationalize the research findings.

Delimitations and Limitations

This study is restricted to the knowledge, perceptions, and practices of visiting Saudi parents regarding their children's education. Interest is focused on six essential types of parental involvement, as described in Epstein's model, as well as an additional type of involvement that emerged in the data (discussed in the results section). The survey given to Saudi parents was provided in both English and Arabic, and posted on SACM's Facebook page. The survey was available to all Saudi parents studying in the United States who had joined the SACM's Facebook page. However, spouses who are not students often do not join the SACM's Facebook page; therefore, the chance for them to participate in the survey was low. The restrictions regarding who could see the survey post may have led to missing valuable data because non-student spouses of Saudi students often play a larger role in their children's education than their student partners. The focus group interviews provided rich and in-depth data that could help elaborate on Saudi parents' perceptions. However, participation in the study's focus groups was limited to families living in Wayne County, Michigan, which limited the ability to participate to Saudi citizens living within a specific set of school districts. Therefore, the focus group data does not reflect the perceptions of Saudi parents in other geographic regions.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Although there is a great deal of research to support the idea that children's home languages and cultures can be assets in the classroom (Bank, 2004; Gottlieb & Ernst-Slavit, 2013; Nieto, 2002), dissonance between children's home and school lives can also serve as a hindrance, at times. Oftentimes, cultural minority parents are unable to assume ideal parental involvement roles, or are unaware of the roles they have to play in assisting their children's learning (Li, 2012; Trumbull, 2001). This chapter presents a theoretical framework through which this issue can be viewed, a review of existing literature, and a discussion of the relevance and necessity of this study.

Theoretical Framework

This study is predicated on two related theoretical frameworks, those of Gee (1990, 2008) and Epstein (1995, 2002). Gee's theory of the Discourses goes beyond language in its use; it also includes ways of being. The ways of being that one assumes in the home might be in direct conflict with other Discourses outside the home. Acquiring Discourses beyond one's home requires a full understanding of the new practices and ways of being. On the other hand, Epstein suggested that families, schools, and communities have their own influences upon children, and there are points where the influences of the three spheres overlap. Thus, to best serve a child's unique needs, the child's family, school, and community should develop a partnership and place the child in the center of the overlap between the influences of the three spheres. In this section, Gee and Epstein's theories are explained in-depth as they relate to this study.

Gee's Theory of Discourses with a Capital "D"

According to Gee (1990, 2008), language "always comes fully attached to 'other stuff': to social relations, cultural models, power and politics, perspectives on experience, values, and attitudes, as well as things and places in the world" (2008, p. 1). Gee (1989) presented a theory of Discourses through which Discourses with a capital D are "ways of being in the world; they are forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, and social identities as well as gestures, glances, body positions, and clothes" (p. 6-7). He explained further, "A Discourse is a sort of 'identity kit' which comes complete with the appropriate costume and instructions on how to act, talk, and often write, so as to take on a particular role that others will recognize" (p. 7). He proposed the existence of two domains of Discourse: a primary Discourse and secondary Discourses. A primary Discourse is that which one acquires from one's family; it reflects one's native language, natural way of being, and primary socialization in one's formative years. Secondary Discourses are those acquired through the various social institutions that people participate in beyond their home environments, such as places of worship, businesses, and schools (Gee, 1989).

A primary Discourse, as described by Gee (1989), is a result of one's "*primary socialization* early in life in the home and peer group..." (p. 7). Cultural minority parents, particularly those born and raised outside of the country in which they are raising their own children, are enculturated into ways of acting and talking (the basis of their primary Discourses) by those with whom they interact during their formative years. Primary Discourses vary across the United States, often along lines of cultural, socio-economic, racial, ethnic, and regional group distinctions. Although the primary Discourses of many

groups differ significantly from mainstream Discourses, one is not inherently better or worse than another in terms of social and cultural practices. Therefore, no Discourse should be recognized as right or wrong, or better or worse—rather, they should be seen as simply different from one another (Fiano, 2012; Jackson, 2010).

Secondary Discourses are acquired or learned later in life outside of the home, where one's ways of being have been apprenticed. According to Gee (2008), acquiring secondary Discourses requires compatibility between one's primary and secondary Discourses' ways of being, so one can move freely between Discourses as needed. However, some secondary Discourses' ways of being (e.g., particular ways of speaking, acting, and doing) may vary from one's primary Discourse, and at times are in direct conflict with it, thereby limiting access to them. Some families are aware of the dissonance between their primary Discourses and the Discourses expected by their children's schools as social institutions outside the home. These families may try to acknowledge their children's school Discourses in an attempt to use aspects of them in the home, presumably to ease the transition between Discourses. Gee (2008) asserted that many families are able to borrow and use practices of secondary Discourses in the home-based socialization of their children, and this is called the early borrowing process. The influence of these processes appears later in the alignment with secondary Discourses, and thereby facilitates the acquisition and learning of secondary Discourses.

Gee (2008) also explained that Discourses are associated with the distribution of social power in society. Control over certain Discourses (dominant Discourses) empowers some groups (dominant groups) whose primary Discourses have little conflict with their secondary Discourses, making it much easier for them to master switching

between Discourses. He noted that some people experience more overt and direct conflicts between Discourses, which may obstruct their acquisition of secondary Discourses and thus their access to power.

In many American schools, the dominant Discourse closely matches that of most white, middle-class families, likely because most teachers and administrators are white and middle class (Nieto, 2009). Based on Gee's theory, primary Discourses may come into alignment with some aspects of secondary Discourses while diverging from others. Acknowledging both the positive (alignment) and negative (divergent) interactions between primary and secondary Discourses provides a greater understanding of how parents' primary Discourses influence the roles that parents play in their children's education.

A second issue caused by conflicting Discourses stems from teachers not understanding or investigating the primary Discourses of students and their families. This lack of understanding can lead teachers to believe that parents are not involved or are inappropriately involved in their children's educations, when in reality, they are just enacting different ways of being (Discourses) related to schooling. Teachers who are not able to recognize both types of Discourses will mostly have a limited view of different parental practices. Many parents from diverse cultures and backgrounds argue that their efforts supporting their children's education are not recognized or supported by schools (Morrison, 2009). Teachers should be able to recognize who those parents are, and what different practices they bring with them (as an effort to adapt themselves) into their children's schools (secondary Discourses). Otherwise, cultural minority parents might face undue difficulties in adapting themselves with the junctures revealed when the two

types of Discourses (home and school) converge. Some instances of incompatibility between Discourses can be helpful because they can encourage both parents and teachers to understand the incompatibility between Discourses and work to alleviate any incongruities. If parents and teachers are unable to recognize overlaps between Discourses, they cannot take advantage of the opportunities such overlaps provide to improve the compatibility between students' Discourses. Points of convergence, which are addressed in this study, refer to the contradictions and the overlap that occur when cultural minority parents' primary Discourses meet their children's secondary Discourses in school (mainstream, white, middle-class Discourses).

The Convergence Points in the Epstein Model of Parental Involvement

Whereas Gee wrote about the role of Discourses in the mechanisms through which people are connected, in general, Epstein (1995, 2001, 2002) wrote more specifically about the logistics of how parents and schools connect and collaborate to benefit children. Epstein (1995) used "Overlapping Spheres of Influence" to describe the interactions between and the influences of home, school, and community on children's learning. However, in contrast to Gee, Epstein's ideas were based on the assumption that all parents and schools hold similar goals for children's education. Epstein's research (2002) offered a model called a comprehensive partnership program. The model was inspired by the idea of caring because Epstein claimed that if educators view children simply as students, they are likely to see children's families as separate from the school environment. On the other hand, if educators view students as children, they are likely to see both families and the community as partners with the school in children's education

and development, and locate students in the center of the overlapping of influence (Epstein, 1995, 2001).

Epstein (2001) highlighted four forces that affect the degree of overlap in influence between the home, school, and community that can enhance the relationship between the three spheres and benefit children's educational development. The forces are based on the following factors: first, the time a child has spent at school, his/her age and grade level; second, the experiences, philosophies, and practices of the family; third, of the school; and fourth, of the community. These forces influence the nature of the relationship between school, family, and community, and the effects each has on a child's learning experience. Epstein (2002), like Gee (2007), refuted the idea that parents are at a deficit. However, as opposed to Gee's approach of examining the ways in which home Discourses can be honored in schools, Epstein examined how parents can support the goals of their children's schools in regard to helping students meet academic requirements; in other words, Epstein explored how to help parents adapt and help their children assimilate to schools' Discourses.

Epstein (1995, 2001) suggested that parental effort is most effective when it is utilized in ways that schools believe will have a positive effect on children's education. Epstein argued that when parents' values and beliefs are quite different from the values and beliefs of schools, children will attempt to function one way within the school environment and another way in the home environment. This means that what children learn at school might not be supported at home, and what children bring to school from home might not be valued at school. Epstein suggested that the overlapping of influence is powerful only if schools and families "operate as true partners, with frequent

cooperative efforts and clear, close communication between parents and teachers in a comprehensive program of many important types of parent involvement" (Epstein, 1986, as cited in Epstein, 2001, p. 29).

Epstein's six types of parental involvement model. Epstein's (1995) theory of the "Overlapping Spheres of Influence" has been adopted by the United States Department of Education (USDE, 1994) and the National Parent Teacher Association (PTA, 1995) as a national standard for schools to utilize and for educators to follow in developing parent and family involvement partnership programs. The model identifies six types of involvement that schools can help facilitate:

Type 1: Parenting (helping families with parenting skills)

Type 2: Communicating (assuring effective communication regarding school programs and students' progress)

Type 3: Volunteering (organizing volunteers and providing volunteer opportunities)

Type 4: Learning at home (encouraging parents to work with their children at home)

Type 5: Decision-making (including families in school decisions)

Type 6: Collaborating with the community (coordinating resources and services)

(Epstein, 2001, p. 43-44).

A Unified Approach: Gee, Epstein, and Saudi Families' Involvement in Schooling

The current study integrates both Gee's theory of Discourses with a capital D and Epstein's theory of the "Overlapping Spheres of Influence" as frameworks to explore Saudi Arabian (Saudi) parents' perceptions about their role in their children's education in the United States. Integrating the two theories is crucial when addressing parental involvement with minorities, such as Saudi parents. This is because Gee concentrated on

the juncture points that emerge from the conflict between the primary Discourse (home) and the secondary Discourses (school and community), while Epstein (2001) focused more on the shared points that emerge between the spheres (home, school, and community). Epstein claimed that while schools and families hold mutual interests, goals, responsibilities, and influence on students' learning and development, developing specific policies and programs may enhance the overlap between school and family and helps bring into congruence the actions, attitudes, experiences, and decisions of both parents and teachers in way that positively influences children's achievement (2001, p. 31). Programs and policies that enhance partnership could reduce the confusion parents have regarding "their knowledge of how to help their children at home, their belief that teachers want them to assist their children at home, and the degree of information and guidance from their children's teachers in how to help their children at home" (p. 36). Most importantly, partnership programs also seek to reduce incongruities in literacy practices. This is crucial because literacy, as one form of language in use, reflects all other components that are involved in Discourse, including other people, objects, values, times, and places, and focuses on social and cultural contexts (Gee, 2008).

Deductively, in order to develop an effective partnership program as suggested by Epstein, alignment between families and schools, as suggested by Gee, must be achieved. This is because parents with divergent primary Discourses, largely those who are part of a minority group, can be limited in their educational involvement due to a lack of understanding of or access to the practices associated with the Discourses of schools. Thus, minority parents who hold different views regarding their responsibilities and value different literacy approaches and philosophies than mainstream parents, while also

engaging in their own literacy practices that are rooted in their cultural backgrounds, might be unable to work with mainstream schools as effective partners.

Review of the Literature

There are several bodies of literature that are relevant to the exploration of differences between home and school cultures, and the subsequent effects on literacy learning, including literature on parental involvement in schooling (generally, and specific to literacy) and the role of culture in education. However, because Saudi families are a minority in the mainstream society of American schools, it is reasonable to first address the educational history of Saudi parents who are international students enrolled in institutes of higher education in the United States. This is necessary to help understand the four forces, identified by Epstein, that affect the degree of overlap between Saudi parents' primary Discourses and schools' Discourses, and how the degree of either overlap or conflict impacts Saudi parents' involvement in their children's education. Also, the six types of involvement developed by Epstein will be used as a guideline to explore this issue. The remainder of this literature review synthesizes current research studies of parental involvement around four themes: Saudi parents in the United States; education in Saudi Arabia; the role of culture in parental involvement; and parental involvement in the United States and Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Parents in the United States

According to the 2000-2014 Open Door Reports, American colleges and universities entered the twenty-first century as the unquestionable destination of choice for international students. Although international exchange students have been and are hosted by many other nations, the United States continues to dominate international

enrollments (Institute of International Education, 2014). Thus, in 2005, as part of an initiative by the Saudi Arabian government to improve educational opportunities for citizens of Saudi Arabia, King Abdullah Bin Abdul-Aziz announced the King Abdullah Foreign Scholarships Program. This program was designed to encourage and support students to seek bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees, or medical fellowships in areas of need (as determined by communities, government ministries, and national corporations) from the best universities in the world. Many countries have been selected by the Saudi Arabian government on the basis of higher educational excellence to be included in the scholarship program; however, the United States consistently hosts the largest number of Saudi students each year when compared to all other participating countries (Saudi Arabian Ministry of Higher Education, 2012).

Eight years after President George W. Bush and Saudi monarch Abdullah Al Saud launched the scholarship program in 2005, the number of Saudi students enrolled in American universities increased rapidly, from 3,448 in 2005-2006 to 71,000 in 2012-2013 (Saudi Arabian Ministry of Higher Education, 2012). More interestingly, the 2014 Open Door Report on International Educational Exchange stated that the number of Saudi students at colleges and universities in the United States increased by an additional 21% in the 2013-2014 academic year to approximately 110,000 Saudi students (Arabian Business, 2014). This information confirms that the United States remains the destination of choice for Saudi scholarship students and the Saudi Arabian government. Also, according to the recent Open Door Report (2014), the Saudi scholarship program is considered to be the fourth-largest scholarship program for foreign students to American colleges after China, India, and South Korea (Open Door Report, 2014).

The Saudi Ministry of Higher Education administers all of the Saudi government's scholarship programs, providing Saudi students with full coverage of school fees, health care expenses, and expenses for themselves and their dependents (Ministry of Higher Education, 2012). This generous financial support allows Saudi students to avoid the financial stress that most international and domestic students face. However, funding alone cannot address all of the stress factors that international scholars face, such as issues with language proficiency and cultural mismatches.

Most Saudi scholarship recipients begin their studies in the United States by participating in an English language program to increase their English proficiency and prepare them for the challenges of academic English. These language programs can take anywhere from a month to two years to complete. However, not all language difficulties are related to academic English, and not all language needs can be deferred while the language programs are completed. For example, those recipients with school-aged children must navigate the American education system in order to enroll their children in school. Enrollment processes can be complicated for any parent because many forms and types of documentation are required; however, it is even more so for non-native English speakers because it requires both understanding the education system and communicating in a language in which they are not yet proficient.

As noted above, language is only one factor that composes one's primary Discourse. Accordingly, differences in "ways of being" (e.g., cultural and religious beliefs, norms for politeness, body language, etc.) also pose challenges to Saudi scholarship parents as they attempt to navigate American school systems. Differences in choosing experiences and literacy practices between the two countries create huge

cultural mismatches. In particular, the goals of each country's education system, including values, criteria, requirements, and curricula, vary widely. Consequently, parents' "ways of being" involved in their children's education in Saudi Arabia are different than the expectations for their involvement in American schools. This conflict can hinder Saudi parents' ability to play an effective role in their children's education. These conflicts not only influence how Saudi parents support their children, but such conflicts can also impact how schools meet students' needs and effectively involve Saudi parents in their children's education. If American schools effectively involve Saudi parents in their children's education, the likelihood of Saudi children thriving in American schools increases.

To get a clear picture of the possible impact of cultural mismatches on Saudi parents' involvement in their children's education in American schools, it is important to understand the educational history (primary Discourse) of Saudi parents and their schooling experience in Saudi Arabia. The next section introduces the nature of the education system in Saudi Arabia. Importantly, since the Saudi Arabian education system has rapidly changed in recent years, the next section summarizes the history of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to explain how most Saudi parents perceive their educational roles. Also, related educational issues, curricula, and policies that most current Saudi scholarship parents experienced twenty years ago during their time spent as students in Saudi Arabia are examined in detail.

An Overview of Saudi Arabia and Saudi Arabian Schooling

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, established in 1902, is the second-largest country in the Arab world and it is located in southwest Asia. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

means different things to different people. For Muslims across the world, it is the Holy Land and a pilgrimage destination. For many expatriates from Asia, Europe, and the United States, the Kingdom represents open opportunities for investment. For the rest of the world, Saudi Arabia is most often associated with oil. As a developing country, Saudi Arabia seeks to meet all of these expectations (Ministry of Economy and Planning, n.d.). The lifestyle of Saudis seems to be primarily affected by two factors. The first factor is the Islamic religion because all of the religious and moral laws in Saudi Arabia are based on Islam. The second factor is the environment, which includes the desert lifestyle of many Saudis as the country is covered by large swathes of desert. The influences of these factors are reflected in the character, customs, and traditions of the Saudi people (Al-Sadan, 2000). Education is majorly impacted by these two factors.

The history of education in Saudi Arabia. In 1924, the first modern education system in Saudi Arabia was established and directed by the Directorate of Education. Before that, education was a community responsibility and teaching was an individual effort. Twenty-nine years later, in 1953, the entire national education system was reformed, and the Directorate of Education was replaced by the Ministry of Education. The new Ministry aimed to expand the national school system and modernize the system to be comparable to the education systems of Western nations. In 1970, the official policy of education in Saudi Arabia was established. This policy has remained largely stable and unchanged, with only slight changes taking place through the last thirty years.

Although there have been some systemic changes in the past 15 years, most current Saudi graduate students were educated in the education system that was established in 1970; therefore, this system serves as their main frame of reference as to

how schools function and the roles of various stakeholders (e.g., parents, teachers, and children) in them. The educational style of this era was influenced by the British system in Egypt and by the French system in Lebanon (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014) and Syria (Wiseman, Al-Sadaawi, & Al-Romi, 2008). Islamic and Arabic subjects were the first priority in all curriculum designs. This is primarily due to the importance of learning the Holy Quran and its related literature among Muslims, and the belief that the Holy Quran is the only guide that ensures a happy nation and produces good citizens, which are two of the main goals of education in Saudi Arabia.

Elementary education in Saudi Arabia. In general, elementary education in Saudi Arabia lasts for six years, from ages 6-12 years old. Students from grades one to six study 189 total hours per month. Approximately 57% of the hours of study each week are devoted to Islamic and Arabic studies in each grade as they are the foundations of reading, writing, and literature. No social studies lessons are given to students from grades one to three, while students from grades four to six study this subject only 3% of the hours of study in each grade. The proportion of mathematics and science lessons is about 22% of the hours of study in each grade from one to six. English language lessons are given only to students in grades four to six and compose 3% of the hours of study in those grades. Other hours of study (about 14%) go toward other class activities, such as art and physical education (Alamer, 2014).

Characteristics of education in Saudi Arabia. As explained previously, the education system in Saudi Arabia is influenced by religion. Educational institutes in Saudi Arabia are segregated by gender, from the elementary grades to the university level. Although the education is segregated, all public and private schools, as well as

higher education universities, are controlled by the Ministry of Education. Even though Saudi Arabia has a heterogeneous population that includes numerous cultures and lifestyle differences, Saudi education curricula are standardized across the country; all schools, including private ones, have the same textbooks, and all teachers utilize the same teaching instructions and plans that are listed in the official teacher guidebook. Therefore, the textbooks used in each grade are the main source of reference for the teachers as well as for the students (Al-Sadan, 2000). The applied teaching methods used in Saudi schools are derived from the traditional practices of teaching Islamic subjects and rely on lectures, memorization, and written homework (Rugh, 2002).

Examinations are the primary educational assessment tool used to measure the outcomes of the educational curricula. The academic year is divided into two terms. The educational curricula are divided into these terms, and promotion from grade to grade is decided by two internal examinations in each grade that are held at the end of each term (Ministry of Higher Education, 2006).

Parents' educational roles and responsibilities concentrate on monitoring children's homework and preparing them for their exams by directing and teaching them, and sometimes providing tutoring for them before their exam days, so they can earn good grades. Conferences between teachers and parents are held approximately twice a year for parents whose children are struggling academically. Parents are contacted and immediate parental involvement is required only if their children are displaying any unacceptable social or behavioral practices.

Although the education system in Saudi Arabia has rapidly improved during the past ten years, parental involvement in mainstream schools is still considered a

challenging issue in Saudi Arabia and throughout the Middle East. A few Middle Eastern countries recognize parental involvement as an educational need (Al-anqoodi, 2012), but it is difficult for Saudi education authorities to swim against the current, which represents the forces of experiences and the practices of families, schools, and communities, by initiating regular parental involvement in education. Initiating effective parental involvement as a new concept in Saudi society requires a fundamental change both in the social structure and the education system of Saudi Arabia. The degree of overlap in Saudi Arabia is different than the degree of overlap in the United States because it is affected by family, school, and community practices that are vastly different than those found in the United States (Epstein, 1995).

The Role of Culture in Parental Involvement

Parents are a critical link to their children's literacy development; they act as resources and meaning-makers of their children's literacy learning environment (Ortiz, 2000). Based on that, discrepancies between home and school cultures regarding learning styles and the use of language may put children at risk for poor literacy outcomes. Saudi children studying in American schools might be limited in their literacy development due to school Discourses that are associated with white, middle-class Americans. As a result of these discrepancies, Saudi children's school Discourses might be neglected at home, or be in direct conflict with their home Discourses (Fiano, 2014).

Research studies have illuminated the discrepancies between children's home and school Discourses. For example, Li (2012) conducted an ethnographic study with first-generation Chinese families who immigrated to Canada. The study examined how the families supported their children's literacy development. The study involved eight

Chinese children in grades one through five, their parents, and their Canadian teachers. Intensive observation, interviews, and focus-group discussions were used throughout the one-year study. The study outlined how cultural conflicts regarding literacy instruction, culturally inappropriate yet well-intentioned parental involvement in children's literacy development, and different interpretations of school policies contribute to immigrant children's learning difficulties. To illustrate, for English language learning, Chinese parents mainly utilized homework that involved drill practices using a pencil and paper; they did not consider reading stories to their children to be an appropriate homework method to enhance their children's English knowledge. This means that these Chinese parents rarely, if ever, engaged in parent-child reading at home, or supported reading literature books as part of their children's homework practices. The discrepancies between Chinese parents' conceptualizations of parental involvement and their children's schools' preferences were found to have adverse effects on children's literacy development as each party resisted the other one, and the transitions between home and school were challenging, and even overwhelming, for the children (Li, 2012).

Heath, in earlier ethnographic work (1983), used a longitudinal study to compare the ways in which three different social groups encouraged their children's literacy development via literacy events (any activity involving print). The three communities Heath studied were: Roadville, a white, working-class community; Trackton, a working-class, African-American community; and mainstream, middle-class, urban-oriented African-American and white families; all families were from Piedmont, South Carolina in the United States. Heath concentrated on how children in each community developed literacy during socialization processes that taught them the norms and values of their

communities. Heath found that while the mainstream, middle-class, urban-oriented families' practices aligned well with the school practices, those of the other two groups did not. For example, most of the middle-class parents and their children interacted in ways that closely resembled school expectations for interaction in the children's pre-school years. Adults labeled objects for their children to teach them new words and modeled ways of reading, writing, talking, and discussing.

Unfortunately, Heath found that many children from both Roadville and Trackton were unsuccessful in school, despite both communities placing a high value on education. To find out why this was so, Heath analyzed story reading processes in all three communities. In the mainstream homes, the parents read to their children in ways that reoccur repeatedly at school and in life. The adults read to their children and asked their children follow-up questions, such as, "What is X?" Then, the parents provided their children with verbal feedback in question and answer sequences typical of classroom lessons. Although Roadville parents read to their children, they did not ask their children questions or relate their readings to the real world. Trackton parents provided their children with an entirely different learning environment. There were no reading materials in Trackton homes just for children, and adults did not sit and read to children. Trackton parents did not believe that they should play a tutoring role with their children, and they did not simplify their language to help their children learn, as mainstream parents did, nor did they label items in books or the environment. Children did, however, constantly interact verbally with their peers and adults. Adults did not ask children, "What is X?"; instead, they asked questions with no specific answers. Most Trackton children failed to

learn the content of lessons in school, which Heath hypothesized might in part be because they were not used to answering questions about the content they read in books at home.

Heath asserted that when a school Discourse has not been introduced at home, children may be at risk for academic failure in programs designed (whether intentionally or not) for white, middle-class learners. Heath explained that literacy skills must be practiced, and one cannot practice a skill to which one has not been socialized or even exposed. Unfortunately, this is what most non-mainstream children are expected to do in school (Heath, 1983).

It is crucial to understand that all parents want the best for their children and will do what they can to help them, but the ways in which they go about helping differ from culture to culture. Thus, the ways in which some groups participate may differ significantly from the expectations of their children's schools (Li, 2012; Gee, 1983). A lack of understanding of this type of phenomenon can lead to passive or negative experiences for both parents and teachers. It can also lead to frustration; many parents from diverse cultures and backgrounds argue that they do care about their children's education, but their efforts are not recognized or supported by their children's schools (Trumbull, 2001).

It is important for teachers to recognize and value parents' contributions and standards of participation as the first step toward an effective home-school relationship. As one teacher stated, "It was important for me to understand that European-American middle-class values and standards were not the only way things can or should be done" (Morrison, 2013). This understanding helps teachers to adapt instruction to meet the needs of individual students and help parents to understand the culture of American

schools. For instance, some teachers view African-American children's oral storytelling as ill-informed and believe African-American children's language is a deficit; however, Michaels, in her early work *Sharing Time* (1981), pointed out how children from different cultural backgrounds have different access to literacy; therefore, they might have different narrative strategies than non-minority students. Michaels stated that African-American children's stories fit a different structure and fill a different need than the structures and needs that apply to European-American children (1981). Instead of holding deficit views toward minority students' home literacy backgrounds, teachers should consider students' cultural knowledge and experiences as a foundation to help children link between their knowledge and experiences and school-taught content so they can develop healthy home-school literacy relationships.

Areas of Conflict

The conflict between students' home and school environments creates powerful barriers that can prevent parents from being effectively involved in their children's learning. The conflicts typically appear within three key areas: literacy approach and pedagogies, role expectations, and communication and understanding.

Literacy approach and pedagogies. Perspectives on literacy and approaches to literacy instruction are shaped by cultural concerns that extend beyond the classroom walls. Chu and Wu (2010) stated that when parents' perspectives about literacy and its instruction are in conflict with the mainstream school's perspective, children are subject to a cultural mismatch between school and home. Such cultural clashes are detrimental to children's academic success. As previously mentioned, Li's (2012) work with Chinese immigrants found that Chinese children bring their families' cultural values and practices

to their Canadian school settings, and teachers can perceive such values and practices as incongruent with mainstream school practices. Li revealed that the literacy perceptions of the Chinese parents' with whom Li worked were largely shaped by their culture. For example, they wanted their children to memorize thousands of words because they believed that was the best way to develop their vocabularies. While this practice may be celebrated and encouraged in Chinese schools, many schools in the United States do not encourage such rote learning methods.

The pedagogy of the teachers in Li's (2012) study reflected a mainstream Canadian way of teaching and learning. They used language experiences and literature-based approaches to literacy instruction. Their teaching methods of literacy included innovative methods, such as drawing, role-playing, and drama, as well as an emphasis on play, the acquisition of practical life skills, independent problem solving, and fostering student autonomy. However, Chinese parents sought different learning approaches for their children's English literacy development. They were much more concerned with concrete literacy skills, such as correct spelling, good pronunciation, and standard grammar, and viewed the role of the teacher as monitoring and correcting students' performance.

The cultural mismatch between the ideal learning approaches of teachers and Chinese parents created frustration for all parties. The Chinese parents considered their children's literacy instruction at school to be inadequate due to its lack of rigor. To make up for this deficit, the Chinese parents chose to provide their children with practices that met the norm of homework in their culture. Moreover, many Chinese parents also looked for tutoring for their children to compensate for the "inadequate" schooling they believed

their children were receiving in school. On the other hand, the children's teachers perceived these parental practices and investments as counterproductive to the children's natural cognitive development and not academically or cognitively beneficial. Unfortunately, because the norms for education are quite different in Chinese culture than the norms Canadian mainstream teachers hold, each party held onto what they believed to be the best pedagogy for the children. This resulted in the two parties engaging in a cold war in and out of school.

Role expectations. Two types of role expectations for parental involvement are commonly discussed in the literature: involvement in building children's academic skills and knowledge, and a physical presence and participation in the school and classroom environments. Role expectations might create "puzzlements" when diverse parents expect different roles than the roles that are expected by schools' mainstream culture (Jacob, 1993). To illustrate, in the work provided by Trumbull et al. (2001), the authors developed a framework that helps teachers, schools, and parents prevent conflicts due to differing values and role expectations between teachers and immigrant Latino families. In their study, the authors found that mainstream teachers frequently asked all parents, including Latinos, to work on schoolwork with their children at home. Unfortunately, for many immigrant Latino parents, working on schoolwork at home with their children is not seen as an appropriate parental role. The Latino parents valued the education that teachers provided their children in school and believed they cannot educate their children as well as professionally trained teachers can. Therefore, a large cultural mismatch between the immigrant Latino parents' and mainstream school teachers' expectations

regarding parent involvement created tension between the two groups and hindered students' learning (Trumbull et al., 2001).

Just as expectations for parental involvement vary, there are also cultural differences in the expectations for parents' physical presence and participation in the classroom. For example, coming to school and helping out is a common practice for many mainstream parents in the United States, but many immigrant parents from certain cultures may not feel that this is an appropriate practice because they feel it disrespects teachers' authority. Such parents believe their role is to teach their children family and cultural values, and that teachers should teach their children learning skills (Ferguson, 2003; Li, 2012). A 2011 nationwide survey of children enrolled in public schools examined parents' involvement in schools and their knowledge of basic education. The survey found that one in every five parents in the United States is not involved in school-related activities because they believe that "teachers don't really want parents interfering with their classes" (Public Agenda, 2011). On the contrary, many American teachers encourage parents to participate in their children's schools, and appreciate when they do so, but a cultural mismatch can make it difficult for some immigrant parents to believe they are welcome to participant in their children's schools.

Parental involvement is a completely foreign concept for parents from certain cultures, such as some Asian parents. Li (2012) explained that parents from Hong Kong, "don't have all this volunteer work in the school in Hong Kong, and so they're not so used to that" (p. 98). This difference in role construction can have undesired consequences because school administrators and educators in the United States often see parents' physical presence as the most important sign of parental concern (Payne, 2006).

Communication and understanding. It is hard to build strong and respectful relationships between families and teachers who share similar cultural backgrounds, language, and expectations for schooling, and such communication and relations between parents and teachers who come from different backgrounds can be even more difficult (Wong & Hughes, 2006). When parents and teachers share common values, they are likely to share not just similar assumptions and goals about children's education, but also, they are likely to speak the same way and use similar language so that each party can easily understand each other. Cultural minority parents are likely to communicate differently than their children's mainstream teachers, which can lead to a real risk of misunderstanding.

Trumbull et al. (2001) examined the nature of communication across cultures with regard to the degree to which each culture is a "high-context" or "low-context" communication culture. In high-context cultures, such as those found in Mexico and Japan, people do not need to explain everything to each other; a large part of the meaning of a message is implicit in people's communication because they assume that the listener shares the same values, beliefs, and norms of the speaker. On another hand, in low-context cultures, such as those found in the United States, England, and Germany, communication language is more explicit than the communication in high-context cultures. When people in low-context cultures communicate, they tend to encode everything in the message rather than rely on shared assumptions about beliefs, values, and norms. Understanding these differences in communication language can prevent potential miscommunications between teachers and cultural minority parents.

Trumbull and colleagues (2001) discussed a situation documented by Greenfield, Quiroz, and Reaff (unpublished data, 1996) in which a first-grade child's mother attended a parent-teacher conference. The mother was an immigrant who only had a first-grade education. The teacher talked with the mother about teaching her child at home, and the mother replied that she would like to learn with her child. The mother was from a high-context culture, and when she spoke, she believed her meaning was implicit. She assumed that the teacher got the message that while she would like to learn with her child, she was unable to teach her child, but the teacher did not get the message. Since mainstream teachers in the United States are part of a low-context culture, they are much more explicit and they do not extract single words upon which to focus while effectively gleaning meaning from people's statements. Therefore, the teacher did not appear to notice that the mother stressed she would "like to learn" with her child, implying that she was unable to teach her child due to her education level. This miscommunication was due to the differences between how members of low- and high-context cultures communicate.

Some parents and teachers from different cultures complain that communication with one another is a negative experience for both parties. When parents and teachers do not reach a common understanding, the outcomes of a communication event will not be natural, and the resulting differences between communication styles can cause meanings to be misconstrued, and, thus, cause communication difficulties (California University et al., 1998). Moosa, Karabenic, and Adams (2001) examined teachers' beliefs about Arab parents' communication styles and preferences. They stated that if teachers do not understand the hidden dimensions in the messages and communication styles of Arab parents, they will most likely misinterpret Arab parents' verbal and nonverbal

expressions. Wilson (1996) explained that misrecognizing cultural differences could hinder teachers ability to meet the needs of Arab families and to communicate effectively with Arab parents. Wilson (1996) provided examples in which Arab parents' variable and non-variable communication might be misinterpreted. One example is that Arabs consider using the word "No" in a conversation to be impolite, even if they disagree with the discussion at hand. If teachers cannot recognize Arab parents' disagreement from the context of their conversations, they might not understand Arab parents' true feelings, thus leading to miscommunication and potential tension between Arab parents and teachers from mainstream schools.

Parental Involvement in the United States and Saudi Arabia

Although parental involvement is encouraged in both the United States and Saudi Arabia, each country utilizes different forms of parental involvement that align with the cultural expectations of their societies. There are no inherently good or bad strategies, and one country's parental involvement practices are not stronger than the other's; rather each country's strategies are different due to cultural differences.

In the United States, many departments of education utilize six different types of parental involvement (National Center for School Engagement, 2007) that are suggested by the Epstein Model (2002). The six types are as follows: parenting, learning at home, communication, volunteering, collaborating with community, and decision-making. In Saudi Arabia, the Ministry of Education enacted regulations that share some goals similar to those of the Epstein Model. Comparing the six types of parental involvement with the regulations enacted by the Saudi Ministry of Education, there are three types common to both countries, as well as cultural discrepancies in the remaining three types that might

not exist in Saudi Arabia, or might be in direct conflict with the educational roles that Saudi parents are expected to fulfill.

Parental Involvement Common to the United States and Saudi Arabia

Communicating. Schools in both countries use two-way channels for home and school communications to coordinate school programs and track children's progress. Communication in both countries takes many forms, including parent conferences, regular notices by formal letters, phone calls, report cards, and language translators (in United States schools particularly), to assist families as needed. Families in both countries are encouraged to ask questions about school programs, meet with their children's teachers, and provide information about their children to increase teachers' understanding of their children's needs, and the families' goals for students' learning and success (Epstein et al., 2002; Epstein & Salinas, 2004; Muaallim, 2003).

Students' learning at home. The roles that mainstream American parents play in learning at home include: helping children do homework, doing curriculum-related activities, making decisions regarding the available educational opportunities for their children's benefit, and preparing for examinations. In the younger grades, families in the United States may support reading and engage in reading-related activities on a daily basis. In the same manner, parents in Saudi Arabia provide their children a lot of support at home that focuses mostly on doing homework, though this support is mainly guided toward helping students prepare for their mid-term and final exams (Shaw, 2010), rather than doing activities related to what they learned at school that day or literacy activities. Parent-child reading, or bedtime stories, for example, are not common practices in which Saudi parents engage to develop their children's reading skills. Instead, parents

encourage their children to focus on reading and comprehension of the Holy Book (the Quran). This is typically the most common, daily-basis family reading practice, which is also the core curriculum at schools that most Saudi families embrace. Thus, families in both the United States and Saudi Arabia focus on reading and understanding text, but in the United States, the text selection is broad, while in Saudi Arabia it is concentrated on the Holy Quran and related Islamic literature.

Collaborating with the community. In both countries, collaborating with local communities is a school-based practice that enables families to become involved in their children's education and contribute to society. Collaborating with the community in the United States includes after-school programs, summer enrichment and remedial activities, health services, cultural events, and other beneficial programs (Sanders & Harvey, 2000). Although Saudi parents do not play an initiative role in collaborating with the local community, they often respond to schools' invitations, and they are effective in their response. Parents are often willing to participate in school-community activities as soon as they are invited to do so by schools. In fact, the limited number of educational activities in Saudi Arabia's local communities (Youth for Understanding, n. d.) encourages parents to react effectively and take advantage of provided opportunities. National or religious events, after-school programs, and summer schools are common ways that Saudi parents collaborate and become connected to their children's education and their local communities in Saudi Arabia.

Cultural Discrepancies in Three Types of Parental Involvement in Both Countries

Parenting. Based on Epstein's model of parental involvement, parenting includes helping families establish good home environments for learning; providing families with

educational development courses or training; and assisting families with health, nutrition, and other services (Epstein et al., 2002). Currently, schools in the United States often provide effective, evidence-based programs that have been determined to have a high likelihood of producing positive impacts on parents' involvement in their children's education (Kaminski et al., 2008). Popular programs utilized in the United States include Parents as Teachers, Parenting Through Change, Raising a Thinking Child, Strengthening Families, and Cub Coffee programs (Small & Mother, 2009).

Conversely, in Saudi Arabia, the concept of parenting programs is currently an emerging concept. The need for such programs in Saudi Arabia emerged after two great shifts took place in the education system. First, new modern curricula were developed and adopted in 2009 that apply a completely different approach versus what Saudi children had been taught for the previous 25 years (Al-hamad, 2010). Second, the Noor Program (the Educational Management Electronic System) was established in 2011 to serve schools, students, teachers, parents, and educational directors; and it covers all schools affiliated with the Saudi Ministry of Education. The program offers more than 2763 types of online services, such as providing an electronic copy for all standardized curricula applied in schools, allowing parents to track their children's academic progress, providing information on schools' educational progress, and maintaining a central database linked with other government systems in Saudi Arabia. The Noor Program earned an award for excellence at the World Summit for the Information Society in 2012 (Committed to Connecting the World, 2012).

In 2015, Alzahrani completed a study to examine the effectiveness of the Noor Program. Alzahrani found that the Noor Program was an advanced and sophisticated

system that challenged educators by encouraging educational supervisors to provide teachers with useful publications and educational materials, and assistance to plan educational training programs (Alzahrani, 2015). Unfortunately, Alzahrani also found that the Noor Program was not well understood by most Saudi parents of schoolchildren. Many Saudi families are inexperienced regarding integrating technology into the education process. Therefore, comprehensive education is needed to explain to parents how the Noor Program works, and how they can use the program to enhance their children's educational experiences.

Parenting programs in Saudi Arabia are still rare and limited to school curricula and systems. Therefore, most Saudi parents are unaware of the variety of parenting support programs that American schools provide, and this limits their access to the school community and to the available sources they can use in assisting and tracking their children education and development.

Volunteering. Volunteer efforts in American schools are welcome from anyone, at any time, and in any place (within reasonable safety limits) (Epstein, 2001). Mainstream American parents often offer their time and talents to improve the quality of school programs and increase the success of students. When parents volunteer their time at their children's schools, their efforts can take a variety of forms, such as assisting homeroom teachers, fundraising, and attending school events (Epstein et al., 2002). In sharp contrast, parental volunteering is not a culturally customary act or a welcomed practice in Saudi Arabia, except for parents being in the audience for school events to support their children's performances (Kojah, 2013). Also, volunteer fundraising is prohibited in any form, including fundraising for school supplies (Ministry of Education,

2012). Taking into account these huge conflicts in volunteer practices in both countries, Saudi parents may not be comfortable or familiar with the idea of volunteering at their children's schools, particularly for fundraising events, but this is not because they do not want to become involved; rather, it is because they are unfamiliar with parental involvement practices of this type.

Decision-making. A majority of parents in America have the opportunity to be involved in school decisions, governance, and advocacy. Simultaneously, schools strengthen parents' participation in school decisions by encouraging the organization of strong parent associations, and by including parents and community representatives on school councils and committees in a way that can lead to increased student achievement (Epstein et al., 2002).

In contrast, families in Saudi Arabia are accustomed to giving schools full authority in decision-making without any interference. Saudi cultural heritage encourages families to give full support to the decisions schools make, whatever those decisions may be. Also, the school system structure does not include parents or provide them with decision-making opportunities. An example that might support this assumption is that parents' organizations in Saudi Arabia are simply meetings that parents are invited to attend as guests rather than as effective, decision-making members. Due to this discrepancy between parents' roles in decision-making, Saudi parents might appear to be passive when participating in their children's educations; however, in reality they show their trust of schools by giving full authority to teachers and educational leaders, such as principals.

In sum, though parental involvement in the United States and Saudi Arabia share some similar characteristics, there are characteristics of involvement in the United States with which Saudi parents are unfamiliar. Even if Saudi parents have been informed about common parental involvement practices in American schools, they frequently lack the experience needed to become effectively involved in such practices unless they receive support from schools and teachers.

Summary of Literature Review

This critical review of the research literature addressed the role of cultural differences on parental involvement, in particular, Saudi parents who are international students in the United States and their involvement in their children's education. While the role of cultural differences in parental involvement is well documented in the research literature, there is considerably less research regarding the effects of cultural minority parents, such as Saudi parents, holding different perceptions about their roles in their children's education in the United States.

Until more is known specifically about what Saudi parents believe about their children's education, a gap remains in the research literature. The purpose of this mixed-methods research study is to examine how Saudi parents understand involvement in their children's education in American schools from the parent's point of view. This review of the literature addressed the nature of schooling in Saudi Arabia that most current parents have received and might apply to their literacy practices and experience with their children's schooling in the U.S.; an overview of the role of culture in parental involvement highlighting the areas of conflict; and commonalities in parental

involvement practices between Saudi Arabia and the United States. The next chapter describes the research methodology used in this study.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In the following pages, the research methodology of this study is described. The chapter begins with an explanation of the purpose of the study, research questions, and research paradigm. Next, I explain the methodology being used in detail; the particular role of the researcher; the research design, along with a discussion of the participants; the methods of data collection and procedures; how data were analyzed; and how the validity of the instrument was assessed, credibility and trustworthiness of the data and ethical concerns.

In this study, I aimed to gain an understanding of the different experiences that Saudi parents' have in relation to their children's education in the United States. More precisely, I investigated the perceptions of Saudi parents about their involvement in their children's schooling and education in the United States, focusing on the following research questions:

- What are Saudi parents' beliefs about their roles in their children's education?
- What do Saudi parents understand, in general, about the education system in the United States, and how it might be navigated?
- How do Saudi parents perceive and describe the nature of the Saudi family-school relationship?
- What are the cultural differences in schooling in Saudi Arabia and the United States that might influence Saudi families' contributions to their children's English literacy development?

The Research Paradigm

This study is predicated on the idea that reality can be co-constructed by a group, but exploring the reality of others is always an act of interpretation. Utilizing a *constructivist-interpretive* paradigm means that the researcher "understands that research as an interactive process shaped by one's personal history, biography, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity and those of the people in the setting" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 6). I used an interpretive-constructivist lens in this study because I was seeking to reveal multiple realities from Saudi parents about their perceptions of American schools, schooling, and their involvement in both. Then, I interpreted these realities through my filters as a Saudi researcher and parent who lives in the U.S. and has children in an American elementary school. Thus, I share several characteristics with the participants, but also differ from them in many ways.

Although the *constructivist-interpretive* term is commonly used in the research field as simply *constructivist*, I prefer the combined term utilized by Denzin and Lincoln (2005) because it positions the researcher as having a role in the study. Creswell (2013) wrote that there are two main criteria for being a constructivist. First, constructivists believe there is no absolute knowledge and they seek an interpretive understanding of reality. As a researcher, I believe there is no an objective reality about parents' involvement; rather the reality emerges as constructed by participants. Second, Creswell (2013) pointed out that a researcher's own background shapes their interpretation; who you are affects how you interpret the described experiences of others. As a constructivist-interpretivist, the researcher's position in the research is "to acknowledge how their

interpretation flows from their personal, cultural, and historical experiences" (Creswell, 2013, p. 8).

Research Design

In order to address the research questions, this mixed-methods study utilized a quantitative survey followed by focus group interviews. According to Creswell, "the uses of both quantitative and qualitative methods, in combination, provides a better understanding of the research problem and question than either method by itself" (2012, p. 535). In this study, it was important for both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection to occur in sequence, so responses from each method could be used to interpret the other. The quantitative data that emerged from the survey helped shape the focus group themes and questions. On another hand, the data that emerged from the focus groups enriched and provided context for the interpretation of the questionnaire data.

I decided to utilize an electronic, self-administered survey because it allowed me to contact a large sample size that is representative of the target population (Phellas, Bloch, & Seale, 2011). Having a large, representative sample helped me in exploring the main issues Saudi parents feel strongly about in terms of their involvement in their children's schooling by increasing the variety of experiences I was able to explore. Then, I used this information as I designed the focus group questions.

I chose to employ focus group interview methodology rather than individual interviews for a number of reasons. In focus group interviews, the researcher has the opportunity to observe numerous participants interacting and discussing a specific topic during a limited time period (Smith, 2007). This encourages participants to hold conversation-like interactions that lead to reflection by the discussion parties. Also, the

participants' internal thinking can be enhanced when they hear others present their thoughts and comments (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008). Moreover, while the focus group discussion can be directed by the moderator to capture the desired information (Smith, 2007), using a focus group is ideal for constructivist-interpretive research because "the researcher's intent is to make sense of (or interpret) the meanings others have about the world" (Creswell, 2013, p. 8). Finally, discussing the same topic with multiple participants can provide saturated data (Smith, 2007). The saturated data can be achieved when the "researcher ensures that sufficient data to account for all aspects of the phenomenon have been obtained" (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002, p. 18). Thus, having saturated data ensured efficient and effective saturation of categories, with optimal quality data (Morse et al., 2002).

In summary, I was seeking interpretive understanding of Saudi parents' perceptions about their role in their children's education in the U.S. by applying qualitative mixed-methods research. The chosen methods, a self-administered survey and focus groups, were suitable to gain saturated, in-depth data by examining the various viewpoints of those who are directly involved in a common experience.

The Researcher's Role

At the time of this study, I was an international graduate student and the mother of three children who had been students in American public schools since 2010. As a Saudi parent, I struggled to be involved in appropriate ways in my children's schooling within the first two years after arriving. After I gained some understanding of American schools, because I was a graduate student in Curriculum and Instruction with a concentration in elementary education, and the vice president of the Saudi Student Association for 2013-

2014. I volunteered to counsel Saudi parents in regard to their children's education in the United States. I, as a researcher, played two primary roles in this study. First, being a part of the participant's community, I could better communicate with the participants to reveal the desired data. Also, being from the same community, I could invite people whose experiences I know, which might have enriched the discussion and produced data to help answer the research questions. Second, I undertook, by myself, data collection and the analysis processes. Because I speak two languages, English and Arabic, I was able to design the measures, and transcribe and analyze the data in both languages.

Research Instruments

The data collection and analysis were conducted in two main stages, with sub-phases within each stage, starting with the self-administered survey, followed by the focus group interview findings' triangulated with the survey results. The analysis and traingulation of the two data sets is explained as follows.

First: Self-Administered Survey

Recruiting participants. I was interested in exploring the experiences of a particular group of people and not in generalizing beyond that group; therefore, I used criterion-sampling methodology and set strict criteria for inclusion. Participants had to: (a) be Saudi Arabian, (b) currently live in the United States, (c) be a student or the spouse of a student, and (d) have children in K-5/K-6 (based on the district) U.S. public schools. Saudi parents were the only source of data for this study. All Saudi students in all regions of the United States who joined the Saudi Arabia Culture Mission public social media (Facebook) page were invited to participate in the study. Using *random sampling*

increased the chances of obtaining a sample that would be representative of the target population of this study.

However, because there was no guarantee that all Saudi students and their spouses are following or even visiting the SACM page on Facebook, there was a bias in reaching all targeted people. To avoid further bias and to have as good of a probability sample as possible, the link to the survey was widely shared through the SACM's Facebook page sub-groups. This also allowed a greater chance of reaching a hidden population for this study: the spouses of Saudi students who may be residing in the U.S. as companions of students.

For this study, the population size is not precisely known. While approximately 110,000 Saudi scholarship students are currently studying in the United States, only 4453 of those students are the parents of elementary-school-age children (i.e., 5 to 11 years old) (M. A. Assaf, personal communication, June 18, 2015). These 4453 students who are also parents may also have a spouse who is either a companion or is also a student at an American university. Therefore, the number of possible participants in the survey ranges from 4453 to 8906. To determine an adequate sample size for the survey, I used Qualtrics software. Given a 6% margin of error and a 90% level of confidence, and using a possible population of between 4453 and 8906, I calculated that I would need a sample size of between 181-185 participants with a response distribution of 50%.

Survey data collection. I created a survey, which I entitled *Saudi Parent Survey of Parental Involvement in the Elementary Grades and Literacy Development (SPS)*. The purpose of this survey was to reveal trends related to Saudi parents' involvement in their children's elementary education. I began by reviewing Epstein's survey (discussed in

Chapter 2) entitled *Parent and Student Surveys of Family and Community Involvement in Elementary and Middle Grades* (Sheldon & Epstein, 2007). Epstein's survey of parental involvement has been shown to be valid and reliable when used to evaluate school, family, and community partnership in the six areas of parent involvement identified by Epstein (Epstein, 1995; Epstein et al., 2002; Epstein & Jansorn, 2004), and the PTA's National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs (PTA, 1995). Epstein's survey is organized around the six types of involvement as discussed in Chapter Two: learning at home, parenting, communicating, volunteering, decision-making, and collaborating with the community.

The Epstein survey does not, however, measure particular cultural practices that I was interested in exploring with Saudi parents. Therefore, I conducted an extensive review of the extant literature on the role of cultural differences in parental involvement in literacy practices (e.g., Heath, 1983; Li, 2006; Trumbull et al., 2001) in order to design questions that would help me explore cultural differences in Saudi parental involvement in literacy. I created 26 questions that addressed both culture and literacy practices that could be asked of Saudi parents. I also used 34 questions from the Epstein survey – permission to use the survey was obtained from the authors (Appendix A). The resulting modified/designed survey for this study included 60 fixed-choice questions divided into four main sections: personal information, school contact, your involvement, and your ideas (see Appendix B for the full survey). The questions grouped under each section were based on a Likert scale (i.e., "strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree," "every day/most of the time, once a week, once in a while, never"), except the personal information section, which included multiple-choice items. The survey was designed to

be completed in 10-15 minutes.

An electronic copy of the survey was designed using Qualtrics Software in both Arabic and English. Participants were able to choose to take the survey in either English or Arabic. Then, the link of the e-survey was posted on the SACM Facebook page. To avoid the inclusion of participants who did not meet the basic study criteria, the Facebook invitation for the survey asked: "Do you have a child/children in an American public elementary school?" so as to only survey people who did. Also, within the first few questions, the participants were required to identify the elementary grade levels of their child from K-6. If they did not, they could not continue with the survey. If the participants did not fit the criteria for the study, they were not included in the study.

After one week, the e-survey advertisement was reposted and shared with all of the sub-groups within the SACM Facebook page, which spans universities with Saudi student associations across the U.S. Two weeks later, only 84 participants had completed and submitted the survey. Because the targeted number of responses had not been reached, a four-week extension of the survey deadline was applied, and the e-survey advertisement was reposted every week. By the sixth week of posting the survey online, I had received 229 completed surveys (incomplete surveys were rejected). Finally, 17 participants who identify themselves as Saudi American citizens were excluded because they are likely to have lived in the U. S. for some periods of time and accordingly have different experiences with schooling than Saudi scholarships. So, I ended up with 212 of the completed surveys, which are more than enough to satisfy a representative sample size.

Statistical analyses for the numerical data. The *Saudi Parent Survey of Parental*

Involvement in the Elementary Grades and Literacy Development was designed to provide information about the common practices and ideas of Saudi parents' related to their educational roles under each of the six types of parent involvement. The data were collected online through Qualtrics.com. All data were transferred to the software program SPSS. Afterward, items about Saudi parents' practices and ideas in the survey were re-grouped under the six types of parental involvement. In order to present the values of interval data produced by the Likert scale and to be able to report a single average for each item, each response was assigned a value as follows: strongly agree = 4 points, agree = 3 points, disagree = 2 points, strongly disagree = 1 point.

To estimate the reliability of the survey items, Cronbach's Alpha Internal Consistency was calculated to compute the internal consistency reliability of all the responses to questions. Because the number of questions under each type of involvement is uneven, I calculated the level of Cronbach's Alpha Internal Consistency under each type of involvement separately.

Lastly, considering the gender and residential status of the participants, I created across-tabulations tables that display the frequencies of parents' responses by gender and residential statuses in each scale. Because the number there was only 7 males with F2 visas out of 85 male participants, I combined them and reported the frequencies of their responses as one group of males (F1 & F2 visa types).

In addition to the descriptive statistics, I ran an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) for the survey items under each scale. To run the factor analysis on the data, Garson, (2007) claimed that there should be at least 10 cases for each variable, which means the minimum sample size for my survey to run the factor analysis should be 530.

However, I only had 229, so I decided to apply EFA within each type of scale item instead of the entire survey so I could be within the range of subjects-to-variables ratio. Since I modified and used a valid survey, Epstein's Survey of Partnership (2007), my aim of applying the EFA was to explore the subcategories within each type of involvement. By running principal components analysis using oblimin rotation, I was able to reduce the 53 variables to a few factors (subcategories) of parental involvement under each of the six scales. Then, these factors were discussed during the focus group interviews.

The number of the factors was determined by considering the following criteria: Kaiser's criterion of initial Eigenvalues greater than 1.0 and the conceptual meaningfulness of factors (Field, 2009; Hair et al., 2006). Because I have an uneven number of items under each scale, I used two different ways to extract the number of factors. I forced (three) as the number of the extracted factors in scales that had more than seven items to avoid having a big number of factors within the scale. Forcing a specific number made it easier to extract the themes and more manageable to address them. However, the numbers of extracted factors in scales that have items less than seven were based on Eigenvalues greater than 1.00.

Since items loaded with a coefficient value of less than .30 are considered low, and loadings of .40 or greater are typically considered high (Leeh, Barrett, & Morgan, 2015), I suppressed loadings less than .40. Only factors that had three or more items that loaded at .40 or higher were considered. Although some items were disregarded statistically since they had a low value of loading with any of the factors, I considered them in a thematic way in defining the factors.

Second: Focus Group Interviews

Recruiting participants. The number of focus group participants was smaller and recruited differently than the survey participants, though some participants may have been included in both data sets. Because I needed to be physically present to mediate the focus group interviews, it was not feasible to select participants from the nation-wide database of survey participants. Rather, I chose to invite participants living in close proximity. Thus, I was drawn to the pool of participants who fit the sampling criteria, but also lived in or near my own community, which is located in the Midwestern U.S. and has a sufficient Saudi student population.

I chose focus group participants from two types of communities in this location because these types of communities have varying concentrations of Arab Americans. Thus, the support mechanisms within the community and schools were also likely to vary.

In the first community, the majority of the population was Arab American and there were many support mechanisms for Arab-American families. When Arab-American children comprise a large percentage of the school population, Saudi children are more invisible. Saudi children in those schools often are counted as Arab Americans who are bilingual or ESL learners. The second community is also nearby but has a lower percentage of Arab-American children in the schools. Thus, Saudi children and their families are likely to receive greater attention because they stand out more. This trend is also common in other regions of the U.S., such as California, New York, Florida, Texas, New Jersey, Illinois, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Virginia, where the majority of Arab Americans live (Arab American Institute, 2015). Although Arab Americans are a minority in the United States, Saudi parents are a minority within the Arab minority, so

erroneously viewing them as part of the Arab-American population can lead to overlooking important distinguishing features.

In addition to the general four criteria of sampling used in the survey (i.e., Saudi Arabian, currently live in the U.S., student or spouse of a student, and children in K-5/K-6 U.S. public schools), a fifth criterion – to be a female/mother – was applied in recruiting participants for the focus groups for cultural reasons. Because Saudi culture is segregated by gender, it would be more culturally appropriate for the participants to speak with a researcher of the same gender. Because I am female and the moderator for the focus groups, inviting female participants would be culturally required and thus afford the participants better opportunities for communication and collaboration with me. Furthermore, in Saudi culture, women often carry the most responsibility for caring for the educational success of the children, both female and male. Thus, Saudi mothers were the best participants for this study as they are more likely to provide rich and in-depth data for this study than Saudi fathers. This, in turn, helped produce saturated data.

The Saudi mothers who were asked to participate in the focus groups were recruited through a purposive sample, which "can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon of the study" (Creswell, 2012, p. 299). More specifically, I utilized one strategy of the purposive samples, the *Criterion Sampling Strategy*, in which the researcher is responsible for recruiting participants who meet specific criteria for the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). As an active member of the Saudi community in my location as well as the Saudi Student Community Association, I know many Saudi families in my geographic area. Therefore, I identified 27 Saudi mothers who were known to me and fit all other criteria appropriate to the study

who could be participants. Since most of these mothers knew me personally, a research assistant was hired to recruit and obtain consent of the study participants. This was crucial to reduce coercion with regard to participating in the focus groups. A total of 27 mothers were invited. The research assistant contacted possible participants by phone and invited them to volunteer for the focus group, answered their inquiries about the research study, and made sure they understood the purpose of the study and their expected roles. Of the 27, 20 mothers consented to participate. Formal informed consent took place during the focus group sessions.

Focus group data collection. Twenty participants met in four separate focus groups. While the ideal number of participants suggested by (Creswell, 2012, p. 384) is to have four to six participants in each focus group, I invited five to eight mothers for each session in case something came up and one or more of the participants could not attend. I grouped participants by residency status based on their Visa types (F1, F2). Grouping participants based on their residency status is important since people with the (F2) visa type have more limited educational opportunities; they are not allowed to work, or apply to universities, and thus often have fewer interactions with English speakers and, as a result, lower language proficiency. Thus, each of the focus group members was likely to share the same experiences and have approximate English language levels.

Since the mother participants with F1 visas are full-time students, and the mother participants with F2 visas are either part-time students or not students at all, I conducted two focus groups for student mothers with F1 visa types and two focus groups for mothers with F2 visa type. The interviews were held in January 2016, so the mothers had completed at least four months of American school experience upon which to base their

discussion. The groups met in a private meeting room at a local public library. The location was suitable for all of the participants because it is available to the public and near most of the participants' homes. The exact dates and times were decided based on the participants' availability. However, we had to reschedule two of the focus groups' assigned meetings based on the participants' requests. After the phone call invitation and before the assigned day of conducting the focus groups, the research assistant sent a reminder email including the time, location, the purpose of the study, and the participants' roles in enriching the discussion. At the time of the interview, the number of participants who attended varied from group to group based on the participants' circumstances at the time of conducting the focus group (between four to eight).

The main questions for the focus group interviews were created by applying Exploratory Factor Analysis, using Principal Component Analysis, for the survey data of the six types of involvement, as described previously. Applying Principal Component Analysis allowed me to reduce the large number of questions used in the electronic survey by using the factors that were retained from the statistical analysis as frames to design summary questions encompassing the components (items) under each type of parental involvement. I later used these six types of involvement as priori themes and the factors as predefined codes for the interviews' data analysis. Sub-questions that were not predefined emerged from the participants' flow of discussion. See Appendix C for the focus group priori themes and questions.

Most of the 12 factors were discussed in each of the focus group interviews, one main question for each factor. However, I was not able, because of the time limitations, to address each factor in each focus group, although all 12 factors were discussed in at

least two of the four sessions. Some of the participants' answers fit under more than one factor, and I will give examples, but that not all parents responded to all questions that were posed. Each question was addressed within 10 minutes before I, the moderator, shifted to the next question in order to address at least six factors during each session; it is important to bear in mind that not all parents were asked all questions, and not all of those who were asked responded to all questions.

Each focus group session began with welcoming the participants and a short introduction to the task by the research assistant to explain the roles, how the session would be documented, and how the researcher would ensure the security and privacy of the data. The participants were then given time to sign the consent form. Next, the discussion began with a grand tour: a question to obtain participants' first overall experiences with the U.S. educational system (Stewart, 2006), followed by the main questions and related follow-up questions to further probe participants' thinking on the topics. The duration of each focus group session was around 60-90 minutes. Otherwise, after one hour, fatigue might have lessened the quality of the data. The entirety of each session was recorded on digital audio files.

Qualitative analysis of the raw interview data. All of the focus group conversations were transcribed verbatim in Arabic and then translated into English. Data extracted from the focus group interviews were used to confirm and highlight contradictions in the results that emerged from the quantitative survey data. The qualitative data were coded and analyzed using *Template Analysis* as one approach of *Thematic Analysis* methodology for qualitative data. While "thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun &

Clarke, 2006, p. 79), template analysis allows the researcher to produce a list of predefined codes ('templates') representing themes identified in the textual data. However, the researcher might modify these predefined codes during the reading and interpreting process (King, Cassell, & Symon, 2004).

For this study, the themes were provided prior to the textual analysis based on the literature review and the theoretical framework of the study. Then, the predefined codes (factors) under each theme were developed using the Exploratory Factor Analysis for the quantitative data, as explained previously.

Using the template analysis approach in the analysis of the qualitative focus group data was ideal because I was seeking to generate patterns from the qualitative data under themes. I was not going beyond that in this stage of analysis, and there was no aim to develop theories from completely qualitative data. Theorizing the data and answering the research question was the result of the final stage of the analysis, when the qualitative and quantitative data were integrated and reported together. Template analysis of the focus group data involved seven levels of coding as follows:

I. ***Transcribe the raw data.*** The four sessions of the interviews were transcribed and translated into English.

II. ***Segment the text.*** All interview transcripts were divided into codable segments at the idea level. The segments were bounded by changes in either the speaker or the topic.

III. ***Create the theme book.*** All predefined codes were categorized and defined under each of the prior themes retrieved from the theoretical framework to answer the research questions. The first sixth themes are the six types of involvement suggested by Epstein's (2007) model of partnership (learning at home, parenting, communicating, volunteering,

decision-making, and collaborating with the community). The seventh theme (cultural differences) was retrieved from Gee's (2007) theory of the Discourses.

IV. ***Coding raw data.*** This phase involved identifying segments in the text that most represent one or more of the predefined codes, then sorting the segments using NVivo software. The process of reading and coding was done several times until sufficient meaning was extracted from the entire raw data.

V. ***Apply inter-coder reliability.*** Inter-coder reliability assesses the degree to which coding of text by multiple coders is similar. Measuring the degree of agreement between coders is a substantial process in this stage of analysis as a tool assessing the quality of the study findings (Hruschka et al., 2004). For this study, two coders worked individually on coding an initial 25% of the raw data. I calculated the percentage of agreement and the value of Kappa. The Kappa statistics is an appropriate measure for the inter-rater reliability. Using Kappa instead of raw percentage of agreement was important because it includes the possibility that the two raters guessed on at least some variables because of uncertainty (McHugh, 2012). Although we reached a substantial agreement with a Kappa value of 0.70 ($p < 0.000$), the raw percentage of agreement was lower than desired at 69%. Then, the two coders met, discussed, and resolved all disagreements. Then, the second round of inter-coder reliability check covered another 25% of the raw data, and resulted in 81.3% percentage simple agreement and a Kappa value of 0.80 ($p < 0.000$), which is considered to be at the substantial agreement level. All disagreements were discussed and resolved. Then, I alone coded the remaining 50% of the data.

VI. Generate the findings from the qualitative data and triangulate the two data sets. After coding the transcripts and reviewing the categories several times, I developed

statements that accurately reflect the data in each category. The statements were supported by quotations from the data, as needed.

During this final stage, the analysis processes went beyond the surface content of the data to recognize and interpret the underlying ideas, practices, and perceptions by interweaving the results of the quantitative and qualitative data analyses, and exploring how the findings generated from the two different types of data support each other. The results from the survey data were rationalized and supported by the findings that emerged from the focus group data. I provided a comprehensive description that brought together all areas of analysis (the survey and focus group data) in a single coherent report to answer the research questions. This type of triangulation allowed me to verify the validity of my conclusions.

In short, the use of multiple data-collection techniques (survey and focus groups) helped produce data that is rich, in-depth, and saturated in exploring Saudi parents' perceptions about their roles in their children's educations. The different stages of analysis included in this design offered a comprehensive understanding of the data relevant to the issue.

Validity and Credibility

Although I applied Epstein's survey of partnership (2007) for this study, I also used expert review as a way to ensure and improve construct validity for the modified survey of partnership (modified to include questions that are applicable for the Saudi community), making sure that the included questions were likely to result in data related to Saudi parents' perceptions of their involvement in their children's schooling. Three experts, a professor and two Ph.D. candidates who have been exposed to American

schools, are specialists in education, and are familiar with the constructs, examined the items and approved the survey with their feedback.

The main verification strategy that strengthens the credibility of the results of this study is triangulation. Guba (1981) noted that an investigator should provide documentation for every claim or interpretation from at least two sources to ensure that the data support the researcher's analysis and interpretation of the findings. In the current study, I applied two types of triangulation identified by Denzin (1970). First, I applied *theory triangulation,* which involves using more than one theoretical scheme in the interpretation of the phenomenon. By viewing the data through lenses of the "Big D Discourses theory" (Gee, 2007) and the "overlapping spheres of influence theory" (Epstein, 1995), I was better able to support my findings from two different perspectives, which helps to ensure the validity and credibility (Guba, 1981).

In addition, I applied *between-method triangulation* by combining divergent methods, so the strengths of one counter-balanced the weaknesses of the other (Denzin, 1971). Between-methods triangulation is a powerful technique in dealing with validity threats stemming from the biases inherent in any single method (Denzin, 1971). For example, using the survey alone would not have allowed me to propose follow-up questions or provide more explanation for the participants if needed; conducting the focus group interviews offset that limitation. Collecting data from two different sources also allowed me to minimize the threat of social reactivity that may have affected the focus groups by conducting an anonymous survey, in which it was less likely that participants would skew their answers to favor social desirability or the opinion of the larger sample. Verifying the findings from two different perspectives and theories also helped minimize

the impact of the researcher's personal experiences on data analysis and interpretation.

However, it should be noted that there is some degree of bias in all interpretive analysis. In this study, the threat of bias stemmed from the fact that I share many of the participants' common experiences. As a Saudi parent who has children in American schools and is an educator, all my personal and professional experiences are brought to this research study. It is possible that my own experiences and internal thought might have unduly influenced my interpretation of the data (Phellas et. al., 2011). Thus, I acknowledge that my personal and professional experiences influence the lens through which the data were analyzed and interpreted in this study.

Ethical Considerations

In addition to the concerns about researcher bias and tool validity addressed above, I also considered ethical issues related to informed consent and protecting the privacy of my participants. Prior to data collection, I provided participants with an informed consent form that included the research statement, possible benefits and risks of participation in the study, a description of the voluntary nature of the study, and a description of how I would maintain the confidentiality of the data. Further, I used pseudonyms for participants in written transcriptions of the focus group discussions to ensure confidentiality and did not request any identifying information from survey participants. All data were stored in secure, password-protected electronic files. All audio recordings were destroyed after transcription was complete.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The purpose of this chapter is to present the results of the parent survey data analysis and findings from the focus group data analysis in order to address the following research questions:

- What are Saudi parents' beliefs about their roles in their children's education?
- What do Saudi parents understand, in general, about the educational system of the United States, and how it might be navigated?
- How do Saudi parents perceive and describe the nature of the Saudi family-school relationship?
- What are the cultural differences between schooling in Saudi Arabia and the United States that might influence Saudi families' contributions to their children's English literacy development?

This chapter contains four major sections. The first section includes an overview of the data preparation and analysis procedures. The second section presents results of the Saudi parent survey related to the parents' beliefs about the six types of parental involvement proposed by Epstein and colleagues (Epstein, 1995; Epstein et al., 2002; Epstein & Jansorn, 2004). The third section of the chapter provides the findings from the analysis of the parent focus group interview data related to Saudi parents' understanding of the educational system in the United States, their roles in it, and the cultural differences in parents' roles relative to education in Saudi Arabia and the United States. The fourth section provides an overall summary of the results and findings from the data analysis.

Saudi Parent Survey Statistical Analysis

Saudi Parent Survey Demographics

The first section of the survey, items 1 through 7, describes the demographics of the survey participants as related to their gender, residency status, highest level of formal schooling, the language spoken at home, the number of children in elementary school and their grades, and whether both parents were living in the United States. The demographic questions provided data that gave insight (revealed via percentage calculations) into how Saudi parents vary in their thoughts and involvement.

As shown in Table 1, (after removing the 17 American citizen female participants) there are almost twice as many male as female participants in the survey. More interestingly, the vast majority of participants (80.7%) have F1 visa. A majority of the survey participants are currently enrolled in a graduate program or at least have a bachelor's degree, and the vast majority of them (90.4%) speak Arabic with their children at home. Looking more precisely, the data showed that almost half of the parent participants have one child, and those children are likely to be in the early grades, as shown by parents' responses to the question "In what grade levels are your child/children enrolled?" Most of the reported grade levels of the children (63.2%) were in the early grades (K-2), and the children are living in the United States with both parents, as the data showed that the vast majority of the participants (91.3%) are living in the United States with their spouses.

Table 1
Demographic Information

Variable		n	%
Gender			
Male		85	37
Female		144	63
Residential status			
F1 Visa	Male	78	36.8
	Female	93	43.9
F2 Visa	Male	7	3.3
	Female	34	16.0
Formal Schooling Level			
High School		22	9.6
Diploma*		19	8.3
Bachelor's degree		64	27.9
Master's degree		100	43.7
Doctorate degree		24	10.5
Language you speak most at home			
Arabic		207	90.4
English		22	9.6
How many children do you have in elementary school?			
One child		105	45.9
Two children		83	36.2
Three or more children		41	17.9
In what grade levels are your child/children enrolled?			
Kindergarten		108	30.2
First grade		58	16.2
Second grade		60	16.8
Third grade		52	14.5
Fourth grade		32	8.9
Fifth grade		28	7.8
Six grade		20	5.6
Does your spouse live with you in the U.S.?			
Yes		209	91.3
No		20	8.7

Note. *n*= 212
* Diploma is a certificate of completion for a two-year post-high school program

Results of the Six Scales in the Survey

The six scales' items were distributed through sections 2, 3, and 4 of the survey. Participants responded to all items in sections 2 through 4 using a Likert scale that provided interval data about Saudi parents' common ideas and involvement in their children's literacy development.

Learning at home scale. The survey data showed that most Saudi parents believe it is their responsibility to support their children's efforts to complete their homework at home. For example, 72.9% of male (F1 & F2), 86.0% of F1 female, and 94.1% of F2 female parents strongly agreed that it is their responsibility to help their children understand their homework. In most cases, at least 75.3% of parents in all groups reported engaging in the home learning activities at least once per week, such as going over spelling words, working with their children on writing skills, and asking their children if they learned new vocabulary at school. However, there were a few exceptions. For example, only 68.8% of F1 females reported preparing their children for reading evaluations at least once per week. Also, F2 female parents reported a higher percentage of involvements with each of these practices than the two other groups.

Also, the data indicated that most Saudi parents keep track of their children's learning progress, as at least 95.7% of the parents believe it is their responsibility to make sure their children are learning at school. This result aligns with how most Saudi parents check every day or most days to see if their children have finished their homework and ask their children every day or most days how well they are doing in school. The survey data also indicated that a high percentage of Saudi parents, more than 90% in each group,

strongly agreed that they felt confident they know how to support their children's learning, either at home or in school.

Overall, the survey data showed that most parents are highly involved in their children's at-home learning. More precisely, the data revealed that F2 females often have a higher level of involvement across the scale's items than do males and F1 females. See Table 2 for the frequencies and percentages of parents' responses on the Learning at Home Scale.

Table 2

The Frequencies and Percentages of parents' Responses on the Learning at Home Scale by Gender and Visa Status

Item	Strongly agree/ Every day or most days			Agree/Once a week			Disagree/Once in a while			Strongly Disagree/Never		
	Male F1 & F2	Female F1	Female F2	Male F1 & F2	Female F1	Female F2	Male F1 & F2	Female F1	Female F2	Male F1 & F2	Female F1	Female F2
How often do you help your child prepare for reading evaluation tests?	36 (42.4)	43 (46.2)	18 (52.9)	30 (35.3)	21(22.6)	12 (35.3)	11 (12.9)	19 (20.4)	2 (5.9)	8 (9.4)	10 (10.8)	2 (5.9)
How often do you go over spelling words with your child?	43 (50.6)	49 (52.7)	16 (47.1)	29 (34.1)	25 (26.9)	14 (41.2)	7 (8.2)	13 (13.0)	3 (8.8)	6 (7.1)	6 (6.5)	1 (2.9)
How often do you work with your child on writing skills?	36 (42.4)	64 (49.5)	21 (61.8)	29 (34.1)	25 (26.9)	6 (17.6)	17 (20.0)	18 (19.4)	4 (11.8)	3 (3.5)	4 (4.3)	3 (8.8)
How often do you ask your child if he/she learned new vocabulary in school?	44 (51.8)	52 (55.9)	18 (52.9)	23 (27.1)	18 (19.4)	11 (32.4)	16 (18.8)	16 (17.2)	5 (14.7)	2 (2.4)	7 (7.5)	0 (0.0)
How often do you ask your child to read something he/she wrote?	34 (40.0)	51 (54.8)	24 (70.6)	36 (42.4)	23 (24.7)	8 (23.5)	12 (14.1)	14 (15.1)	1 (2.9)	3 (3.5)	5 (5.4)	1 (2.9)
How often do you read with your child for pleasure?	34 (40.0)	41 (44.1)	16 (47.1)	33 (38.8)	31 (33.3)	15 (44.1)	17 (20.0)	18 (19.4)	2 (5.9)	1 (1.2)	3 (3.2)	1 (2.9)
How often do you help your child with reading/language arts homework?	48 (56.5)	63 (67.7)	26 (76.5)	25 (29.4)	14 (15.1)	4 (11.8)	8 (9.4)	12 (12.9)	2 (5.9)	4 (4.7)	4 (4.3)	2 (5.9)
How often do you take your child to the library or bookstore?	29 (34.1)	32 (34.4)	13 (38.2)	15 (17.6)	25 (26.9)	15 (44.1)	27 (31.8)	26 (28.0)	5 (14.7)	14 (16.5)	10 (10.8)	1 (2.9)
It is a parent's responsibility to help their child understand their homework.	62 (72.9)	80 (86.0)	32 (94.1)	20 (23.5)	11 (11.8)	2 (5.9)	3 (3.5)	1 (1.1)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (1.1)	0 (0.0)
It is a parent's responsibility to make sure their child learns at school.	64 (75.3)	73 (78.5)	33 (97.1)	20 (23.5)	16 (17.2)	1 (2.9)	1 (1.2)	3 (3.2)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (1.1)	0 (0.0)
It is a parent's responsibility to show their child how to use learning resources like a dictionary or encyclopedia.	45 (52.9)	50 (53.8)	20 (58.8)	35 (41.1)	30 (32.3)	13 (38.2)	4 (4.7)	9 (9.7)	1 (2.9)	1 (1.2)	4 (4.3)	0 (0.0)
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: I know how to help my child do well and earn good grades in school.	37 (43.5)	49 (52.7)	19 (55.9)	44 (51.8)	35 (37.6)	15 (44.1)	4 (4.7)	7 (7.5)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (2.2)	0 (0.0)
How often do you check to see if your child finished his/her homework?	62 (72.9)	81 (87.1)	31 (91.2)	16 (18.8)	9 (9.7)	3 (8.8)	4 (4.7)	2 (2.2)	0 (0.0)	3 (3.5)	1 (1.1)	0 (0.0)
How often do you ask your child how well he/she is doing in school?	69 (81.2)	77 (82.8)	30 (88.2)	10 (11.8)	9 (9.7)	3 (8.8)	4 (4.7)	6 (6.5)	1 (2.9)	2 (2.4)	1 (1.1)	0 (0.0)
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: I know how to help my child with schoolwork.	37 (43.5)	53 (57.0)	26 (76.5)	43 (50.6)	33 (35.5)	8 (23.5)	5 (5.9)	6 (6.5)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (1.1)	0 (0.0)

Note. Female F1 n= 93, Female F2 n= 34, and Male F1 & F2 n= 85.
Percentages appear in parentheses.

Parenting scale. The survey data suggested that most Saudi parents strongly believe it is their responsibility to stay on top of their children's behavioral and academic performance, such as keeping track of their children's progress in school and teaching their children to value schoolwork. Moreover, all but one parent (an F1 Female) agreed or strongly agreed that is their responsibility to keep track of their children's academic progress, which reflects some of their practices and beliefs under the Learning at Home Scale. As stated previously, most Saudi parents strongly believe it is their responsibility to make sure their children are learning at school, so they check every day or most days to see if their children have finished their homework and ask them every day or most days how well they are doing in school (Table 2).

Also, the data illustrated that most Saudi parents expect schools to support their parenting around schooling issues, for example, by telling them how their children are doing in school (all but one F1 Female agreed or strongly agreed with this). In addition, more than 90% of parents in each group agreed or strongly agreed that schools should support them in their efforts to know what skills their children need to learn in reading/language arts, explain how to check their children's homework, and invite them to parental programs at the school.

However, comparing the Saudi parents' responses to other items within the scale, the percentages of responses that *strongly agree* decrease when the responses concern parents' efficacy in parenting with schooling issues. For example, the data suggested that 16.5%, 20.4%, and 14.7% of Saudi parents (male F1 and F2, F1 female, and F2 female, respectively) believe they do not know how the school year and curricula are divided in American school systems although their responses on the previous scale (Table 2)

showed that most Saudi parents are strongly confident they know how to support their children's learning, either at home or in school. In addition, 14.1% of males and 10.8% of F1 females disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement "I feel good about my efforts to help my child learn." See Table 3 for the frequencies and percentages of parents' responses on the Parenting Scale.

Table 3

The Frequencies and Percentages of parents' Responses on the Parenting Scale by Gender and Visa Status

Item	Strongly agree/ Every day or most days			Agree/Once a week			Disagree/Once in a while			Strongly Disagree/Never		
	Male F1 & F2	Female F1	Female F2	Male F1 & F2	Female F1	Female F2	Male F1 & F2	Female F1	Female F2	Male F1 & F2	Female F1	Female F2
It is a parent's responsibility to know if their child is having trouble in school.	70 (82.4)	82 (88.2)	33 (97.1)	14 (16.5)	8 (8.6)	1 (2.9)	1 (1.2)	2 (2.2)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (1.1)	0 (0.0)
It is a parent's responsibility to show an interest in their child's schoolwork.	65 (76.5)	81 (87.1)	32 (94.1)	20 (23.5)	11 (11.8)	2 (5.9)	0 (0.0)	1 (1.1)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
It is a parent's responsibility to keep track of their child's progress in school.	63 (74.1)	72 (77.4)	30 (88.2)	22 (25.9)	20 (21.5)	4 (11.8)	0 (0.0)	1 (1.1)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
It is a parent's responsibility to teach their child to value schoolwork.	65 (76.5)	73 (78.5)	29 (85.3)	20 (23.5)	17 (18.3)	5 (14.7)	0 (0.0)	2 (2.2)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (1.1)	0 (0.0)
How often do you encourage your child to follow the rules in school?	65 (76.5)	79 (84.9)	30 (88.2)	13 (15.3)	12 (12.9)	4 (11.8)	7 (8.2)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (2.2)	0 (0.0)
My child's teacher or someone at the school should inform me about what skills my child needs to learn in reading/language arts.	62 (72.9)	68 (73.1)	27 (79.4)	20 (23.5)	18 (19.4)	4 (11.8)	3 (3.5)	5 (5.4)	2 (5.9)	0 (0.0)	2 (2.2)	0 (0.0)
My child's teacher or someone at the school should tell me how my child is doing in school.	67 (78.8)	72 (77.4)	30 (88.2)	18 (21.2)	20 (21.5)	4 (11.8)	0 (0.0)	1 (1.1)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
My child's teacher or someone at the school should explain how to check my child's homework.	49 (57.6)	56 (60.2)	23 (67.6)	31 (36.5)	31 (33.3)	9 (26.5)	4 (4.7)	5 (5.4)	1 (2.9)	1 (1.2)	1 (1.1)	1 (2.9)
My child's teacher or someone at the school should invite me to parental programs at the school.	39 (45.9)	65 (69.9)	22 (64.7)	41 (48.2)	24 (25.8)	12 (35.3)	4 (4.7)	3 (3.2)	0 (0.0)	1 (1.2)	1 (1.1)	0 (0.0)
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement I know how the school year and curricula are divided in an American school system.	33 (38.8)	42 (45.2)	10 (29.4)	37 (43.5)	27 (29.0)	19 (55.9)	14 (16.5)	19 (20.4)	5 (14.7)	1 (1.2)	5 (4.5)	0 (0.0)
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement I feel good about my efforts to help my child learn	37 (43.5)	37 (39.8)	18 (52.9)	36 (42.4)	44 (47.3)	15 (44.1)	12 (14.1)	10 (10.8)	1 (2.9)	0 (0.0)	2 (2.2)	0 (0.0)

Note. Female F1 n= 93, Female F2 n= 34, and Male F1 & F2 n= 85.
Percentages appear in parentheses.

Communicating scale. The data demonstrated that most Saudi parents, with slight differences between males, and F1 and F2 females, feel welcome at school and get along well with their children's teachers. The data revealed that all male and F2 females agreed their children's schools are good schools. However, four (4.3%) F1 females disagreed that their children's schools are good schools.

In general, there is sufficient data that indicate most Saudi parents believe it is their responsibility to contact schools regarding their children's academic issues. For example, 80.0% of males, 88.2% of F1 females, and 88.2% of F2 females strongly believe parents should contact children's teachers if they believe their children are struggling in school, and they also strongly believe it is parents' responsibility to contact teachers as soon as academic problems arise. In contrast, the three groups of Saudi parents' responses indicated less agreement on items about their actual communication practices with schools and teachers, particularly responses about sending notes, messages, or emails to teachers, and visiting school websites or reading teachers' blogs. See Table 4 for the frequencies and percentages of each of the scale's items.

Table 4

The Frequencies and Percentages of parents' Responses on the Communicating Scale by Gender and Visa Status

Item	Strongly agree/ Every day or most days			Agree/Once a week			Disagree/Once in a while			Strongly Disagree/Never		
	Male F1 & F2	Female F1	Female F2	Male F1 & F2	Female F1	Female F2	Male F1 & F2	Female F1	Female F2	Male F1 & F2	Female F1	Female F2
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: I feel welcome at the school.	63 (74.1)	61 (65.6)	20 (58.8)	22 (25.9)	29 (31.2)	12 (35.3)	0 (0.0)	3 (3.2)	2 (5.9)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: the school's teachers care about my child.	59 (69.4)	52 (55.9)	21 (61.8)	25 (29.4)	40 (43.0)	11 (32.4)	1 (1.2)	1 (1.1)	2 (5.9)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: my child/children's school is a good school.	53 (62.4)	58 (62.4)	17 (50.0)	32 (37.6)	31 (33.3)	17 (50.0)	0 (0.0)	4 (4.3)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: I get along well with my child's teacher(s).	53 (62.4)	51 (54.8)	22 (64.7)	28 (32.9)	40 (43.0)	11 (32.4)	2 (2.4)	1 (1.1)	1 (2.9)	2 (2.4)	1 (1.1)	0 (0.0)
It is a parent's responsibility to contact the teacher if they think their child is struggling in school	68 (80.0)	82 (88.2)	30 (88.2)	16 (18.8)	10 (10.8)	4 (11.8)	1 (1.2)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (1.1)	0 (0.0)
It is a parent's responsibility to contact the teacher as soon as academic problems arise.	61 (71.8)	81 (87.1)	30 (88.2)	22 (25.9)	11 (11.8)	4 (11.8)	2 (2.4)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (1.1)	0 (0.0)
How often do you visit the school's website/read the teacher's blog?	24 (28.2)	23 (24.7)	14 (41.2)	21 (24.7)	29 (31.2)	13 (38.2)	25 (29.4)	31 (33.3)	7 (20.6)	15 (17.6)	10 (10.8)	0 (0.0)
How often do you meet with your child/children's school staff?	26 (30.6)	27 (29.0)	11 (32.4)	21 (24.7)	13 (14.0)	7 (20.6)	33 (38.8)	47 (50.5)	16 (47.1)	5 (5.9)	6 (6.5)	0 (0.0)
How often do you send a note/message/email to your child's teacher?	29 (34.1)	34 (36.6)	9 (26.5)	21 (24.7)	23 (24.7)	9 (26.5)	27 (31.8)	29 (31.2)	14 (41.2)	8 (9.4)	7 (7.5)	2 (5.9)
How often do you attend parent-teacher conferences?	42 (49.4)	57 (61.3)	22 (64.7)	13 (15.3)	12 (12.9)	8 (23.5)	25 (29.4)	20 (21.5)	4 (11.8)	5 (5.9)	4 (4.3)	0 (0.0)
My child's teacher or someone at the school should provide me with translator services, if I need such services.	31 (36.5)	56 (60.2)	19 (55.9)	37 (43.5)	26 (28.0)	12 (35.3)	17 (20.0)	9 (9.7)	2 (5.9)	0 (0.0)	2 (2.2)	1 (2.9)
My child's teacher or someone at the school should send home news about things happening at school.	53 (62.4)	65 (69.9)	19 (55.9)	29 (34.1)	26 (28.0)	14 (41.2)	3 (3.5)	2 (2.2)	1 (2.9)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)

Note. Female F1 n= 93, Female F2 n= 34, and Male F1 & F2 n= 85.
Percentages appear in parentheses.

Decision-making scale. Comparing Saudi parents' responses on the Decision-Making scale with their responses on other scales, many parents responded much more negatively to questions related to their ability to participate in decision-making regarding their children's education. For example, as shown in Table 5, the survey data showed that at least 20% of parents within each of the three groups do not know the legal steps to take if their children face problems in school.

On the other hand, the data suggested that most Saudi parents are satisfied with the decisions made by schools/teachers related to their children's academics and believe that school principals' decisions are the best for their children. Within each group and scenario, at least 88.1% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied. This also reflects the previous results from the Communicating Scale, as shown in Table 4, because the majority of Saudi parents agree that their children's schools are good schools and believe that teachers care about their children.

Table 5

The Frequencies and Percentages of parents' Responses on the Decision Making Scale by Gender and Visa Status

Item	Strongly agree/ Every day or most days			Agree/Once a week			Disagree/Once in a while			Strongly Disagree/Never		
	Male F1 & F2	Female F1	Female F2	Male F1 & F2	Female F1	Female F2	Male F1 & F2	Female F1	Female F2	Male F1 & F2	Female F1	Female F2
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: I know the legal steps to go through if my child faces behavioral problems (e.g., bullying, discrimination) in school.	34 (40.0)	32 (34.4)	18 (52.9)	29 (34.1)	35 (37.6)	9 (26.5)	20 (23.5)	19 (20.4)	7 (20.6)	2 (2.4)	7 (7.5)	0 (0.0)
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: I know how to get answers to my questions about the educational system of the United States and its schools.	30 (35.3)	45 (48.4)	19 (55.9)	39 (45.9)	31 (33.3)	13 (38.2)	15 (17.6)	12 (12.9)	2 (5.9)	1 (1.2)	5 (5.4)	0 (0.0)
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: I believe teacher/school principal's decisions are the best for my child.	40 (47.1)	38 (40.9)	18 (52.9)	37 (43.5)	46 (49.5)	14 (41.2)	7 (8.2)	9 (9.7)	2 (5.9)	1 (1.2)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: I know how my child's literacy development is evaluated at school.	34 (40.0)	47 (50.5)	23 (67.6)	42 (49.4)	35 (37.6)	10 (29.4)	8 (9.4)	9 (9.7)	1 (2.9)	1 (1.2)	2 (2.2)	0 (0.0)
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: I had no difficulty enrolling my child in American schools.	54 (63.5)	66 (71.0)	23 (67.6)	28 (32.9)	22 (23.7)	11 (32.4)	3 (3.5)	2 (2.2)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	3 (3.2)	0 (0.0)
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: I understand everything written in my child's report card.	47 (55.3)	54 (58.1)	18 (52.9)	33 (38.8)	32 (34.4)	14 (41.2)	3 (3.5)	5 (5.4)	2 (5.9)	2 (2.4)	2 (2.2)	0 (0.0)
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: I am satisfied with decisions made by the school/teacher related to my child's academics.	43 (50.6)	50 (53.8)	21 (61.8)	38 (44.7)	37 (39.8)	13 (38.2)	3 (3.5)	5 (5.4)	0 (0.0)	1 (1.2)	1 (1.1)	0 (0.0)

Note. Female F1 n= 93, Female F2 n= 34, and Male F1 & F2 n= 85.
Percentages appear in parentheses.

Volunteering scale. The survey data, presented in Table 6, displayed surprising results regarding Saudi parents volunteering in their children's schools: 40.0% males, 32.3% of F1 females, and 23.5% of F2 females have never volunteered in their children's classrooms or schools. However, the rest of the Saudi parents, which are at least 60% within all three groups, occasionally volunteer in their children's schools or classrooms, offer suggestions/opinions for teachers and principals about what is best for their children, and go to school literacy events. In addition, the data showed that F2 females are less involved than males or F1 females in volunteering, while they are also the group most likely to believe that schools should ask them to volunteer and help with fundraising. Although male and F1 female groups are significantly higher than the F2 females, all groups had lower levels of participation and agreement on these items relative to their responses on the other scales.

Collaborating with the community scale. Most Saudi parents expect their children's schools to involve them in the community by providing them with information on community events they might want to attend and community services they might want to use. On the other hand, 24.7% of males, 25.8% of F1 females, and 23.5% of F2 females disagreed with the statement that schools should invite them to participate on school committees, such as curriculum, budget, or improvement committees, which aligns with the results from the Decision-Making Scale that indicated parents' satisfaction with decisions made by schools/teachers related to their children's academics (Table 5). Such parents believe that school principals' decisions are the best for their children, and, as the results from the Communicating Scale demonstrated (Table 4), most Saudi parents agree that their children's schools are good schools and believe that

teachers care about their children. It may be that these parents do not believe they need to have input on these committees as the school is doing well without them. See Table 7 for the frequencies and percentages of the Collaborating with the Community Scale's items.

Table 6

The Frequencies and Percentages of parents' Responses on the Volunteering Scale by Gender and Visa Status

Item	Strongly agree/ Every day or most days			Agree/Once a week			Disagree/Once in a while			Strongly Disagree/Never		
	Male F1 & F2	Female F1	Female F2	Male F1 & F2	Female F1	Female F2	Male F1 & F2	Female F1	Female F2	Male F1 & F2	Female F1	Female F2
How often do you offer suggestion/opinions for teachers/principals about what is best for your child?	31 (36.5)	47 (50.5)	16 (47.1)	20 (23.5)	13 (14.0)	4 (11.8)	22 (25.9)	24 (25.8)	11 (32.4)	12 (14.1)	9 (9.7)	3 (8.8)
How often do you volunteer in the classroom or at the school?	15 (17.6)	15 (16.1)	7 (20.6)	12 (14.1)	12 (12.9)	4 (11.8)	24 (28.2)	36 (38.7)	15 (44.1)	34 (40.0)	30 (32.3)	8 (23.5)
How often do you go to school events (e.g., literacy night, open house, music, drama, sports) or meetings?	24 (28.2)	31 (33.3)	15 (44.1)	14 (16.5)	19 (20.4)	5 (14.7)	33 (38.8)	33 (35.5)	14 (41.2)	14 (16.5)	10 (10.8)	0 (0.0)
My child/children's teachers or someone at the school should ask me to volunteer at the school.	22 (25.9)	31 (33.3)	9 (26.5)	47 (55.3)	45 (48.4)	19 (55.9)	14 (16.5)	15 (16.1)	4 (11.8)	2 (2.4)	2 (2.2)	2 (5.9)
My child/children's teachers or someone at the school should ask me to help with fundraising.	21 (24.7)	22 (23.7)	8 (23.5)	28 (32.9)	33 (35.5)	16 (47.1)	30 (35.3)	30 (32.3)	7 (20.6)	6 (7.1)	8 (8.6)	3 (8.8)

Note. Female F1 n= 93, Female F2 n= 34, and Male F1 & F2 n= 85.
Percentages appear in parentheses.

Table 7

The Frequencies and Percentages of parents' Responses on the Collaborating with the Community Scale by Gender and Visa Status

Item	Strongly agree/ Every day or most days			Agree/Once a week			Disagree/Once in a while			Strongly Disagree/Never		
	Male F1 & F2	Female F1	Female F2	Male F1 & F2	Female F1	Female F2	Male F1 & F2	Female F1	Female F2	Male F1 & F2	Female F1	Female F2
My child's teacher or someone at the school should provide information on community events that I may want to attend with my child.	33 (38.8)	47 (50.5)	11 (32.4)	44 (51.8)	36 (38.7)	18 (52.9)	8 (9.4)	10 (10.8)	5 (14.7)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
My child's teacher or someone at the school should invite parents to participate on school committees, such as curriculum, budget, or improvement committees.	29 (34.1)	28 (30.1)	9 (26.5)	31 (36.5)	37 (39.8)	16 (47.1)	21 (24.7)	24 (25.8)	8 (23.5)	4 (4.7)	4 (4.3)	1 (2.9)
My child's teacher or someone at the school should provide me with information on community services that I may want to use with my family.	26 (30.6)	44 (47.3)	18 (52.9)	47 (55.3)	36 (38.7)	12 (35.3)	11 (12.9)	9 (9.7)	3 (8.8)	1 (1.2)	4 (4.3)	1 (2.9)

Note. Female F1 n= 93, Female F2 n= 34, and Male F1 & F2 n= 85.
Percentages appear in parentheses.

Internal Consistency and Reliability of the Survey

I calculated the value of Cronbach's Alpha Internal Consistency in order to estimate the reliability of the survey items. Values of internal consistency reliability for responses to each of the scale items was found to be statically considered respectable and acceptable (Cronbach, 1984), as shown in Table 8. In addition, the level of Cronbach's Alphas for all scales in the survey statistically shows a high level of Internal Consistency Reliability.

Table 8
Reliability Analysis for Parents' Responses

Type of parental involvement	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Learning at Home	.853	15
Parenting	.712	11
Communicating	.755	12
Volunteering	.715	4
Decision-making	.813	7
Collaborating with the Community	.709	3
Cronbach's Alpha for all scales	.923	53

Data Preparation, Analysis, and Findings of the Focus Group Interviews

Applying Exploratory Factor Analysis

Principal component analysis (PCA) using oblimin rotation was conducted to evaluate dimensionality in each of the six scales. The variance explained by each component and items loaded on each scale is described in the following sections.

Learning at home. Three factors were extracted through PCA, explaining 56.04% total variance out of the 15 components (items). The first factor loaded with seven components, each with a high correlation coefficient (above 0.6). The general idea extracted from these seven components is the *daily practices of learning at home.* The importance of this factor is in revealing parents' daily literacy practices with their children at home, as well as literacy activities outside the home. The second factor has

four components with a coefficient value above 0.5. The retained factor explains *parents' qualifications and confidence in helping their children learn at home.* The component loaded under this factor addresses the extent to which parents perceive themselves to be able to support their children's literacy development. The third factor also loaded with four components. One of the components is shared with the second factor. All components have coefficient values above 0.4. The shared factor is *parents tracking their children's learning.* This includes items about what parents do and how they see their role in following their children's learning progress. The components loaded under each of the three factors can be found in Table 9. The Learning at Home Scale was addressed during the focus group by asking encompassing questions like *Tell me about what you do to support your child's academic success*. Then other follow-up questions emerged during the focus group to address each of the three factors during the discussion (Appendix C).

Table 9

Factor Loadings from Principal Component Factor Analysis for Learning at Home Scale' Items with a Coefficient Value of 0.40

Components	Loadings			Factors
	1	2	3	
How often do you help your child prepare for reading evaluation tests?	.79			Daily practices of learning at home.
How often do you go over spelling words with your child?	.76			
How often do you Work with your child on writing skills?	.76			
How often do you ask your child if he/she learned new vocabulary in school?	.74			
How often do you ask your child to read something he/she wrote?	.73			
How often do you read with your child for pleasure?	.71			
How often do you help your child with reading/language arts homework?	.67			
How often do you take your child to the library or bookstore?				
It is a parent's responsibility to help their child understand their homework.		.83		Parents' qualifications and confidence in helping their children learn at home.
It is a parent's responsibility to make sure their child learns at school.		.82		
It is a parent's responsibility to show their child how to use learning resources like a dictionary or encyclopedia.		.63		
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: I know how to help my child do well and earn good grades in school.		.52	-.41	
How often do you check to see if your child finished his/her homework?			.66	Parents' interest in tracking their children's academic progress.
How often do you ask your child how well he/she is doing in school?			.58	
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: I know how to help my child with schoolwork.		.42	-.49	

Parenting. The Parenting Scale includes 11 components, and the number of factors was fixed at three factors that explained 63.341% of total variance. The first factor has five components, all loading with values above 0.5. The factor aligned with these components is *parental sensitivity toward their children's academic and behavioral development*, and it includes responses that examine parents' perceived abilities to recognize and address their children's academic and behavioral needs and problems. The importance of the data shown by this factor is in exploring how Saudi parents believe it is

their responsibility to keep track of their children's academic and behavioral development, and what Saudi parents think is their ideal role in this regard. This factor was addressed by the general question *How do you know how your child is doing academically?*

The second factor has four components, all with coefficient values above 0.5. The identified factor of these components examines *parents' expectations from, and responses to, teachers and school attempts in supporting families*. This factor reveals what parents expect from schools and teachers, either related to their children's learning or the schools' role in supporting parents, and how parents respond to schools' parenting program offers. The focus group question designed for this factor was *How does your child's school try to involve you with the school, either through doing things at home with your child, or in your child's classroom or the school building?* The other follow-up questions for each factor are presented in Appendix C.

The number of components loading on the third factor was only two components. Therefore, I discounted these two components statistically to extract a third factor, but the two components were included theoretically within the two previous factors (further explanation was provided in chapter three). See Table 10 for the items' loading values and factors.

Table 10

Factor Loadings from Principal Component Factor Analysis for the Parenting Scale's Items with a Coefficient Value of 0.40

Components	Loadings			Factors
	1	2	3	
It is a parent's responsibility to know if their child is having trouble in school.	.87			Parental sensitivity toward their children's academic and behavioral development.
It is a parent's responsibility to show an interest in their child's schoolwork.	.86			
It is a parent's responsibility to keep track of their child's progress in school.	.81			
It is a parent's responsibility to Teach their child to value schoolwork.	.73			
How often do you encourage your child to follow the rules in school?	.58			
My child's teacher or someone at the school should inform me about what skills my child needs to learn in reading/language arts.		.80		Parents' expectations of teachers and their responses to the school's parenting implementations
My child's teacher or someone at the school should tell me how my child is doing in school.		.76		
My child's teacher or someone at the school should explain how to check my child's homework.		.74		
My child's teacher or someone at the school should invite me to parental programs at the school.		.51		
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: I know how the school year and curricula are divided in an American school system.			.82	
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: I feel good about my efforts to help my child learn.			.75	

Communicating. The Communicating Scale has 11 components; the number of factors extracted by PCA was fixed by the researcher to be three. These three factors explain 58.048% total variance for the 11 components. The first factor has four components that loaded with a coefficient value above 0.7. The retained factor reflects *parents' attitudes toward schools and teachers*. The loaded components under this factor describe parents' feelings and thoughts about teachers and schools, the perceived nature of the relationship between parents and the school/teacher, and how parents see their children's relationships with the school/teachers. The factor helped in designing the question that asked parents *How do/did you feel about your child's teachers and school?*

The second factor has four components with coefficient values above 0.5. The factor reflects *parents' initiated action in communicating with their children's school/teachers*, which explains when and how parents attempt to communicate with schools/teachers. The factor was addressed by some follow-up questions such as *How does the school/teacher try to communicate with you? And have you tried to call or communicate with your child's teacher? Tell me about that experience.* See Appendix C for the follow-up questions for each factor.

The number of components loading on the third factor is fewer than four items. Therefore, I discounted it, as was explained previously. See Table 11 for component loadings onto each factor.

Table 11

Factor Loadings from the Principal Component Factor Analysis for Communicating Scale's Items with a Coefficient Value of 0.40

Components	Loadings			Factors
	1	2	3	
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: I feel welcome at the school.	.84			Parents' attitudes toward the school and teachers.
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: the school's teachers care about my child.	.84			
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: my child/children's school is a good school.	.80			
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: I get along well with my child's teacher(s).	.76			
It is a parent's responsibility to contact the teacher as soon as academic problems arise.				
How often do you visit the school's website/read the teacher's blog?		.79		Parents initiated action in communicating with their children's school/ teachers.
How often do you meet with your child/children's school staff?		.79		
How often do you send a note/message/email to your child's teacher?		.78		
How often do you attend parent-teacher conferences?		.57		
My child's teacher or someone at the school should provide me with translator services, if I need such services.			.82	
My child's teacher or someone at the school should send home news about things happening at school.			.69	

Decision-making. As shown in Table 12, the Decision-Making Scale has two factors based on Eigenvalues above 1.00. The total of explained variance is 75.622%. Five components loaded onto the first factor, three onto the second factor, and one of the components loaded on both factors. All components have coefficient values above 0.4. The first factor examines *parents' awareness of the educational system of the United States,* including parents' awareness of the legal steps they can take related to student behavior and how to get information related to their children's learning and schooling. The questions for parents in the focus group to explore this issue are that *What would you do if you had a problem or concern related to your child's education or school experience? Or, if you have had a problem, what did you do?*

The second factor*, parents' experiences and satisfaction with the authority of the school*, shows parents' ability to understand school enrollment processes and report cards, in addition to their level of satisfaction with the decisions made by teachers and schools. The general question to explore this factor was *Tell me about a time you had a problem with school and how you addressed the problem?* See Appendix C for the follow-up questions for each factor.

Table 12

Factor Loadings from Principal Component Factor Analysis for the Decision-Making Scale's Items Based on Eigenvalues Above 1.00

Components	Loadings		Factors
	1	2	
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: I know the legal steps to go through if my child faces behavioral problems (e.g., bullying, discrimination) in school.	.89		Parents' awareness of the educational system of the United States.
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: I know how to get answers to my questions about the educational system of the United States and its schools.	.82		
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: I believe teacher/school principal's decisions are the best for my child.	.69		
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: I know how my child's literacy development is evaluated at school.	.68		
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: I had no difficulty enrolling my child in American schools.		.87	Parents' experiences and satisfaction with the authority of the school.
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: I understand everything written in my child's report card.		.78	
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: I am satisfied with decisions made by the school/teacher related to my child's academics.	.49	.49	

Volunteering. The Volunteering Scale only has five components. Based on Eigenvalues, because there are fewer than seven components, two factors emerged explaining 81.642% total variance out of the five components. The first factor, *how parents see their role in volunteering at school,* had three components with loadings greater than 0.7. The factor examines how parents contribute to the school community and their perceptions about volunteering inside and outside of school. The question designed to investigate this factor was *How does your child's school try to involve you with the school, both in your home and the school building?* There were only two components left; thus, a second factor was not extracted. See Table 13 for component loadings onto each factor.

Table 13

Factor Loadings from Principal Component Factor Analysis for the Volunteering Scale's Items Based on Eigenvalues Above 1.00

Components	Loadings		Factors
	1	2	
How often do you offer suggestion/opinions for teachers/principals about what is best for your child?	.84		How parents see their role in volunteering at school.
How often do you volunteer in the classroom or at the school?	.80		
How often do you go to school events (e.g., literacy night, open house, music, drama, sports) or meetings?	.74		
My child/children's teachers or someone at the school should ask me to volunteer at the school.		.89	
My child/children's teachers or someone at the school should ask me to help with fundraising.		.82	

Collaborating with the community. Since the Collaboration with the Community Scale only has three components, there was only one factor extracted based on Eigenvalues, which explained 64.20% of the variance. All three components are loaded strongly on the factor with a coefficient value above 0.7 (Table 14). The factor examines how *parents rely on schools to involve them in the community,* and it describes to what extent parents count on and collaborate with schools to help them become integrated into the local community. The main question that addressed this factor was *Have your child's teachers or school helped you learn about community services or events?* See Appendix C for the follow-up questions for each factor.

Table 14

Factor Loadings from Principal Component Factor Analysis for the Collaborating with the Community Scale's Items Based on Eigenvalues Above 1.00

Components	Loadings	Factors
	1	
My child's teacher or someone at the school should provide information on community events that I may want to attend with my child.	.83	Parents rely on the school to involve them in the community.
My child's teacher or someone at the school should invite parents to participate on school committees, such as curriculum, budget, or improvement committees.	.79	
My child's teacher or someone at the school should provide me with information on community services that I may want to use with my family.	.77	

Focus Group Interview Analysis

Focus Group Demographics

All of the participants in the focus groups were female (mothers), and they were allocated in groups based on their residential visa type (F1, F2), as each visa type is limited in regard to study and work legalizations. Participants with an F1 visa type are obligated to full-time enrollment in academic programs, while participants with an F2 visa type are companions to their spouses and can stay free of studying or enroll in part-time academic programs. Distinguishing the participants' visa status was an important step as F1 and F2 visa holders have different language proficiency levels, experiences, and circumstances.

The first and second focus groups had eight F2 participants; all of them are housewives and live in the United States with their spouses. Only one is a part-time student in the English language institute. Six out of the eight F1 mother participants do not speak English. Five participants took part in the first group, and most of them have two or more children in elementary school. Three of the participants have at least one child in an early grade (K-2). The second focus group included three mothers. Each of them has a child in an early grade (K-2).

The third and fourth groups were allocated for the F1 visa participants; all of them are full-time students and live in the United States with their spouses, except one participant's husband lives overseas. The third group was the biggest group and included eight participants. Most of the participants have at least two children in elementary school, and they reported different grade levels for their children (K-6). Four F2 mother participants met in the fourth and last group. Three of them have more than one child in

elementary school in grades (3-6).

Focus Group Interviews' Findings Triangulated with Survey Results

The focus groups interviews provided a more in-depth understanding of Saudi parents' experiences and beliefs related to their children's education in the United States and their own involvement in it. To answer the research questions, I targeted the raw data under the related predefined codes to each research question in an integrated manner with the survey results across the six scales, reporting when the two data sets were supported, justified, or even conflicted with each other. The following is how the 12 predefined codes were categorized to answer each research question. Sometimes, there is an overlap between the reported data that can be used to answer more than one question, and I will point out each overlap.

First research question: What are Saudi parents' beliefs about their roles in their children's education? Presented below are the integrated findings from the survey and focus groups that are related to Saudi parents' beliefs about their roles in their children's education. The findings were categorized under five different predefined codes, listed as follows.

Learning at home: Daily literacy practice at home. The survey results indicate that at least 40.0% of parents in each group read every day or most days with their children for pleasure. Likewise, the focus group findings reveal that some of the parents within the F1 and F2 groups consider reading at home to be a common literacy practice, but it is primarily done by the child on his or her own, without the parents getting involved. Only Kadi (all participant names are pseudonyms), a full-time student and the mother of third-grade twins (a boy and a girl), reported that she talks with her children

about their reading. She said, "I follow with them while they are reading and try to talk to them to give them some motivation." However, none of the F1 and only two F2 mothers mentioned writing as literacy practice at home and it was related to doing homework.

When parents were asked about the types of literacy practices in which they engage with their children at home, F1 and F2 mothers responded similarly; most of their answers were limited to doing homework. A few individuals responded that they engaged in other reading-related activities in addition to homework, such as visiting websites for electronic books, or using reading applications on computers or smartphones. Only one participant, Amal, a non-student mother of a third-grade daughter, reported that her daughter watched an educational channel like Nickelodeon, "…so she learned lots of words, and she obtained the majority of her language from TV."

Learning at home: Parents' interest in tracking their children's academic progress. Looking at the survey results, 75.3% of parents across the three groups reported that they engage in home learning activities at least once per week (Table 2). The focus group data revealed that most of these home literacy activities are related to doing homework; the focus group data also provided more detail about the different ways in which parents help their children with homework. The majority, six out of eight, of F2 mothers who have children in the early grades (K-2) reported that they sit with their children to help them do homework. Huda, a non-student mother of a first-grade daughter, said, "…I used to teach her letters, numbers, spelling, and everything." Deem, a non-student mother of a first-grade son, stated, "Every day we read together, every day. And every week, he's given approximately 10 homework papers at school. We work together to complete them." These explanations support the survey results that indicated

that 79.4% of F2 female parents work with their children on doing their schoolwork (Table 2).

On the other hand, F1 mothers responded differently than F2 mothers; only three out of 12 F1 mothers reported that they usually help their children complete their homework. There was also a large difference between the F1 and F2 mothers' rates, which was confirmed by the survey result that indicated F2 females are often much more involved in schoolwork with their children than male or F1 female parents (Table 2).

However, once more, the two data sets showed parallel findings of F1 and F2 mothers who never helped their children with homework, and the focus group findings provide clarity of why they do not. The survey data showed that there a few mothers (10.8% of F1 females and 8.8% of F2 females) who never work with their children on some of the schoolwork examples mentioned in the survey. Similarly, some mothers from the F1 focus group and one mother from the F2 focus group reported that they do not help their children with homework because their children have no homework. As Kadi stated, "They often come home from school without any homework, or having done their homework at school." Also, one F2 mother and some of the F1 mothers reported that they do not help their children with schoolwork because they believe that it is not their role to sit with their children and help them. Other F1 mothers reported that they do not help their children because they do not have time to do so.

Although some of the F1 mothers felt that it was not their responsibility to help their children do homework, during the survey, 96.4% of the parents agreed or strongly agreed that is their responsibility to do so, which suggests a conflict between the focus groups and the survey findings regarding parents helping their children complete their

homework. However, looking at the parents' demographics, it is interesting that the survey and F2 focus groups were demographically similar, and responded in similar ways to this question, while the survey and F1 focus group were demographically different, and they responded in different ways to the same question. As reported by the participant parents in the survey, 63.2% of the children are in early grades (K-2), which is also the case with the participants in the F2 mother groups, as most of them have children in early grades, while most of the F1 focus group parents have children in third grade and above.

The survey results indicate that most of the Saudi parents within all groups are highly engaged in keeping track of their children's learning performances. This is corroborated by the focus group finding that most of the F1 and F2 mothers, without significant differences between the two groups, believe it is part of their role as parents to stay aware of their children's academic and behavioral development using various techniques. Once again, the F1 and F2 mothers responded similarly. For example, when I asked about reading and signing the daily school planner – a notebook that includes daily homework and school duties that must be signed daily by teachers and parents – most of the 20 mothers within each of the F1 and F2 groups confirmed they signed it daily to indicate to their children's teachers they were informed and their children had done their homework. Two F1 mothers said their children do not have planners from school. This finding aligned with the survey findings that showed 95.7% of the parents believe it is their responsibility to make sure their children are learning at school (Table 2).

When I asked about their children's grades that were posted online on the parents' connect website, only two F1 mothers of the eight participants in that F1 focus group knew about the service and signed in regularly. This finding that many F1 and F2 parents

do not use online sources to track their students' progress is not unexpected because 33.3% of the F2 female participants in the survey also responded they do not visit the school website or teacher blogs regularly and 10.8% of them said they never do. This is also the case with the F1 females and the male participants in the survey; they responded similarly to the F2 females as 29.4% of males do not visit the school website or teacher blogs regularly and 17.6% never do. In some cases, however, it is possible that some teachers do not have blogs or do not post grades online, and thus mothers would have no reason to know about these types of schooling website services.

The data suggest differences between the F1 and F2 mothers on how frequently they use online schooling sites; 79.4% of the F2 mothers visit the school websites or teacher blogs regularly, at least once a week, and no F2 female reported that they never do (Table 4). Thus, based on the available data, there is a significant difference between the F1 female and F2 female participants in using online schooling sites, while a large difference does not exist between the F1 female and male participants. It is worthwhile to note that most of the male participants (91.8 %) hold an F1 visa type (Table 1), which highlights the differences in visiting the school websites and teachers' blogs between the F1 and F2 parents, in general.

In addition, although some mothers in the focus groups believed that they should not help their children with their homework, a majority of mothers believe it is their role to direct their children, encourage them, and provide them with the resources needed to do it themselves. Moreover, most of the F1 and F2 Saudi mothers in the focus groups reported that they often recognize their children's academic and behavioral progress and

problems. For example, when I asked Deem how her son was doing in school and how she knows, she answered:

> I feel that he learns really fast, God willed it (expression). I know through his reading. Reading, to me, is the most important thing and spelling, as well. I feel that he is learning really fast. They give him a pack that has at least five books, and they change the books every week.

Another F1 mother, Zainab, a full-time student and the mother of two children in elementary school, answered: "… from her reading, and spelling words. Each Friday, she has a spelling test. I realized that her reading has improved." As both the F1 and F2 mothers responded similarly in the focus groups, which shows a high sensitivity toward their children's educational progress, this result also confirms the survey data that indicated 100% of F2 female parents and 96.8% of F1 female parents agreed or strongly agreed that it is their responsibility to know if their children are having trouble in school. Also, all of the parents except one F1 female agreed or strongly agreed that is their responsibility to keep track of their children's academic progress (Table 3).

Learning at home: Parents' qualifications and confidence in helping their children learn at home. Overall, the focus group data showed that mothers within the two focus group types do not feel confident providing their children with the support they think they need to be successful academically, and once again, the results suggest an agreement between F1 and F2 mothers. A sampling of the statements offered by the mothers about their confidence include, "I used to cry"; "I don't have confidence"; "I am suffering with his schoolwork"; "I am afraid"; "I have difficulties"; and "My way was wrong." These findings conflict with the survey results, which indicated that more than 90% of the parents in each group felt confident and strongly agreed that they know how to support their children's learning, either at home or in school (Table 2).

During the focus group interviews, many mothers from the two different visa type groups expressed negative feelings about supporting their children's learning at home, and the causes of these negative feelings differed. First, some F1 mothers stated they felt upset because they had no time to support their children. Second, three F2 mothers explained that they were upset they could not give their children enough support at home because of their native language (Arabic). Third, one F1 and one F2 mothers explained that they could not use the computer, let alone teach their children to study using a computer. Shahad, a non-student mother of third- and fourth-grade boys, explained that she and her husband faced difficulty in helping their children with their schoolwork, so they went to the school asking for help, but the school told them to use the Internet and software programs to help their children at home. Shahad commented, "You see, my children do not know how to use the Internet, and when we came here, using the Internet was difficult." As reported previously, this finding of difficulty using the computer and the Internet is consistent with the survey result that indicated Saudi parents are less than ideally involved in sending emails, visiting school websites, reading teachers' blogs, or signing into Parent Connect websites, when available. Thus, the findings also suggest that there are differences between F1 and F2 mothers; that difference is seen here with the F1 mothers' concerns about time, while the F2 mothers have difficulty with language and using the Internet and computers.

When I asked the mothers in both the F1 and F2 groups what they did when they felt unable to help their children, their answers often included the same four solutions: they hired tutors for their children, asked for help from friends, or enrolled their children in afterschool classes, and most of the F2 and one of the F1 mothers reported that they

relied on their children's fathers, suggesting that there is a difference between F1 and F2 mothers in looking for help from their children's fathers.

Volunteering: How parents see their roles in volunteering at school. The survey showed that at least 81.2% of parents from both the F1 and F2 groups agreed or strongly agreed that schools should ask them to volunteer in the school building. However, when asked how frequently they volunteered, 40.0% of male, 32.3% of F1 female, and 23.5% of F2 female parents didn't report volunteering at all (Table 6). Relatedly, four F1 mothers reported during the focus group sessions that they have never volunteered because they have never received an invitation from the school. However, eight F1 and F2 mothers confirmed they were invited but did not volunteer because of time constraints. For example, Kadi stated, "I wish to do so, but I have no time. I am a graduate student and I have responsibilities at home, you know how that is." Similarly, Sara, a full-time student and the mother of two children in elementary school, explained, "I am honestly not free; I am a Ph.D. student with four children, so it is very hard. Sometimes, I participate if they want supplies; I will do that."

On the other hand, two out of the 12 F1 mothers and four out of the eight F2 mothers had volunteered in their children's school activities or in their classrooms, and all of those mothers reported their volunteer experiences were positive, particularly for their children. Nahid, a full-time student with a son in kindergarten, commented,

> Honestly, it is a very beautiful feeling when you are in the middle of [your child's classroom]…So I repeated this experience many times because I felt that my son was happy that his mother came – he felt like I was a teacher or something like that – and it made me happy too.

Nouf, a non-student mother of two children in elementary school, said, "My daughter forced me to volunteer," meaning that her daughter encouraged her to

participate. However, these mothers were not sure about who was benefiting from their volunteering; three F2 mothers said the school, two F1 mothers believed it was in the interest of their children, and one F1 mother stated, "We are [benefiting], and both the children and the school."

Further, only three mothers, two F1 mothers and one F2 mother, reported during the focus group interviews that they have participated in school fundraising. This low rate of participation as compared to their volunteer rates in other school activities and in the classroom is not surprising given that up to 42.4% of Saudi parents within the three survey groups did not agree that schools should invite them to help with fundraising (Table 6). In addition, one of the focus group participants stated she helped with a fundraiser once, and then she held back from doing so again because she was unsure how the money was used. She explained: "I wanted to ask where the money went, but there was no meeting to discuss it, so I decided to stop fundraising for the school." Also, an overlap of the findings here showed how parents believe their role as parents should be and how the influence of cultural differences shapes their beliefs concerning their role as parents. Fundraising is not a common practice in Saudi Arabia, as school policies in Saudi Arabia prevent schools from engaging in fundraising activities, and parents who grew up in Saudi Arabia typically find school fundraising to be a confusing and foreign concept.

Parenting: Parental sensitivity toward their children's academic and behavioral development. As presented in the results of the survey data, most parents in all three categories responded with agree or strongly agree on statements that reflected their beliefs related to their responsibility to watch over their children's academic

performances and their behavior in school (Table 3). These beliefs were substantiated by parents' practices and sensitivity toward their children's performance in school, as reported during the focus group sessions. The findings suggest that there are no differences between mothers in the F1 and F2 groups, as most of the interviewed F1 and F2 mothers were able to recognize their children's academic and behavioral problems. For example, Reem, a non-student mother of two children in elementary school, explained that her second-born, first-grade son is struggling in school. She stated,

> He does not want to listen in class; he gets bored fast, he does not like repetition. So, I went to meet with the social worker because my son is not happy. You know? His grades are good, but his way of dealing with the teacher is going to affect his performance anyways.

Another example was given by Hanan, a non-student mother of a kindergarten daughter. She stated:

> The problem is that the stories my daughter's teacher gives the students to read every week seem to be above the reading ability of my daughter. During the first weeks of school, she gave her picture books with only a few words, but lately, she is giving them…[higher-level storybooks]. The [story] words are hard on me; sometimes I translate them so I can understand the books to help my daughter read. The words used in the most recent books are hard for both my daughter and me to comprehend. The words are long and it is a big problem for us.

In sum, within the five different predefined codes that related to Saudi parents' beliefs about their role in their children's education, several patterns emerged. First, there was a pattern where the findings across gender or visa types were matched. For example, parents often recognize their children's academic and behavioral progress and problems, as they believe it is their responsibility to do so. Parents demonstrate limited classroom volunteer involvement while they believe that schools should invite them to engage in such volunteer opportunities, and they also display a low level of involvement in school fundraising. Also, there was a place where the survey findings conflicted with findings

from the focus groups, as both F1 and F2 mothers from the focus groups expressed negative feelings about their ability to support their children's learning at home, while most parents in the survey strongly agreed that they know how to support their children's learning. Sometimes, parents in the survey groups and parents in the focus groups responded differently. For example, the focus group data revealed that F2 mothers are more engaged in helping their children with homework than F1 mothers, while the survey data showed that F2 females use online schooling sites more frequently than F1 females or males; and, as shown by the focus groups, F2 mothers rely primarily on their husbands in communicating with schools, but not F1 mothers do not.

Second research question: What do Saudi parents understand, in general, about the educational system in the United States? To answer the second research question, I targeted data under three different predefined codes within parenting and decision-making themes. Related findings under these codes from both the survey and focus groups were reported in an integrated manner, listed as follows.

Parenting: Parents' expectations of and responses to teacher and school attempts to support families. All of the F2 mothers and 95.7% of the F1 mothers in the survey agreed or strongly agreed that teachers or someone at the school should invite them to parental programs at school. Most parents in the focus groups were not happy with the teachers' and schools' performance in this area. Only two mothers out of the eight F2 participants said that they had been notified by the school about such programs, and just one of those two F2 mothers had attended a parental event. Conversely, within the F1 focus groups, some of the F1 participants confirmed that their children's schools offered such parental programs, but they did not go; others were unaware of such

programs and complained that their children's schools did not send them invitations. Only two mothers out of the 12 F1 mothers had attended parental educational programs, and those mothers had only attended only one event each. Overall, the findings suggest that there is no significant difference between F1 and F2 mothers, as both groups seemed to expect to be notified of these events, but they do not attend such events even when they are notified in advance.

Moreover, the findings also suggest that there is a similarity between the F1 and F2 mothers' reports of looking for support from schools. During the focus group interviews, mothers with both visa types said that they are looking for schools to support them to be able to help their children with issues that they do not fully understand themselves, such as exam criteria. Reem explained how she addressed her concerns about the *Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress* (M-STEP, Michigan Department of Education, 2016). She said: "I did not know what it was. I had to go and ask the teacher to explain it to me so I could specifically understand what my daughter was going to be tested on." Saudi parents also want to know their children's reading levels (an indicator of their academic progress). Ghadah, a full-time student and the mother of two children in elementary school, stated: "I asked her [the teacher] to give me a way by which I could know my son's reading level, so she gave me the classroom website. From time to time, I log in and see his reading level." Shahad also mentioned: "We asked them [the school], we told them that we wanted a tutor who can come and teach [them] at home." These focus group findings confirm and provide a variety of illustrative examples of the survey result that more than 90% of parents within all groups are looking for support from their children's schools and teachers about schooling issues (Table 3).

In addition, generally, most female participants, with no major differences between F1 and F2 mothers, expect schools to know about their needs as visitors to the U.S. with no experience with American schooling and with limited English language proficiency. Huda explained:

> My child's kindergarten teacher knows. She recognized that there are many Iraqis in school and understood that our culture [as Arabs] is different from American culture. She offered to provide extra help to get our family acclimated to the American way of schooling.

Also, Shahad mentioned how she communicates with her son's school. She said, "They know that I do not speak English, so they offer me [a translator]."

The focus group data shows that some mothers, particularly those from F1 groups, expected schools to know about their limited experiences and felt strongly that it was the schools' or teachers' responsibility to introduce them to the school system, including learning demands and resources; some were frustrated that they had requested this support and felt it had not been given. Nahid discussed her son's struggles in school and said:

> In reading, maybe he needs to put forth more effort, but I want to know what is supposed to happen, what kinds of books I should buy for him, and what is the process? I don't know. I felt that I had to go to the school and ask about what I should do. They told me about my son's problem, but they did not give me a solution regarding what I should do.

Also, Mariam described a situation during which she met with her son's teacher. She stated,

> I told her that we were doing more math practice at home using the iXeL website, and she told me 'Oh, we also have an account on this website, and we have a password,' but why didn't she tell me about the website in the beginning of the year? I mean, the communication this year is very bad, but what can I say? So, I gave her [the teacher] my email and gave the school full responsibility to email me if they had anything to tell me [related to my child's learning].

These examples added clarity to the survey data showing that some parents expect more support from schools in regard to their children's learning; however, F1 mothers made several statements that indicated they consider it to be a failure on the part of schools in playing their role in facilitating parents' involvement in their children's learning.

Decision-making: Parents' awareness of the American educational system. Looking precisely at the survey data, 72.0% or more of the participants in all three categories (male, F1 female, F2 female) were aware of some aspects of the school system and policies; however, up to 25.9% of male, 27.9% of F1 female, and 20.6% of F2 female parents were unfamiliar with them (Table 5). The findings from the focus groups provide many examples as to the extent to which parents are unaware and how it might affect Saudi children's education. As the interviews revealed, some Saudi parents within both group types (three parents from the F1 groups and four parents from the F2 groups) have been missing out on educational opportunities for their children due to a lack of understanding of the system. For example, Ameera, a full-time student and the mother of three children in elementary school, explained:

> With my oldest child, we did not fully understand the system here. We were so confused, so my child stayed at home until he was enrolled in kindergarten. With our second child, we were able to follow the preschool registration deadlines, and we enrolled him in a half-day program. Our youngest child was the luckiest one because we became saturated with the information and became more acclimated with the system, so we enrolled her in a full-day preschool program as soon as we could.

While the survey results showed that up to 18.8% of male, 18.3% of F1 female, and 5.9% of F2 females parents do not know how to get answers to their questions (Table 5), the findings from the focus groups reveal the consequential effects of this unfamiliarity with navigating the school system and its policies. The focus group data

indicate that some of the F1 mothers (five out of six participants who responded to this question) struggled with school registration processes. Jana, a newcomer and full-time students with a child in sixth grade, said: "The biggest problem I faced was registering my children for school." The previous examples also indicate the influence of cultural differences on parental involvement; most Saudi parents are not familiar with American school policies and school systems because such policies and systems differ greatly from those found in their home country of Saudi Arabia.

Despite widespread confusion regarding school policies and systems from many of the study participants, all of the F2 mothers reported that they had no difficulties, and the registration processes were easy and done primarily by their husbands. This finding is identical to the survey result that all of the F2 female parents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement "I had no difficulties enrolling my child in American schools." In fact, as the focus group data suggested, all eight F2 mothers' husbands, in addition to one F1 mother, who reported that the registration process was manageable for them were familiar with searching English websites online or got help from American resident friends. Zainab stated: "I did not face any difficulties with the registration process because we came during the summer. We stayed at our friends' house and they helped us go through the registration process." Maha, a part-time student and the mother of two children in elementary school, stated: "There were no difficulties. It was the opposite. God willed it, yes; through the Internet, we looked for schools near us, and we asked about school reviews online. We chose the best schools we could for our children."

Although, as mentioned above, the survey showed that between 5.9% and 18.8% of all of the survey group participants do not know how to get answers to questions

related to the educational system in the United States and its schools, the focus group data went beyond this example and showed higher percentages of Saudi parents who were largely unaware of federal education legislation, regulations, and programs. The data from the focus group sessions revealed that there are no differences between F1 and F2 mothers in their level of awareness. When I occasionally asked about associations and programs, such as educational advocacies, the school of choice program, school entitlement "school eligibility for federal funds (Title I, Title II, etc.)," and the parent-teacher association (PTA), the mothers from all groups were unable to tell me what these associations and programs were about, which also provides evidence of the influence of cultural differences. Deem stated:

> Things like registration, any Saudi could tell us about, but stuff like you just mentioned?! This we do not know. Schools sometimes think that we are aware of such things and they do not mention them to us, so this is the first time I have heard about them.

Within the survey data, F2 female participants responded differently than F1 females or males. They often showed higher levels of awareness of the school policies, and they went through the school system, as mentioned previously, with more ease than the F1 female and male parents who showed lower and almost even levels of awareness than F2 mothers and often struggled when they interacted with school policies or systems. For example, 89.4% of male and 88.1% of F1 mothers agreed/strongly agreed with the statement "I know how my child's literacy development is evaluated at school," while 97.0% of F1 female parents agreed/strongly agreed with the same statement (Table 5). This difference in the rate between F2 mothers' responses and other parents' responses to the survey items about awareness is also the case in the focus group interviews, as reported above. Another example of this difference from the focus groups

about the parents' familiarity with the school policies is, as mentioned before, that all F2 mothers reported that the registration processes were good experiences and none of them reported having any problems during the processes, while four out of the 12 F1 mothers experienced difficulties.

Decision-making: Parents' experiences and satisfaction with the authority of the school. Although the survey data showed that at least 95.3% of the parents in each group are satisfied with decisions made by schools or teachers related to their children's academics (Table 5), some of the parents who participated in the focus groups reported their dissatisfaction with decisions that school authorities made regarding their children. For example, three mothers, one F1 and two F2, reported being disappointed about some of the school decisions related to placing their children in lower grade levels. As one mother stated,

> The school said they would accept my children as students, but they wanted to place them in lower grades. They wanted to place my fifth-grader in fourth grade and my third-grader in second grade, but he [their father] refused. He said they are supposed to be in the same classes as their legal ages.

Similarly, Kadi said,

> I came with twins in elementary school and three children in high school. They placed my daughter two years lower than her current grade, and they placed my son three years lower than his grade. I completely refused and told them you can test them; I do not mind.

She explained: "To me, placing them in lower grades than they should have been was devastating."

Another example of dissatisfaction was evident when six mothers, three F1 and three F2, talked about their disappointment with schools' zero tolerance policies toward children's behavioral problems in school. Shahad reported,

> To punish my son, they expelled him from school. You should not expel a child for something that has nothing to do with being impolite; my son did nothing. It was only because he had heavy contact on the playground with other children. I did not think it was right to expel him.

This is also an example of the effect of cultural dissonance on what behaviors of children are acceptable, as the example revealed that parents' views of children's behavior, especially male behavior, may be cultural. The mother stated that her son "had heavy contact" with other students and seems to feel that is allowable for her son, but the school expelled him.

The mothers who faced problems with their children's schools also stated that they felt unable to argue on behalf of their children's best interests. During the discussion in the focus groups, the mothers seemed unaware about their legal rights in such situations. They were limited in their advocacy for their children within the school building and felt that their voices were never heard far beyond this point in addressing their children's rights. When Shahad was asked about her reaction to the school's decision to expel her son, she said, "We argued with them [the school]. They said 'We did not reach this point until we passed the stages that we took with him.' They took many stages, and it is their [final] decision." In other words, the school told them that they went through the legal steps until they reached the last one, leading them to believe that there was no mechanism for a higher appeal.

The findings also suggest that there is a difference between F1 and F2 mothers in their abilities to advocate for their children. Two of the F1 mothers reported situations in which they advocated on behalf of their children's interests while none of the F1 mothers did. Mariam questioned a teacher's low evaluation of her son's work on his report card. According to Mariam, the teacher claimed her son's writing skills were not at his grade

level and his work was sloppy. However, she stated that his reading skills were excellent. Mariam discussed the issue with her son's teacher and the child was found to have weakness in his hands. He was recommended for occupational and physical therapy, and, while being involved in these therapeutic sessions, his handwriting significantly improved compared to his previous performance. Mariam said,

> I did the investigation, not the teacher. His reading level has always been very high and his writing does not reflect his reading level. His teacher simply saw that his writing was terrible, but she did not examine why he was having trouble with writing. She did not try [to find out] why he was exhibiting a discrepancy between his reading and writing.

Another mother, Sara, refused to give her child a medication when her son's teacher asked her to do so. She reported,

> She told me, 'My children are like him and I took them to the hospital.' I told her that was her decision and choice, but personally, I will not give my son medication that makes him be the way you want him to be so he becomes numb in class.

On the other hand, during the focus group interviews, other F1 and F2 Saudi mothers showed their full trust in the decisions made by schools regardless of the situation. For example, Nahid stated: "My point of view is that the school is always right. I trust the school to make good decisions." This also aligns with the survey data that at least 90% of parents within all of the survey participant groups believe that teachers' and school principals' decisions are the best for their children, and a majority of parents feel satisfied with such decisions. At least 95.3% of the parents within all groups in the survey are satisfied with the decisions made by schools and teachers related to their children's academics (Table 5).

Overall, the findings related to the second research question about Saudi parents' awareness of the American educational system show several patterns of the focus group

findings that support the survey results, such as showing high agreement between the two data sets. For example, all of the F2 female participants in the survey and focus groups reported no difficulties enrolling their children in American schools. Sometimes, the focus group findings provide examples of the survey results, such as Saudi parents' unfamiliarity with the PTA and other schooling issues, which are examples of the survey results regarding a quarter of the parents who were unaware of some school aspects.

Other times, the focus group findings revealed the consequences of the survey results; an example is that 18.3% of F1 female parents in the survey do not know how to get answers to their questions, and, as a result, F1 mothers struggled with the school registration process, as indicated by the focus group findings. In addition, the findings also show patterns where F1 females responded similarly to F2 females. For example, when I asked about some schooling associations and programs, none of the F1 and F2 mothers were able to identify them. Occasionally, F1 and F2 females responded differently, as all F2 mothers reported that the registration process was manageable in contrast to most of the F1 females who had difficulties enrolling their children in school.

Third research question: How do Saudi parents perceive and describe the nature of the Saudi family-school relationship? The data answering the third research question were located under three predefined codes related to communicating and collaborating with the community themes. The discussion of the previous question is also relevant to this question as the topics are closely related, though it is primarily answered by three additional predefined codes (*Decision-making: Parents' experiences and satisfaction with the authority of the school*), as well. Integration of the data is listed as follows.

Communicating: Parents' attitudes toward their children's schools and teachers. Overall, during the focus groups, most F1 and F2 mothers showed positive attitudes toward American schools and teachers and reported good relationships. This finding supports the survey result that nearly all Saudi parents, with the exception of four F1 mothers, believe their children's schools are good schools and most of the parents across the groups believe that teachers care about their children. Still, there were some individual situations in which mothers questioned teachers' or schools' practices, as revealed during the focus groups. The findings show that F1 and F2 mothers differed in the causes of this dissatisfaction. Four out of eight F2 mothers reported particular situations, mostly related to child punishments, which made them dissatisfied with either school policies or teacher practices. Also, seven out of the 12 F1 mothers mentioned situations in which they struggled to go through the registration process or had argued with teachers about their children's academic performance or behaviors. Most of those F1 and F2 mothers claimed they received more pressure than support from their children's teachers and schools within those particular situations. Ghadah mentioned her displeasure with her son's kindergarten teacher's efforts in dealing with her son being stubborn. She stated:

> I spoke with her at the conference and she told me that he always likes to be a leader, and if he is not the leader, he gets mad. I asked her to please give him activities, so he could be a leader, but she said, 'I cannot.' Every time I tell her an idea I have regarding my son, she says, 'I cannot.' I think she might be old for being a kindergarten teacher because she does not seem to relate well to the children.

In our discussion, Ghada said that she was hoping that the teacher could give him activities that would direct his tendency of the leadership, but it is not clear whether she communicated this to the teacher directly or if the teacher understood.

Jana described her frustration with the school policy regarding the registration process and said,

> Actually, when I first arrived, I thought that things were going to be easier than what I expected as I have heard about America and its ease. When I arrived, I faced some difficulties, but then I figured out that all scholarship students have been through that when they came to America. The biggest problem I faced was in registering my children for school. They required residency proof from us and they wanted a housing contract in order for us to be able to register our children, but at the time, my family was staying in a hotel.

In addition, the survey results suggest that more than 95.3% of parents, with minor differences between the males, and F1 and F2 females, get along with their children's teachers (Table 4). However, the female participants in the focus groups were more specific in reporting their relationships with teachers, and they illustrated how the nature of this relationship is shaped. As they reported, first, mothers' relationships with teachers depend on the teachers' personalities. For example, Reem stated, "I did not like to have contact with the teacher because she thought that she knew what was best. So, I did not want to bother or embarrass her." Shahad explained, "Older teachers tend to accept everyone with an open heart, but younger teachers are usually excited and eager to prove themselves. I have definitely noticed a difference." Amal described her relationship with her daughter's teacher, stating,

> My daughter's teacher is very nice. I mean, even when I had personal problems for me, she suggested solutions. Like when I had my son, I had difficulty breastfeeding him, so she advised me about that. She was always asking my husband how I was doing when he went to pick up my daughter. She is very excellent.

Shahad also stated that the parent-teacher relationship is affected by children's personalities. She explained, "It depends on the child's personality. If a child is quiet, he will get along with the teacher; if he is silly, he will not." In turn, Shahad explained that

this affects the relationship between parents and teachers, and she later reported how her son's teacher deals with her son being hyper:

> The teacher complains about his movement. I tried to explain to the teacher many times that his nature is like this. She says no; she wants him to sit quietly and never move when she talks. [She] told us: 'Tell him to make fewer movements, do not give us a hard time.' This has caused tension between us; we are in a little bit of a dispute.

Communicating: Parents' initiated actions in communicating with their children's school and teachers. The survey data showed that 80.0% of male and 88.2% of both F1 and F2 female parents strongly agreed that parents should contact children's teachers if they believe their children are struggling in school. Combining both those who agreed and strongly agreed, 97.7% of the parents believe it is parents' responsibility to contact teachers as soon as academic problems arise. This result was corroborated by the focus group finding that Saudi parents often initiate communication, typically in regard to their children's academic performance. Otherwise, as F1 and F2 mothers similarly reported, schools typically communicate with parents as soon as there are problems related to their children's behavior in the classroom.

Parents reported different ways of communicating. The most frequently reported forms of communication for both the survey and focus group participants were visiting the school to talk to the teachers or principals and attending parent-teacher conferences. The survey results indicate that at least 43.0% of parents in each group meet with staff at their children's school once a week or more. During both the F1 and F2 focus group sessions, visiting the school to talk to the teachers or principal face-to-face was reported 20 times (10 times during the F1 focus groups and 10 times during the F2 focus group sessions) by most of each group's participants, showing that F1 and F2 mothers, once

again, responded similarly. In addition, most of the 20 mothers reported attending parent-teacher conferences.

The findings indicate that there are similar responses by F1 and F2 mothers that, in contrast to visiting the school, only two mothers, one each from the F1 and F2 groups, reported sending an email. In both cases, the emails were sent from the children's fathers. Only Ameera had commented once on a teacher's blog. Bassmah explained that Saudi parents are not used to "electronic communication emails. For us…we are a little bit far [behind in using emails to communicate with schools], or because in Saudi Arabia we are used to mothers' meetings. " Mothers' meetings are private school events during which current students' mothers meet in a friendly group setting with teachers and other school staff. Also, the quote by Bassmah is evidence of the contribution of cultural differences on parents' communication forms with schools. Saudi mothers miss the mothers' meetings that they used to attend in Saudi Arabia, and they keep making personal efforts to meet with teachers to make up for missing the practice to which they were accustomed. This may be one explain for the mothers' high frequency (once a week) of visiting with teachers or staff. Moreover, no mothers reported that they had made a phone call to a teacher or school. Kadi stated: "I have never made a phone call to the school. Every time I need to address a concern, I go to the school's principal." Also, only four F1 mothers and two F2 mothers out of the 20 mothers who were asked during the focus groups about visiting school websites mentioned that they had used their schools' websites.

Five of eight F2 mothers indicated that they relied primarily on their children's fathers in visiting schools and meeting teachers and even completing the electronic communication. It is worthwhile to note that four out of those five mothers are non-

English speakers, which indicates that their limited English language proficiency makes F2 mothers reliant on their husbands for their communication needs, compared to only one F1 mother out of the 12 F1 mothers. F1 mothers are full-time students and likely to speak English well. Only one F1 mother mentioned that her husband is the one who communicates with teachers (via email); however, she does visit the school.

Only three mothers, Shahad, Jana, and Huda, reported that schools provided them with translator services during meetings. However, when I asked whether they had ever requested the services, none of the 20 mothers, including those who did not speak any English, reported having asked for translations from the school. This finding is not entirely surprising as the survey results showed that 20.0% of Saudi parents, which is a large percentage compared to negative responses on other items within the scale, did not believe that their children's teachers or someone at the schools should provide them with translator services if they needed such services. Also, this finding is evidence of the previous finding as well, that F2 mothers, who do not speak English, are unaware of translation services provided by schools, thus they rely on their husbands to communicate with schools.

Collaborating with the community: Parents rely on the school to involve them in the community. The survey data showed that 85.3% to 90.6% of Saudi parents in all groups agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "schools should provide information on community events that I may want to attend with my child"; none of the participants within all parent groups in the survey strongly disagreed with that statement (Table 7). The focus group data indicate that this is likely because, although some of the parents do not think that it is one of the mandatory roles for schools, they still feel that schools are

the only passage that could connect them to their communities. For example, Kadi complained, "It is not about me, it is about the children. Schools should at least inform children about events so they can participate in activities. Honestly, our school doesn't inform us about any outside-of-school activities." Also, Sara stated, "The school must play a big role, and it is our right to know about events being held in the local community." Again, this finding indicates similarity between F1 and F2 mothers' responses about school attempts to involve them in their communities.

Three F2 mothers and six F1 mothers stated that the schools provided them with information to become involved in local activities, events, and services. For example, when I asked if they received advertisements or guides from schools about local resources and events, Nouf confirmed, "Like the public library or local events? Yes, they always let us know." However, five out of these nine parents believed that the outreach came from a teacher's personal efforts and not officially from the school. Nahid's comments illustrated this belief:

> There is one teacher who always tells me about events happening in our community. She mentions the events so we can take our children if we would like. She tells us about events in an informal way, and I believe she tells us because she wants to, not because the school tells her to.

Although at least 85.9% of parents within the three groups of parents who participated in the survey believe that schools should provide them with information on community services that they may want to use with their families (Table 7), only four mothers (three F1 and one F2 mothers) out of the 20 participants had asked their children's schools about services in the local community, such as free daycare and pediatric clinics. So while most parents who responded to the survey believed schools should provide this information, some of the focus group participants, F1 and F2 mothers,

similarly, indicated that they should do so on their own initiation, not in response to requests from parents.

Generally, several patterns emerged in answering the third research question about the nature of Saudi parents' relationship with schools and teachers. The most presented pattern of findings is when indicating an agreement between the F1 and F2 mothers' responses. For example, both F1 and F2 mothers reported visiting schools mostly to communicate with the principals or teachers. Also, most F1 and F2 mothers rarely or never sent emails; none of the F1 and F2 mothers had asked for translations from schools; and some of the F1 and F2 mothers reported that schools placed pressure on them instead of giving them support in some situations.

The findings showed a pattern when the survey results supported or justified the focus group findings. For example, the survey results supported or justified the focus group findings regarding the following topics: that Saudi parents have a positive attitude toward their children's schools and teachers in general; school visits are a common communication method; Saudi parents initiate communication with schools when it is about academic performance; Saudi parents have never asked for translation services; and Saudi parents think that schools play a major role in involving them in their local communities. On the other hand, there was a pattern when F1 and F2 responses differed. For example, F1 and F2 mothers responded differently about situations that made them dissatisfied with some of the schools' or teachers' practices; F2 mothers reported schools' child punishment approaches, while F1 mothers reported registration processes and issues related to their children's performance in school. Also, the findings indicate that there is a difference between the two groups of mothers as F2 mothers rely primarily on their

husbands in communicating with schools, while F1 mothers do not. Finally, there was an overlap in the findings of the influence of cultural differences as Saudi parents utilize school visits more often than other communication styles because they are missing mothers' meetings that take place in Saudi schools. Other trends above (e.g., parents only concern about the academic achievements) also bring to light cultural differences—the choices parents reported regarding making interactions with the schools and teachers seemed to vary somewhat with the degree to which the practices would be appropriate per their experiences with Saudi schools. Additional cultural differences are explored in the following section, in response to the fourth research question.

Fourth research question: What are the cultural differences in schooling in Saudi Arabia and the U.S. that might influence Saudi families' contributions to their children's English literacy development? There was only one predefined code provided by the data that directly answered this fourth question without integrating parallel results from the survey. However, there was a pattern of the influence of cultural differences that cuts across the other three questions that was mentioned in the previous sections whenever it was appropriate.

Cultural differences: Parents' recognition of cultural differences and similarities. Both F1 and F2 mothers were able to recognize some cultural differences in schooling between their home country and the United States. Sometimes, F1 and F2 mothers reported the same cultural differences by which they were impressed. On the other hand, other mothers discussed their concerns about cultural differences in schooling. For example, several mothers, from both F1 and F2 groups, were in agreement again as they made statements regarding how impressed they were by their children's

schools paying attention to the children's psychological needs and helping them develop their personalities. Ameera confessed, "It is beautiful that the school cares about each child's personality and psychological needs, particularly in elementary school. I wish that our schools in Saudi Arabia did the same." Further, Deem said: "I realized that with my children, American schools care a lot about building their personality." She explained,

> I attended a few classes in the United States when I was a student, and part of my course of study included performing an observation session in a school. I realized that American schools want children to stand up for themselves, express their personality, and speak freely without stress.

Nahid stated,

> American schools take care of children's mental health and support all students, regardless of personality. This does not exist in Saudi Arabia. In my home country, students who do not participate in class will not be successful in school, and teachers do not support children's personality development. I feel like this is a problem, but I feel that they consider the mentality of children here a lot.

Also, mothers from the F1 and F2 groups reported that they were impressed with how American schools encourage a love of education. Maha said: "American schools have positive aspects because they value a love of education and nurture children's self-esteem." Ameera further described,

> When I went to my son's teacher, I found that she preserved a whole side of the classroom for free reading for students who love reading. Also, the classroom includes beautiful books; even I loved to read them because they are interesting.

Some F1 and F2 mothers also appreciate the ESL programs that schools provide for their children. Maha confessed, "The best thing about schools in the United States is that they have ESL programs that help students." Only one F1 mother, Norah, a full-time student and a mother of two children in elementary school, unlike the rest of the 19 F1 and F2 mother participants in the focus groups, stated that: "I came here expecting that I am going to see new ways and methods of teaching and learning, something really different

than the things we have in our schools, but there is nothing until now that made me feel astonished or I feel is unique, even the homework method is the same. I do not know, it might depend on the school?"

On the other hand, the findings reveal that some F1 and F2 mothers were disappointed that the children's home language and religion were not fostered in school, though they did not seem to expect that schools were responsible for doing so. For example, Maha stated, "American schools have positive aspects because they value a love of education and nurture children's self-esteem, but they also have negative aspects for us, like coeducation and missing the Arabic language." On the same topic, Amal commented, "It is an American school, what do you expect? We enrolled our children in a regular public school. It is not a private Islamic school. They are not teaching them any religious things."

Though the findings indicate that there is no difference between F1 and F2 mothers' ability to recognize some cultural differences, the focus group interviews also revealed that sometimes parents' inability to recognize cultural differences caused problems. For example, Kadi felt that there was discrimination involved in her children's school's decision about enrollment requirements, while the school simply applied the policies that guide enrollment for the state. To illustrate, Kadi went back to Saudi Arabia with her children for one semester before returning to the United States, and she wanted to reenroll her twins in the same American school, but the school's office asked her to repeat the entire registration process, including the school placement test, vaccine records, residence contracts, and so on. Kadi felt like she was facing discrimination because the school knew her children and they attended the school before taking a

semester-long break, but the school's office might have expected Kadi and her husband to know the policy (i.e., all students must re-enroll each year). Thus, the school might have felt as if Kadi and her husband were trying to skirt the school system's requirements when she and her husband argued with the school about repeating the registration process.

Another example, also by Kadi, shows the difference in communication methods to which Saudis are accustomed that usually are not used in American schools and the expectations for communication from American schools. Failing to recognize these differences in communication can cause misunderstandings when Saudi parents try to become involved in their children's schools. Kadi reported that she communicates with her children's school in the way that she used to in Saudi Arabia – she meets with her children's principal or teachers when she has questions or concerns. However, her children's school does not always appreciate her concern about her children's academic progress because she frequently visits the school instead of simply sending an email or making a phone call to personally communicate with the school and her children's teachers, or checking the school website to get answers to her questions. As a result, sometimes Kadi feels like she is causing a disturbance when she tries to ask questions and get her concerns addressed. She explained: "Sometimes they welcome me, and sometimes they don't." She further explained:

> I went to him [the school principal] and explained to him my child's problem in the classroom, and he says ok, I will take care of the issue and you can come to me later [but nothing changed]. So I came later and told him about the same issue, again… and… again, until I tried to make an appointment with him and he refused.

Similarly, the findings also show that few F1 and F2 mothers reported that differences between the educational systems of Saudi Arabia and the United States made

them unsure of how they could support their children. For example, Ameera described her experience with her second-grade daughter. She perceives, as most Saudi parents do, that her role in her daughter's education is associated with monitoring her and ensuring she completes her homework. However, unlike in Saudi Arabia, not all American schools and teachers assign homework for children, and Ameera got confused about her role at home because her daughter would frequently come home without homework in written form. She explained, "I told my child's teacher that I was confused about the homework because my child did not bring written assignments home from school." Her daughter's teacher explained, "We rarely give our students homework, but to make you feel comfortable, I will give you a week-by-week schedule and write in front of each day what I gave the students as homework." Ameera commented, "My child's teacher created the written homework sheet because she saw that I was preoccupied with my child's lack of written homework." Another example was mentioned by Mariam, a full-time student and the mother of a third-grade child. She was upset that she did not know about the teacher's blog, while her son's teacher expected that she was familiar with it. She explained,

> At the conference, I told them that I didn't always know the spelling words each week. I know that spelling word lists are given to the students every Friday, but if my son misses a Friday, he also misses the word list given out that day. The teacher mentioned looking up the blog, but I didn't know there was a blog for my son's class. The teacher assumed that parents would go online and look for the blog; she wanted me to search for it, even though I was never told about it in advance.

Other evidence of the contributions of cultural differences on parental involvement were occasionally mentioned under the other research questions, such as the influence of cultural differences on some of the F2 mothers' experiences struggling to enroll their children in schools; the communication method in making school visits

instead of using online or other communication forms; parents' unfamiliarity with school fundraising and their unlikeliness to participate in school fundraising; and parents' different points of view of children's behavior, which causes misjudgments of school policies.

In sum, findings that answer the fourth research question show a constant and great agreement between F1 and F2 mothers in their ability to recognize some cultural differences between schooling in Saudi Arabia and the United States. For example, both F1 and F2 mothers reported that they were amazed by some of the American schooling features, such as paying attention to children's mentalities and personalities, encouraging the love of education, and providing ESL programs for their children. However, both F1 and F2 mothers reported their disappointment that their children lack language and religious support in schools. More important and central to these research findings is that F1 and F2 mothers reported similar situations where parents' failure in recognizing cultural differences between the two types of schooling practices and policies led to great misunderstandings or failures in assisting children's learning in an appropriate way. Examples of such findings can be also located under the other three research questions.

Summary of the Triangulation of the Findings

The results of the survey and focus group data revealed several interesting themes. First, it was interesting to note that trends sometimes differed along gender and visa status lines. For example, F2 females are often much more involved in schoolwork with their children than male or F1 female parents. In addition, Saudi parents tend to feel quite strongly about their right to receive, for example, support from schools and teachers about schooling issues, such as what literacy skills their children need to learn. Although

there are many areas where parents in the focus groups responded quite similarly to the survey, there were also times when there were surprising differences between similar questions. For example, the focus group data showed that mothers within all groups do not feel confident in helping their children to be successful academically, while the survey results indicated that more than 90% of parents within all groups felt confident that they know how to support their children's learning (Table 2). However, in some cases, data from the survey was expanded and clarified by the focus group data; to illustrate, the survey data indicated a low level of Saudi parents' involvement in communicating with schools via email or websites relative to other types of involvement. However, the focus group data clarified that Saudi parents are not familiar with using technology to communicate with schools. It is worthwhile to note that a pattern of the influence of cultural differences was presented across the four research questions.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Research has indicated a correlation between students' success and parental involvement (Epstein & Salinas, 2004; Greene & Long, 2011; Jeynes, 2012; Li, 2012; Thompson, 2013; Ye & Jiang, 2014). However, effective parental involvement might be influenced by cultural mismatches between home and school (Öztürk, 2013; Purcell-Gates, 1997; Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, & Quiroz, 2001; Turney, 2009; Wang, 2008; Wong & Hughes, 2006; Yoder & Lopez, 2013). Oftentimes, cultural minority parents are unable to assume parental involvement roles that are idealized by schools or are unaware of the roles they are expected to play in assisting their children's education in the United States (Li, 2012; Trumbull, 2001). Saudi parents are one group of minority parents in the United States, and this mixed-methods research study examines their involvement in their elementary-aged (K-6) children's education, with an emphasis on English literacy development.

This study adds a new perspective to research on multicultural education in the United States. The conceptual framework of this study is built upon two different but related works. First, Gee's (2007) theory of big "D" Discourses is used. Gee's theory goes beyond the use of language; it also includes "ways of being in the world" (Gee, 1989, p. 7). When children's school and home Discourses are culturally similar, they experience easy transitions between home and school because their parents can successfully merge the two Discourses together. However, when children's home and school Discourses differ culturally (i.e., creating a mismatch), merging the two Discourses is much more difficult (Gee, 2007). The second theory is Epstein's theory (1995) of overlapping influences in which Epstein offered six types of parental involvement that are not mutually exclusive, but rather, as indicated in the name of the

theory and evidenced in this study, have considerable overlap. This Partnership Model focuses on the overlapping influences of school, family, and the community on children's education. The six types of involvement are learning at home, parenting, communicating, volunteering, decision-making, and collaborating with the community (Epstein, 1995; Epstein et al., 2002; Epstein & Jansorn, 2004).

This mixed-methods study examines Saudi parents' participation in and perceptions of each of Epstein's six types of partnership through Gee's Discourse lens. It is important to note that education in Saudi Arabia is a fast developmental sector, and this study reflects to specifically the ration and educational experiences of the current generation of Saudi scholarship parents, which might differ considerably from the future generations who came after the recent educational development reform in Saudi Arabia.

The data were collected and analyzed in sequence. First, 212 of completed surveys, and then transcripts from the discussions with 20 mothers in four focus groups were analyzed. As described in chapter four, the integrated findings show patterns in the data while answering the four research questions. Often time, the two data sets support each other; the only complete conflict reported between the two data sets is of parents' confidence in helping their children at home. Also, there were patterns that showed similarities or differences between parents with different visa types, and sometimes between parents' genders. Also, findings showed an overlap between the data in answering the research questions. The most overlapping reported was related to answering the fourth research question about the influence of cultural differences, as it is stand of in the other three research questions. Interpretation of the findings triangulation to clarify insights gained from integrating the collected data from the survey and focus

groups; the extant research that framed this study; implementations for educators; and recommendations for future research are in the following sections.

Triangulation and Interpretation of the Findings

First research question: What are Saudi parents' beliefs about their roles in their children's education?

The first study question was designed to explore Saudi parents' beliefs about the degree to which they participate and how often they participate in their children's education, and their beliefs regarding the ideal role parents should play supporting their children's learning. In general, the survey data indicated high levels of involvement, while the focus group data illustrated how parents became involved in their children's learning and what they think about their involvement.

The survey and focus groups' integrated findings revealed that Saudi parents have their own practices used to support their children's learning at home, and such practices differ from mainstream practices and, probably, their children's schools' expectations as well. For example, the integrated data indicate that most Saudi parent participants, with minor differences between gender and visa type groups, are involved to some degree in their children's learning at home, and reading is the most common practice of Saudi home literacy. However, many F1 and F2 Saudi mothers from the focus groups, without distinct differences, do not believe that reading stories, for example, to or with their children is a role they should assume in their children's literacy development. This is noteworthy given the focus most schools place on an interactive reading experience, which may never happen in the homes of these families. Also, none of the F1 and F2 mothers reported writing activities at home other than written homework, which indicates

that most Saudi parents do not recognize the importance of supporting their children's writing skills as they do with reading. This is evidence of cultural differences as well because teaching writing skills receives much more support in American schools than Saudi schools. Thus, many Saudi parents might not be culturally attuned to writing as much as reading. Therefore, their children might have gaps between the development of their writing and reading skills due to the varying amounts of support they receive at home in both subjects.

The integrated findings also indicate a slight difference between F2 females and the other survey participants, although most F2 females are attentive to their children doing their homework (Table 2). This difference between the two visa type groups stood out more clearly during the focus group interviews as F2 mothers reported they sit with their children and help them do their homework, while some F1 mothers do not believe this is the best way to support their children as they complete their homework. It is noteworthy to mention that all of those F2 mothers have children in the early grades (K-2) but not F1 mothers, who reported older school grade levels for their children. Integrating this data indicates that Saudi parents become less involved in doing homework with their elder children (in grades 3-6). Still, it is unclear whether the difference might be due to grade level of the children or visa type. The survey questions, as they are limited in their information, do not provide the reasons why some Saudi parents do not help their children. During the focus groups, mothers were able to report some reasons they do not help their children with homework, including children not having homework, not having time to help, and some F1 and F2 mothers of elder children in grades 3-6 believe it is not their ideal role to sit and help their children with homework.

However, the F1 and F2 mothers of older children are still monitoring, directing, and encouraging their children to finish their homework primarily on their own. This could be problematic because although most Saudi parents believe they are supporting their children's learning by monitoring them while they complete their homework, some American schools may expect Saudi parents to play a more interactive role throughout the process of homework completion.

The findings reveal that, without significant differences, most of the survey and focus group participants across gender and visa type groups believe it is part of their role as parents to stay aware of their children's academic and behavioral development using different techniques (Tables 2 & 4), like signing the daily planner, if available, and recognizing their children's reading and writing practices. However, there were conflicts between the survey and focus group findings within the same group of participants who use online resources to keep track of their children's academic progress, the survey findings suggest that F2 female parents are using technology to track their children's schooling more frequently than F1 parents (Table 4).

On the other hand, the focus groups showed that some F2 mothers use online services to simply visit school websites. In fact, though Saudi parents might not have previous experience with online schooling services, they might be encouraged to try them if they have the time to do so, like most F2 mothers do. Thus, the percentages of F1 female and male parents (as the majority of them are full-time students) who are using online schooling services are less than the F2 females who are non-students. Still, those F2 females are limited in their use of the online schooling sites as they simply view school websites and read teachers' blogs, if available, but they lack the experience and

the language skills that would allow them to play an interactive role in sending emails or posting comments, as shown by the focus group data. This conflict might be because those F2 Females who voluntarily did an online survey represent a subgroup more comfortable with technology while the focus groups sound much more like the format of the mother's meetings, which may have been equally comfortable for all participants. Thus, a (self) selection bias for the survey emerges that wouldn't impact the focus groups. Also, it could be that F2 parents did not report visiting school websites or reading teachers' blogs during the interview as they were avoiding follow-up questions or discussions about how they actually use such sites. Thus, F2 parents do not use online sites in the ways that are likely to be expected by the school culture. This finding demonstrates that Saudi parents are left out of properly tracking their children's academic performance because they are relying on tracking techniques that show partial information about their children's learning, like the daily planner, while many American schools and teachers use online sources to update parents and provide crucial details about children's academic affairs.

The triangulation also presents a major difference between the survey and focus group findings related to learning at home involvement: parents from the survey seem to be more confident in helping their children with schoolwork (Table 2), while the focus group participants lack confidence, as they reported negative feelings about their actual roles. One possible reason of these conflicts might be that the participants in the focus groups better understood the question and were able to ask clarifying questions during the discussion, while the participants in the survey were limited in their answers by the available statements, and so they guessed as to which selection out of the available

choices was the best selection. Another possible reason is that survey participants might not have wanted to admit that they were not confident and be judged by others. However, because in the focus groups they were with someone of their own gender and country, they may have felt comfortable in being honest. Thus, once more, the importance of triangulating the two data sets appears here in preventing making wrong statements regarding Saudi parents' confidence and qualifications in supporting their children's learning at home.

Moreover, F1 and F2 mothers within the focus groups differed in reporting the causes of their negative feelings about their ability to assist their children with schoolwork. These differences are seen with F1 mothers' concerns about time, while the F2 mothers had difficulty with language and using technology, which is also the case with the influence of cultural differences, as discussed previously.

Both the focus group data and survey data (Table 6) showed that Saudi parents, with slight differences between groups of gender and visa types, are less frequently involved in volunteering when compared to other types of involvement. In fact, this finding is predictable because volunteering in schools is not a common practice in Saudi Arabia (Kojah, 2013; Ministry of Education, 2012). The triangulation of the data, furthermore, helps in understanding that although Saudi parents typically do not have experience volunteering with their children's schools, they have the desire to do so. This could be indicated by integrating the two data sets, as the survey revealed that the percentage of Saudi parents within all groups who have never volunteered in schools is bigger than the percentage of parents who disagreed/strongly disagreed that schools should ask them to volunteer inside of the school building. Second, the focus group

findings suggest reasons that some F1 and F2 mothers, equally, do not volunteer, including because their children's schools do not send them invitations or because they have no time to do so. Integrating the two findings, I was able to take out the statement that some Saudi parents do not volunteer in their children's schools because they disagreed; rather they do not volunteer because they need schools to initiate and introduce them to the concept of volunteering in schools. One problem may be that most American public schools often offer volunteer opportunities for parents during PTA meetings, but Saudi parents, because of schooling cultural differences, are unaware of PTA meetings, as shown by the focus group data, and they are also unfamiliar with school volunteering. However this does not appear to be the issue for all parents as some reported being invited, but not attending. On the other hand, the absence of Saudi parents in the field of school volunteering might lead schools to misinterpret Saudi parents' low level of involvement. It is interesting to compare between parents' responses on volunteering and their responses on parenting programs. The data indicates that Saudi parents believe that school should invite them to both parenting programs as well as volunteer opportunities, but they are much more motivated to volunteer in school than attend parental event conducted by the school. The possible reason is that parents seemed to be motivated as they can see the direct impact of their volunteer but not with parental programs.

Likewise, the integrated findings from both the survey (Table 6) and focus groups show that some parents, without noticeable differences between gender and visa type groups, do not participate in school fundraising because they do not believe it is their role to do so. An overlap of the findings here showed parents' beliefs regarding their role and

also showed the influence of cultural differences on their beliefs because fundraising is not practiced in schools in Saudi Arabia. Schooling policy in Saudi Arabia prevents schools from engaging in such activities. Thus, Saudi parents' previous cultural experience likely confused them regarding fundraising and prevents them from participating.

In sum, the data suggest that current Saudi scholarship parents and their spouses are coherent to some degree when reporting their own experiences and understanding their role in their children's education in the United States. Triangulation of the findings raises some critical points of discussion. First, the findings show that most Saudi parents do not read to their children and do not encourage writing at home. In addition, some of them do not believe that helping their children complete their homework is the ideal role for them as parents, but American schools might hold different expectations about the role of parents and they might expect more from Saudi parents in supporting their children's literacy development. Second, contrasting findings from the F1 and F2 groups of parents using technology in tracking their children's academic performance led to the assumption that parents might be encouraged to use technology effectively in schooling if they have the time to do so, like most F2 mothers do, and the necessary language skills. Still, Saudi parents are not tracking their children's academic performance using techniques that schools use to keep parents up-to-date. Third, while using technology and language barriers are difficulties reported by most F2 mothers, F1 mothers differ, as they are full-time students and report having difficulty finding time to help their children. Finally, school volunteering is a new experience for Saudi parents, thus they need more

support from schools, including volunteer invitations and opportunities, as they show a great desire to become involved in such activities.

Second research question: What do Saudi parents understand, in general, about the educational system in the United States?

The second research question examines Saudi parents' beliefs, in general, about each party's schooling role, parents' expectations of schools and teachers, and parents' awareness of American schooling policies and systems. Mostly, there are some clear differences between F1 and F2 mothers' understanding of the American educational system and its policies. Some possibilities of these differences were discussed while triangulating the findings.

The integrated data suggest that Saudi parents, with no significant differences between gender and visa type groups, usually do not attend parental events conducted by schools; however, still they expect and believe that schools should invite them to such events (Table 3). This might seem like a discrepancy between Saudi parents' expectations of their children's schools to provide parenting education and their responses to schools' attempts. However, the likely reasons for this discrepancy are that Saudi parents are not motivated to attend because English is not their native language and they cannot understand the content or socialize in English, or because they are full-time students and have no time to attend. Kadi justified in another situation regarding a volunteer event: "I wish to do so, but I have no time." Moreover, because the focus groups showed that the only parental event that Saudi parents might attend is one related to children's academic performance (e.g., school events to explain new exams, parent-teacher conferences), it is possible that the framework of parenting as it relates to schooling for Saudi parents, due

to cultural differences, is more narrow than the framework that is appropriate for mainstream parents of American school children.

Triangulation of the data shows that all groups of Saudi parents, without significant differences between the participants from both the survey and focus group interviews, are looking for support from schools regarding schooling issues (Table 3). Simultaneously, the focus group findings show that most Saudi mothers expect that schools are aware of their needs. This could be a problem because Saudi parents will not initiate asking schools and teachers for support as long as they believe it is the schools' responsibility to do, and as long as they expect that schools understand the kind of support they need. However, in reality, schools are not always aware of Saudi parents' specific needs because they are a minority within the minority of Arabs in the United States. Therefore, schools will not be able to provide the desired support to parents unless parents introduce their needs to the schools, as some of the mothers reported doing.

In addition, while these expectations might keep Saudi parents far away from playing an effective role in supporting their children's education as they are waiting to receive needed support from schools, it could also lead to tension between schools and parents when Saudi parents feel that schools do not do enough to assist them while schools are unable to recognize the specific parenting assistance that Saudi parents need or are looking for.

Furthermore, the findings from both the survey and focus groups across all participants (gender and visa type groups) suggest that Saudi parents show low levels of awareness about school systems and policies, resulting in missing some educational opportunities for their children and struggles when navigating school systems (Table 5).

However, there are some differences between groups of parents reporting their experiences of awareness when dealing with school systems and policies.

First, the integrated findings from the survey and focus groups indicate that F2 females have a higher level of awareness than F1 and F2 males and F1 females, particularly with issues about school practices (e.g., how a child's literacy development is evaluated at school) (Table 5). This difference in awareness levels might occur because F2 mothers have enough time to go to the school and ask for clarifications, while some F1 parents have much less time to help their children at home, let alone go to schools and ask about schooling practices. Specifically, because Saudi parents are not familiar with sending emails or making phone calls when communicating with schools (this will be discussed in answering the third research question), the common communication method of Saudi parents is visiting the school in person.

Second, F2 female participants from both the survey and focus groups did not report any difficulties regarding the registration process, but all of the male participants and F1 females did. Triangulating the two data sets suggests that F2 mothers' responses do not reveal a good level of F2 female awareness. The reason why F2 mothers reported that the registration process was manageable is because they were not the ones who took over the process – their husbands were. Their husbands might report different experiences, which is likely because the survey shows that males and F1 females, whose responses were quite similar, had difficulties enrolling their children in American schools. In addition, both the survey and focus group findings indicate that Saudi parents are limited in their ability to navigate the school system, as they often rely on their friends or performing online research by themselves to understand and be introduced to

the American educational system and its policies. While these tactics seem helpful for most parents, they might not be useful when Saudi parents are in need of information about topics that are not understood in Saudi Arabia (and thus not easily explained by other Saudis) or topics that are completely new to them. For example, during the interview, Saudi parents discussed their abilities to search online for good schools for their children. They stated that they examined schools' performance rates and parents' reviews. However, mothers were unable to search online or ask friends about some of the American educational system's applications and policies, such as educational advocacy, the school of choice program, parent-teacher associations, and reading evaluations, because they had not been exposed to similar applications and policies in Saudi Arabia. As Deem argued,

> Things like registration, any Saudi could tell us about, but stuff like you just mentioned?! This we do not know. Schools sometimes think that we are aware of such things and they do not mention them to us, so this is the first time I have heard about them.

Moreover, their friends, who are often from the same population (Saudi students), are not a good source of information about the school system because they often have the same limited resources and knowledge, despite living in the United States for a few years longer than the students seeking assistance.

Although the majority of Saudi parents think, as indicated by the data, that they are aware of the American educational system and its policies, their awareness is limited to the experiences with which they are familiar or to which they were exposed in their home country. That is to say, they may not be aware that the things they do not know about even exist. Consequently, this might leave them unable to navigate more than the general and easily accessible information about American schools. This limitation of

Saudi parents' resources might also have a direct impact on children's literacy development. Children might lack opportunities to practice their literacy development because their parents are unaware of or unable to navigate available literacy resources on which most mainstream parents and schoolteachers rely, such as reading websites and summer education programs.

Also, findings from the focus groups suggest that only a few F1 parents were able to advocate on behalf of their children's best interests and none of the F2 mothers were able to do so. This is critical when this negativity is due to the belief that schools, as a sector of education, always make the best decisions for children's education, as some parents reported in both the survey and focus groups. In this case, Saudi children might be left behind when the schools misjudge students' situations, like some of the reported cases of schools expelling Saudi children or dropping their grade levels when they first enrolled in American schools.

Additionally, triangulating the findings of Saudi parents' understanding of the American education system reveals areas of agreement between the two data sets and differences between the two groups of participants. Such triangulation also evokes rich discourses that strengthen the discussion of evidence and justify the difference in the findings between the F1 and F2 groups. For example, first, there was a great agreement between all groups of parents from the two data sets that they do not frequently attend parental programs other than those related to their children's academic performance. Still, they believe that it is a school's role to invite parents to parental programs. Saudi parents might be not motivated to attend because of time limitations, language barriers, or

because they answer based on their expectations of parental programs that are different from the parenting subjects provided by schools.

Second, most Saudi parents are missing some educational opportunities for their children and struggling in navigating the school system because they are unaware of school practices other than the common ones used in the system, as well as school policies. Also, most Saudi parents have limited abilities to navigate the school system and its policies, as they are restricted to online research – with limited knowledge about available resources – or experiences from friends who are likely to share the same limited experience. On the other hand, three integrated findings point out differences between F2 and F1 parent groups. For example, the findings suggest that the vast majority of F2 parents reported experiencing a manageable enrollment process, which was contradictory to the male F2 and female F1 parents because the female F2 parents were likely not the people who were in charge of the registration process. Also, the findings indicate that F2 mothers have a higher level of awareness than other F1 parent groups about the policies and the system applications related to children's educational development because they probably have time to visit the school, as doing so is a common way of communication, and ask for help, but F1 parents do not. Finally, though the findings indicate that Saudi parents are unable to advocate on behalf of their children's best interests, as shown by the focus groups, very few F1 parents showed positive reactions in this regard and none of the F2 parents did. The result might be that Saudi children could lack needed support if schools misunderstand the underlying causes behind their academic or behavior problems.

Third research question: How do Saudi parents perceive and describe the nature of the Saudi family-school relationship?

The third question explores Saudi parents' attitudes toward their children's schools and teachers when describing the nature of the Saudi family-school relationship and identifying Saudi parents' attempts and contributions in building two-way communication between home and school. Triangulating the data related to the nature of the family-school relationship showed agreement between the survey and focus group findings.

In general, the findings derived from the two data sets show similarities between parent groups (gender and visa types) – the majority of parents in all groups have good attitudes toward their children's schools and teachers (Table 4). Their good attitudes were strong enough to not be impacted by some personal situations, as reported by the same F1 and F2 mother participants in the focus groups who also confirmed good attitudes in general. Actually, some of the female participants in the focus groups had the chance to talk in detail and express their displeasure with some policies or practices that were used with their children in school; the participants in the survey did not have the ability to do so as freely as they had limited answers to specific questions.

F1 and F2 mothers did not share the same concerns as they reported completely different issues. F2 mothers were disappointed about punishments given to their children by schools, while F1 mothers were dissatisfied with difficult registration requirements, as mentioned previously, and teachers' ways of dealing with their children's low academic or behavioral performance. These differences in parents' considerations are probably due to their different areas of expertise and attention. The problem is that most F2 mothers

might be unable to recognize if there are practices applied mistakenly by schools during their children's academic development and achievements, and thus, they would be unable to argue on behalf of their children's best interests. This discussion is supported by the previous findings of F2 mothers' ability to argue on behalf of their children's academic interests.

The integrated findings also show that most Saudi parents, from all of the groups and different data sets, have good relationships with their children's teachers, but they base their beliefs regarding the parent-teacher relationship on either the teachers' personalities or their children's performance in school; none of the mothers mentioned that they themselves (their personalities) could contribute in shaping this parent-teacher relationship. In fact, some parents, such as Ghada and Shahad, reported their dissatisfaction with how teachers dealt with their children being stubborn, but their quotes show that it is more based on the degree of cohesion between the two personalities. Ghada, for example, wished that her son's teacher would provide him with activities that meet his desire to be a leader, but it was unclear (the mother's and teacher's intents are not in question here) whether Ghada intended to communicate that with the teacher but failed to do so, just as the teacher might have intended to communicate a message that the mother did not get. So, perhaps it is more about the miscommunication between the two (mothers and teachers), which also could be affected by language and cultural differences. In sum, the findings suggest that the impact of the culture on shaping how each person (the mother and the teacher) views children and their behaviors, and what the school should allow, and these different views can cause difficulty leading to suggest that some mothers were unable to recognize that mismatches between the two

personalities and views of the child behavior could be the major reason behind tense relationships between teachers and parents, and thus, they will not recognize that they could play a role in replacing this tension with an understanding between the two parties rather than giving up and claiming that they receive much more pressure than support from schools and teachers.

The findings from the survey and focus groups indicate that the majority of Saudi parents within all groups show a high level of concern about their children's academic achievements; thus, they believe in their responsibility and often initiate communication with schools about academic issues (Table 4). On the other hand, parents seem more thankful when the communication is related to children's behavior, and schools often take the first step in communicating with parents when it comes to children's behavior. Highlighting this finding is critical because it provides understanding about what encourages parents to communicate with schools and the issues schools need to use more effort to remind parents to communicate with them about.

The importance of the triangulation of the findings of the two data sets appears here, again, when looking at the survey results in Table 4. One might make a statement that Saudi parents are not eager enough to communicate with their children's schools, but by integrating the survey data with the focus group data, it is clear that most Saudi F1 and F2 parents, similarly, are highly communicative with schools, but they are limited to the communication ways with which they are familiar in their home country. The common communicating practices in the United States are not facilitated in Saudi Arabia; thus, Saudi parents often fail to play their role effectively. Actually, most Saudi parents across the gender and visa type groups utilize one communication style (face-to-face meetings)

with schools instead of using other communication methods, including visiting the school website or sending emails. Bassmah clarified this issue by saying that Saudi parents are not used to "electronic communication emails. For us…we are a little bit far [behind in using emails to communicate with schools], or because in Saudi Arabia we are used to mothers' meetings." Thus, based on the participants' experience, electronic communication was not something that was particularly facilitated in schools.

The findings show that all Saudi parents, especially the parents in the focus groups, rarely communicate with schools via the phone. This might be because Saudi parents did not use to communicate with schools via the phone, as public schools' phone numbers were not published in Saudi Arabia due to the Ministry of Education's rules. Thus, parents and schools in Saudi Arabia rely primarily on personal meetings as the best communication style. This causes Saudi parents' unfamiliarity with phone communication methods in the United States. As Kadi stated, "I have never made a phone call to the school. Every time I need to address a concern, I go to the school's principal." In addition, because of language barriers, the phone might not be the preferred way to communicate using a second language because it eliminates non-verbal communication cues that many second language speakers rely on to construct meaning.. On the other hand, Saudi mothers miss the mothers' meeting events that they used to attend in Saudi Arabia. Thus, they make personal efforts in meeting with teachers to make up for missing the practice to which they were accustomed. Also, parents reported very low levels of communication through teachers' blogs or parents' connect websites (Table 4), though it should be noted that is likely also due in part to not all teachers have blogs and many schools across grades levels do not have online parents' connect

accounts. In sum, Saudi parents often limit their communication with schools to in-person meetings, while schools might expect more variety. These variances between what Saudi parents are accustomed to and what American schools and teachers expect from parents might lead to educators mistakenly thinking that Saudi parents do not care, or they might create tense relationships between the two parties, as described by some of the focus group participants.

Also, integrated findings from both the survey and focus groups show that most Saudi parents from all groups, similarly, do not request translation services (Table 4), because many of them do not know that translation is available as a school service or do not believe it is a school's responsibility to provide it. The issue is that most Saudi parents do not use the translation services while such services would improve the quality of communication between schools and parents and also reduce the chance of misunderstandings caused by some parents' low levels of English proficiency.

The extracted and integrated findings from the survey and focus groups show no significant differences between parents across gender and visa types when considering schools as a connecting ring between them and local community events and services (Table 7). This is a critical finding because it indicates that Saudi parents might be completely reliant on schools to involve them with the community, and if the school fails to do so, they then fail in getting involved.

Overall, the discussion of the third research question's findings about the nature of the relationship between schools and parents revealed interesting points where the vast majority of Saudi parents, for example, show great agreement regarding having a good attitude toward their children's schools and teachers, although there were some personal

situations where some parents reported dissatisfaction causes based on experts and areas of attention, as F1 parents reported dissatisfaction with registration requirements and teachers' ways of dealing with children, while F2 mothers reported the schools' punishment approach. In addition, most Saudi parents' communication style seems to be affected by cultural differences as they much prefer personal meetings rather than using other communication approaches, such as visiting school websites, sending emails, or making phone calls, as they are not the communication style facilitated in schools in Saudi Arabia. Saudi parents are used to and prefer in-person meetings as it is the primary practice of communication there. Also, the majority of Saudi parents do not take advantage of the translation services available in schools and this might prevent opportunities to facilitate communication and prevent common misunderstandings. Triangulating the findings from the two data sets clearly shows that most Saudi parents from all of the groups believe that schools are the pathway that can connect them with the community, which highlights the risk that parents are at if schools fail to meet parents' expectations.

Fourth research question: What are the cultural differences in schooling in Saudi Arabia and the United States that might influence Saudi families' contributions to their children's English literacy development?

The fourth research question is the gist that was concluded from the overlap of findings related to the other research questions. This question has been answered in a parallel way by answering the other research questions as the overlaps of the findings have been mentioned throughout the discussion. The fourth research question is designed to investigate the influence of cultural disparities in schooling on parents' beliefs and

practices supporting their children's reading, writing, and literature development, and to what extent Saudi parents were able to recognize these cultural disparities of schools.

In general, the previous discussion of the other research questions pointed out that cultural differences influence parents' understanding of their role in supporting their children's learning at home and parents' volunteering in school. Also, cultural differences influence parents' understanding of the education system – how it could be navigated and how they advocate for their children's rights. In addition, cultural differences influence the nature of the relationship between parents and schools, and how mismatches might cause tense relationships between the two parties. However, the crucial point is to what extent parents and teachers are able to recognize these differences. Findings from the focus groups show that both F1 and F2 parents agreed that they are astonished by some of the schooling practices in the United States, such as schools paying attention to children's psychological needs; facilitating the development of children's personalities; encouraging the love of education; and providing ESL programs for their children. However, one F1 mother reported a different experience as she expressed disappointment that schools here are very similar to schools in Saudi Arabia. This may be because her children go to a school located in a majority Arab community and schools and teachers probably apply their own schooling and teaching styles. Also, this mother likely came to the United States with high expectations and criteria of developmental education as she holds the position of an educational supervisor in Saudi Arabia.

Although parents were able to recognize these differences, they seemed to have confusion regarding their role within American schooling experiences that vastly differ from those found in Saudi Arabia. The findings indicate that some F1 and F2 mothers

from the focus groups were able to recognize the differences and ask for help, understanding that their role would be different in the United States. For example, Ameera asked for help when she was confused about the different style of homework her child's teacher used. However, not all parents were able to recognize these differences and not all parents who identify aspects of cultural differences are willing to ask schools for help. This is a critical issue that can cause misunderstandings, as reported by some of the focus groups' F1 and F2 mothers, equally, which underlines the importance of identifying differences between schools and parents. Another example is how the focus group data showed that all of the F1 and F2 Saudi mothers recognized how American schools pay attention to children's mental health and personality development; however, this did not influence Saudi parents' belief that priority should be given to children's academic performance over their mental health and personality development. Saudi parents still demonstrated very low levels of attendance in parenting programs related to subjects other than their children's academic performance.

On the other hand, both F1 and F2 mothers reported their concerns about their children's native language, which is also reflected by their continued speaking of Arabic at home: 90.4% of Saudi parents (Table 1) speak Arabic at home because they likely have the intent of returning to their home country. This is different than other populations of Arab immigrants who might try to speak English at home with their children because their children will be permanent residents of the United States; thus Saudi children's level of English language support at home is likely less than the support permanent resident children receive. Going back to the previous discussion, this might explain why Saudi parents are limited with English literacy practices other than school homework instead of

using all available sources of literacy development: they are trying to raise their children to be bilingual while also ensuring they complete their schoolwork.

In sum, answering the fourth research question highlighted the areas of overlap among the findings related to the other research questions and the influence of cultural differences on parental involvement. The findings showed that Saudi parents were able to recognize some cultural differences. Nevertheless, they were confused by and sometimes unable to recognize how their role might be different based on these cultural differences. In turn, cultural differences might hinder Saudi parents from being involved in the ways schools expect.

Discussion of the Findings and Relevant Literature

This study's findings provide evidence of Epstein's (1995) claim regarding the importance of the overlapping influence between schools, families, and communities in creating effective partnerships, particularly regarding the roles of schools and families. However, when there is contrast instead of overlap and different expectations about each role (e.g., what Saudi parents do and what schools expect from them in support parenting practices related to the child learning), the result may be conflicts or missed opportunities in a child's education. However, these studies raise the areas of conflicts more than the overlapping as they emerged from the data, and by the same time the study is an evidence of the effect of cultural differences in hindering the power of the overlapping of influences.

Thus, the study's findings support Gee's theory of the Discourses (2007), as well, in that some families are aware of the dissonance between their primary Discourses and the Discourses of their children's schools as social institutions outside the home, while

other families are unaware of dissonance. Families who are unable to recognize dissonance, like many of the Saudi families in this study, might have difficulty moving freely between the two Discourses; therefore, misunderstandings and the risk of limited learning opportunities for Saudi children could occur.

While Gee argued that teaching and learning are most efficient when the primary and secondary Discourses are similar, this is not the case for most Saudi parents, particularly those who have recently arrived. The parents in this study showed ample evidence that they had not fully acquired the "ways of being" expected by American schools, for example in this study, the mothers' view of the children's behavior in school based on their primary discourse as a cultural norm. Another example, of Saudi parents' attuned to the academic achievements over the children's mentality or personal development. This has the potential to put children at risk for academic failure, as Heath (1983) found in a seminal study of children's literacy development in three different social groups. Heath discovered that when a school Discourse has not been determined, children are at risk of academic failure when participating in school programs intended for white, middle-class learners. Heath explained that literacy skills must be performed repeatedly, and children are unable to perform skills they have not been taught or experienced in day-to-day life. Regrettably, the findings from this study indicated that Saudi parents, like most minority parents, are unable to utilize school practices at home to create congruence between their children's home and school Discourses because they have not been taught or experienced the school Discourse. For example, they often do not do interactive reading; do not provide writing opportunity for their children as much as they do with reading; and do not encourage using English at home.

That Saudi parents are unsure or unaware of role expectations in American schools is not surprising, given the similar findings of Li's (2012) ethnographic work on minority families' literacy pedagogies. Li suggested that literacy is embedded within the culture, and when schools and parents share the same educational goals for children, they might culturally differ in the ways they use to meet these goals. Much like Li's findings, this study found that although Saudi parents place an emphasis on academic performance, they are unsure and sometimes frustrated about how they can support their children's success in school due to the different learning approaches and the types of homework utilized in mainstream American schools. Similarly, Trumbull et al. (2001) found that mainstream teachers expect Latinos to help their children complete their homework at home. However, many immigrant Latino parents did not view working with their children on homework as an appropriate parental role. This was also the case for some of the Saudi parents in this study – most Saudis see their role as monitors for their children's learning instead of helping their children complete homework. Due to cultural differences, Saudi parents might not know the actual dimensions of parental involvement expected by American schools, yet still consider themselves as effective partners in their children's education.

It is also no surprise that cultural norms influence parental participation patterns. For example, most of the parents in this study were not accustomed to using technology to engage with schools. This fits with Alzahrani's (2015) research, which revealed that the majority of Saudi families are inexperienced with incorporating technology into the learning process. For example, the Noor Program was met with much confusion by many Saudi parents of schoolchildren. Likewise, parents using technology in tracking

children's education or to communicate with teachers here in the United States. However, Saudi parents of this study face many more challenges of the language in addition to the unfamiliarity with using technology in schooling.

Also, the study revealed that Saudi parents are less likely to volunteer in schools than to be involved in other ways. This is likely because volunteering in schools is a new experience that does not exist in Saudi Arabia (Kojah, 2013; Ministry of Education, 2012). This finding is aligned with Li's (2012) claim that many parents from Hong Kong do not effectively cooperate with their children's American schools because they did not encounter volunteer opportunities in Hong Kong schools. Thus, they are unaccustomed to such an involvement form, and they do not engage in volunteer opportunities when such opportunities are presented in their children's American schools, and this is an important difference presented by this study that Saudi parents, and likely the other studies' populations, are interested but because of their unfamiliarity with the field of volunteering, they are looking for school invitations to take the step of volunteering.

In sum, this study evidence believes in the theories of the overlapping of influences (Epstein, 1995) and the big Discourses (Gee, 2007). The study reflects to other studies had done before and supporting the theory, but this is adding new findings to the existing literature as it examines an Arab population from specific country, Saudi Arabia, looking for people who intend to back to their home country, and how that intent might contribute in showing different findings than other studies populations have as most of them are native American who share the school Discourse or immigrants populations who are adjusting themselves and borrowing some of the school Discourse at home while

Scholarship students populations are more eager to create a balance for their children Arabic and English literates developments.

Implications for Educators

The results of this study have several implications for educators to improve the level of parental involvement of minority parents, such as Saudis, in the United States. Schools that utilize partnership programs should expand the meaning of parental involvement by taking into consideration cultural differences. Administrators and teachers should acknowledge the cultural values and practices of minority parents as effective starting points to build a strong partnership with families. Schools and teachers might choose to adopt some of the minority parents' primary Discourse practices into the day-to-day school functions and activities to facilitate parents' ability to switch between the two Discourses. For example, the data suggested that Saudi parents prefer in-person meetings to communicate with teachers. Thus, teachers might arrange a monthly meeting with Saudi parents throughout the school year to address their concerns, and to expose them to the learning approaches applied by the schools and expected by the mainstream society.

Saudi parents are not used to integrating technology in their role with their children's education. Thus, educational leaders, such as school principals, and teachers should offer inclusive workshops or events to introduce the benefits of integrating technology into the schooling system in a way that helps minority parents navigate the system and have easy access to online educational resources. Such workshops or events will help Saudi parents in their support of their children's learning.

Educational leaders and teachers should take advantage of Saudi parents' good attitudes toward their children's schools and must effectively involve them with schools to achieve the partnership level suggested by Epstein (1995; 2001), as well as the alignment between the two discourses suggested by Gee (2007). One way in which they might do this is to construct a survey for school principals and teachers to share with parents. The survey would be given to parents once or twice a year to gather their opinions, suggestions, and ideas regarding their children's learning curricula and the overall school system. Otherwise, Saudi parents' voices are rarely heard and they stay separate from the mainstream parents as they believe in their role in their children's education requires giving schools their full trust and the authority to make decisions about children's educational issues. School administrators and teachers can collaborate with the community to develop a partnership with parents between the school, homes, and the community, as suggested by Epstein (1995; 2001), and to achieve the alignment suggested by Gee (2007) between home and school Discourses so Saudi parents and children can easily switch between the two discourses.

Saudi Arabia's Cultural Mission should include the topic of parental involvement in American schools within other scholarship educational training and programs. Also, Saudi Arabia's Cultural Mission has the responsibility to develop intensive educational programs for scholarship students who have children in elementary school. Thus, once they arrive in the United States, the scholarship students can be provided with the support they need to facilitate the registration process, for example, and to introduce them to American schools' policies, common learning approaches, mainstream practices, and schools' expectations of parents.

Recommendations for Future Research

While the study illuminated Saudi parents' role expectations of their involvement in their children's education, we can only speculate as to the degree to which those expectations overlapped or conflicted with those of their children's teachers. Future research might look at teachers' expectations in relation to the ways in which parents think they should be involved, which would highlight specific areas of conflict. This is important because parents might feel neglected or rejected by schools if they do not receive the support they expect from the schools.

Also, as this study was designed to explore Saudi parents' perceptions of their role in their children's education to examine the influence of cultural differences on their involvement, future studies might examine teachers' expectations of Saudi parents' involvement according to the six types of involvement. Future studies might also examine how the degree of influence of cultural differences is affected by Saudi parents' demographics other than the gender and visa types. For example, the spoken language at home, the number of children and their grade level, or the educational experiences of Saudi parents could be examined to see if residential status plays a role in cultural mismatches. It is crucial to identify all other influences associated with cultural differences to be more accurate in addressing the influence of cultural differences on Saudi parents' involvement.

While the qualitative data from this study reflected mothers' beliefs and actions regarding supporting their children's education, this study can be replicated to explicitly include Saudi fathers' voices; other future studies might include feedback from Saudi fathers when designing focus group interviews. It is important to address all points of

view because Saudi mothers have different responsibilities in their children's education than Saudi fathers do in Saudi Arabia.

The survey's sample size was large enough to provide a sample representative of the population (though with the possible response bias of an over representation of parents comfortable with digital technologies); however, the study's focus group interview sample was limited to one county in a Midwestern state. Future studies might expand the area from which the interview participants are selected to cover additional areas in the United States. Such a study would provide comprehensive data to help in gaining a full understanding of how cultural differences influence Saudi parents' involvement in their children's education.

Future studies might also concentrate on individual types of involvement, as suggested by Epstein and colleagues (1995; 2002; 2004), in order to address all possible areas of conflict within each type of parental involvement. Finally, future studies might compare the dimensions and degree of Saudi parents' involvement with the degree of mainstream parents' or other minority groups' involvement. This would allow us to identify if Saudi children are at risk of having less learning support from home than children from mainstream society.

The study might be replicated to explore other minority parents' perceptions of parental involvement in their children's elementary school education, or Saudi parents' or other minority parents' perceptions of parental involvement in their children's middle and high school education. In this study, parents of younger children reported playing a different role than parents of older children in supporting their children's learning at home. Therefore, Saudi parents' involvement might vary according to children's ages.

Conclusion

This mixed-methods study examined Saudi parents' perceptions of their role in their children's education within the six types of involvement suggested by Epstein (1995), with an emphasis on English literacy development. The study also examined Saudi parents' involvement in their children's education through Gee's lenses of Discourses (2007), and how differences between secondary and primary Discourses may affect Saudi parents' involvement. The findings from the triangulation of two different types of data sets indicated that Saudi parents in general regardless of their gender or visa types have relatively high levels of involvement in their children's education within the six types of involvement. However, the dimensions and degree of their involvement are affected by their own primary Discourse, which is often not recognized by schools (in which a secondary Discourse for these families is used) and is sometimes in direct conflict with schools' expectations. The differences between the two Discourses, or "ways of being" for parents of young students, negatively influenced Saudi parents' awareness of education policies and systems, and their relationships with schools and teachers in a way that could place Saudi children at risk of poor educational support and access to literacy at home being misaligned with what is expected by teachers and schools.

APPENDIX A: PERMISSION TO USE EPSTEIN'S SURVEY

Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships

Johns Hopkins University • 2701 North Charles Street, Suite 300 • Baltimore MD 21218
TEL: 410-516-8800 • FAX: 410-516-8890 • nnps@jhu.edu

August 5, 2016

To: Ebtesam Saleh Alhabeeb
From: Joyce L. Epstein & Steven B. Sheldon
Re: Permission to use:

- Sheldon, S. B. & Epstein, J. L. (2007). Parent and Student Surveys of Family and Community Involvement in the Elementary and Middle Grades. Baltimore, MD: Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships at Johns Hopkins University.

- Epstein, J. L. & Salinas, K. C. (1993). Surveys and Summaries: Questionnaires for Teachers and Parents in Elementary and Middle Grades. Baltimore, MD: Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships at Johns Hopkins University.

- Epstein, J. L., Connors-Tadros, L., & Salinas, K. C. (1993). High School and Family Partnerships: Surveys for Teachers, Parents, and Students in High School. Baltimore, MD: Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships at Johns Hopkins University.

This letter grants you permission to use, adapt, translate, or reprint the survey(s) noted above in your dissertation study.

We ask only that you include appropriate references to the survey(s) and authors in the text and bibliography of your reports and publications.

Best of luck with your project.

APPENDIX B: SAUDI PARENTS' SURVEY

Saudi Parent Survey of Parental Involvement in the Elementary Grades and Literacy Development

For the Academic Year (2015-2016)

Applied

By

Ebtesam Saleh Alhabeeb

Wayne State University

College of Education

2015

Note:

The questionnaire format and most of its questions are quoted from: Sheldon, S. B. & Epstein, J. L. (2007). *Parent and student surveys of family and community involvement in elementary and middle grades.* Baltimore, MD: Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships Johns Hopkins University.

Saudi Parent Survey of Parental Involvement in the Elementary Grades and Literacy Development

Dear Parent or Guardian:

Because your child/children are currently enrolled at the US elementary school, I would like to seek your opinion in order to improve the educational opportunities for our children in the US, and to improve the way that educators and families help each other to support children's learning and success in school. Your opinion will be utilized help improve programs and practices involving minority families and children.

We would like to ask you, as the parent, to answer the questions in this survey. To achieve the goal of this study, please, when you answer the following questions, think about your own personal opinion and daily experience, rather than what you think is socially desired.

Please note that this survey:

- Is voluntary. We hope that you answer every question, but you may skip any questions that you do not feel comfortable answering.
- Is confidential. Please do not write your name anywhere on the survey.
- Has no right or wrong answers.
- Is not part of your child's schoolwork.
- Will not influence your child's learning or grades in any way.

Thank you very much for your participation!

Sincerely,

Ebtesam S. Alhabeeb.

Curriculum & Instruction M.A.

A. PERSONAL INFORMATION

I. The following questions will help us understand your position as a parent, Please mark one answer for each item.

1. **What is your gender?***

___Male __ Female

2. **What is your residence statues type?***

___F1 Visa

___F2 Visa

___American Citizenship

3. **How much formal schooling have you completed?**

___High school

___Diploma

___Bachelor's degree

___Master's degree

___Doctorate degree

4. **What language do you speak most at home?**

__Arabic ___English

5. **How many children do you have in Elementary school?***

____A child ____Two children ___ Three or more

6. **Please, check the school grad level for your Child/children?***

___KG ___First grade ___Second grade

___Third grade ___Fourth grade ___ Fifth grade

___Six grade

7. **Does your spouse live with you in the US?***

___Yes ___No

Note: marked questions with asterisk* are not from Epstein's survey

B. THE SCHOOL'S CONTACT WITH YOU

II. How much do you agree or disagree that your child's teacher or someone at school should do the following THIS SCHOOL YEAR? Circle ONE answer on each line to tell if you: Strongly Agree (**1**), Agree (**2**), Disagree (**3**), or Strongly Disagree (**4**).

My child's teacher or someone at the school should*	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
8. Tell me how my child is doing in school.				
9. Ask me to volunteer at the school.				
10. Explain how to check my child's homework.				
11. Send home news about things happening at school.				
12. Inform me about what skills my child needs to learn in reading/language arts.				
13. Provide me with information on community services that I may want to use with my family.				
14. Invite me to a program at the school.				
15. Ask me to help with fundraising.				
16. Invite parents to participate in school committees, such as curriculum, budget, or improvement committees.				
17. Provide information on community events that I may want to attend with my child.				
18. Provide me with translator services, if needed.*				

III. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your child's school and teachers? Circle ONE answer on each line to tell if you Strongly Agree (**1**), Agree (**2**), Disagree (**3**), or Strongly Disagree (**4**).

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
19. My child/children's school is a very good school.				
20. I feel welcome at the school.				
21. I get along well with my child's teacher(s).				
22. The school teachers care about my child.				

C. YOUR INVOLVEMENT

IV. Families are involved in different ways at school and at home. How often do YOU do the following activities? Circle ONE answer on each line to tell if this happens: Every day or Most Days (**1**), Once a Week (**2**), Once in a While (**3**), or Never (**4**).

How often do you	Every day/Most the time	Once a week	Once in a While	Never
23. Read with your child for pleasure?*				
24. Work with your child on writing skills?*				
25. Help your child with reading/language arts homework?				
26. Go over spelling words with your child?				
27. Ask your child about if he/she learned new vocabulary in school?*				
28. Help your child prepare for reading evaluation tests?*				
29. Ask your child to read something he/she wrote?				
30. Check to see if your child finished his/her homework?				

31. Ask your child how well he/she is doing in school?				
32. Send note/message/email to your child's teacher?*				
33. Visit your child' school website/read teacher's blog?*				
34. Meet with your child/children's school staff?*				
35. Volunteer in the classroom or at the school?*				
36. Go to school events (e.g., literacy night, open house, music, drama, sports) or meetings?				
37. Attend parent-teacher conferences?*				
38. Offer suggestion/opinions for teachers/principal about what is best for your child?*				
39. Encourage your child to follow the rules in school?*				
40. Take your child to the library or bookstore?*				

D. YOUR IDEAS

V. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about what parents should do? Circle ONE answer on each line to tell if you: Strongly Agree (**1**), Agree (**2**), Disagree (**3**), or Strongly Disagree (**4**).

It is a parent's responsibility to	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
41. Make sure that their child learns at school.				
42. Teach their child to value schoolwork.				
43. Show their child how to use things like a dictionary or encyclopedia.				
44. Contact the teacher as soon as academic problems arise.				
45. Keep track of their child's progress in school.				
46. Contact the teacher if they think their child is struggling				

in school.				
47. Show an interest in their child's schoolwork.				
48. Help their child understand homework.				
49. Know if their child is having trouble in school.				

VI. **How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Circle** ONE answer on each line to tell if you Strongly Agree (**1**), Agree (**2**), Disagree (**3**), or Strongly Disagree (**4**).

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
50. I know how to help my child to do well and earn good grades in school.				
51. I feel good about my efforts to help my child learn.				
52. I know how my child's literacy development is evaluated at school.				
53. I know how the school year and curricula are divided.				
54. I know how to help my child with schoolwork.				
55. I know how to get information/answers on my questions about children's education in the US.				
56. I know the legal steps to go through if my child faces behavior problems (e.g., bullying, discrimination) in school.				
57. I believe teacher/school principal decisions are the best for my child.				
58. I had no difficulty enrolling my child in US schools.				
59. I am satisfied with decisions made by schools/teachers about my child's academic issues.				
60. I understand everything written in my child's report card.				

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP!

APPENDIX C: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS' GENERAL QUESTIONS

Table of Focus Group Themes, Predefined Codes, and Questions.

Theme	Predefined code	Main Questions	Follow-up Questions
Learning at Home	Daily practices of learning at home	Tell me about what you do to support your child's academic success.	What do you do at home to help your child be successful in school? What do you do if your child doesn't understand the words in something he or she is reading? Is there anything else you want to tell me about how you support your child's academic success? You've already shared with me some of the ways in which you support your child's success, is there anything else you want to tell me about that?
	Parents' qualifications and confidence in helping their child's learning at home.		
	Parents' interest in tracking their children's academic progress		
Parenting	Parental sensitivity toward their children's academic performance and behavior	How do you know how your child is doing academically?	Tell me about your experiences with report cards? What about your experiences attending conferences at school?
	Parents' expectations of teachers and their responses to the school's parenting implementations	How does your child's school try to involve you with the school, either through doing things at home with your child, or in your child's classroom or the school building?	Was there anything that surprised you about how the school expected to interact with you or for you to be involved?
Communicating	Parents' attitude toward schools and teachers	Is there anything else you want to tell me about how you feel or felt about your child's teachers and school?	When and why do you contact your child's/children's teachers?
	Parents initiated action in communicating with their child's school/teachers	Tell me about your experiences contacting or communicating with your child's teachers.	How does the school/teacher try to communicate with you? Have you tried to call or communicate with your child's teacher? Tell me about that experience.
Decision-Making	Parents' awareness of the American educational system	What would you do if you had a problem or concern related to your child's education or school experience? Or, if you have had a problem, what did you do?	Tell me about how decisions related to your child are made by the school? How you often do you get information about your child's rights as an ELL in an American school?

	Parents' experiences and satisfaction with the school authority	Tell me about a time you had a problem with school and how you addressed the problem.	Tell me about the experience of enrolling your child in school? – Tell me how you figured out which school your child should go to. – What was the enrollment process like?
Volunteering	How parents see their role in volunteering at school	How does your child's school try to involve you with the school both in your home and the school building?	Have you volunteered in school? What did you do? Who do you think benefitted most from your volunteering? In what ways did that person or those people benefit? If there has was a time when you did not feel comfortable sharing your ideas, opinions, or concerns with your child's teacher or school, what held you back?
Collaborating with the Community	Parents rely on schools to be involved in schools and local communities	Have your child's teachers or school helped you learn about community services or events?	Can you tell me about that experience? Can you give me an example?

General Probes:

a. Tell me more about that experience.

b. What was it like for you to experience that?

c. Explain how that impacted you?

d. What happened exactly?

e. Can you give me an example of that?

f. Can you say more about that?

g. What does that mean for you?

h. Anything else you would like to add?

i. How did that affect you?

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ABSTRACT

SAUDI PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THEIR ROLE IN THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION IN AMERICAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

by

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This mixed-methods research study examines the influence of cultural mismatches on minority parents' involvement in their children's education. Particularly, how Saudi families in the United States perceive their role in their children's education in American elementary schools. Data were collected from 212 completed self-administered surveys and 20 Saudi mothers' participation in four focus group interviews. Exploratory statistical analysis for the numerical data and qualitative template analysis for the raw data were utilized. Triangulation of the findings reveals great agreements with few areas of conflicts between the two data sets indicating that Saudi parents understanding of the way of being in the school culture is impacted by their home cultural practices. The survey data indicated a sufficient level of Saudi parents' involvement. However, the focus group interviews revealed that Saudi parents have different beliefs and role expectations than mainstream schools; such conflict prevents parents from being effectively involved in their children's learning. Implications of the research findings are discussed and future research topics are recommended.

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