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PARENTAL PERCEPTIONS OF ENCOURAGERS AND DISCOURAGERS OF
INVOLVEMENT WITH THEIR AFRICAN AMERICAN PRE-ADOLESCENT SONS'
SCHOOL (315 pp.)

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The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of parents, or parent figures, of pre-adolescent African American males relative to what encouraged them or discouraged them in their involvement with their sons' school. A set of 44 phrases perceived as encouraging of involvement was generated from a subset of the population being studied. Likewise a set of 39 discouraging phrases was generated. A sample of 39 parental participants then sorted the statements on a continuum ranging from +4 "most encouraging" to -4 "least encouraging." The continuum resembled a normal curve with few statements placed at the ends and more in the middle. A similar sort from +4 "most discouraging" to -4 "least discouraging" was conducted.

Q methodology was used in the study because of its affinity for disclosing clusters of individuals who share similar perspectives. Factor analysis involved in this methodology revealed three groupings of parents with differing views concerning what encouraged their involvement in their sons' school. These groupings were labeled: (a) Making Sure My Presence is Known by the Staff and my Son to Ensure a Quality Education; (b) Being Present for my Son and Encouraging Him to do Well is Facilitated Through Feeling Welcomed in the School and Convenient Meetings; and (c) Making Sure My Son Knows He has my Support and Making Sure He Receives a Quality

Education by Working with Teachers. Four factor groupings of parents with differing perspectives were present relative to discouragers of parental involvement. These were labeled: (a) School Teachers/Staff Who do not Care and Can't Manage the Class/School; (b) Parents' Busy Lives and Lack of Their Own and School's Flexibility; (c) Lack of Quick Access, School Financial Allocations, and Personal/Family Obligations; and (d) Lack of Flexibility in Personal Life, Lack of High Standards, and Differing Values. Follow-up interviews were conducted with selected parents to further the understandings of varying perceptions.

It appeared that all parents wanted their sons to receive a quality education. It was also apparent that schools would have to use multiple methods of invitation to involvement of parents in the school.