Social Change and Legitimating Voices: an Integrated Framework to Understanding Parent Involvement in Their Children's Education

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Abstract

How is parental involvement framed and studied in educational research? Whose voices are privileged? Why? How can our understanding of parental involvement be extended to be relevant to complex educational environments? This conceptual paper describes an integrated research framework to gain a deeper understanding of parental involvement in children's education. The authors provide an argument for the need to search for alternative approaches and propose a new research framework that integrates transformative epistemological stance and feminist theoretical perspectives within mixed methods thinking. The merging of all three perspectives could provide a means to unpack the complexity and re-think the concept of parental involvement as well as empower parents as they engage in their children's education both within and outside school settings. The proposed research framework potential significance is also discussed.

Key words: parental involvement, social change, educational policy, transformative paradigm, feminist perspectives

It could be argued that parental involvement is the most significant aspect in children's education. However, the rich history of its development has been shaped by political discourses that, in turn, have had a profound and, for the most part, adverse impact on parental engagement with children's education. If parental involvement has the potential to increase academic achievement of children as research in education claims, and the current practices and efforts are having little impact on increasing parental involvement, then there is an emerging need for educational researchers to look at this historical phenomenon differently by resisting "methodological simplification" (Koro-Ljungberg, 2012, p. 808) through (1) *doubting* established ways of knowing by questioning, "What is known?," "How is it known?," "Who is benefiting?" and (2) engaging creativity and opening for new possibilities to explore new modes of inquiry.

The concept of parental involvement in their children's education has a long history. It is historically rooted in the pre-colonial and colonial time periods (Urban & Wagoner, 2009), in which parents and community members shared the responsibilities of helping the young acquire certain skills and gaining understanding of the community's beliefs and values to ensure children were prepared to contribute to the economic, social and moral endeavors of their families and communities. However, during the building of a new nation and throughout the Progressive Era in the United States, the initiative to educate the masses severed the direct involvement of the parent in the role of educating their own children. To Thomas Jefferson and other political leaders, "The education required for participation and leadership in the new American social order was far too important to be left to chance or parental whim…" (Urban & Wagoner, 2009, p.84). Therefore, in an attempt to minimize parental influences on the development of children, the role and responsibility of children's education shifted away from the parent and to the school.

It was not until educational reform efforts in US within the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 that the idea of involving parents in their children's education was reestablished. By targeting children from low socioeconomic status or at-risk homes and their parents, it was hoped that the academic achievement gap between lower and middle-class students would be reduced or even closed. The concept of parental involvement in their children's education continued to gain momentum during the Reagan administration with the release of the National Commission on Excellence in Education, *A Nation at Risk,* in 1983, when direct links were made to improving student achievement scores on standardized tests through the involvement of a parent. Throughout the reports, it is unclear as to what parental involvement entailed and how schools were expected to create programs to involve parents. However, it is evident that the idea of parental involvement being associated directly to a student's achievement score continued to be made.

During the Clinton administration, precisely within the passage of Goals 2000: Educate America Act, funds were distributed to schools to address parental involvement, towards the establishment and building of partnerships with parents in an effort to promote the social, emotional, and academic growth of a child (Goals 2000: Educate American Act, 1993).Various programs were also put into place in order to help develop the relationships with parents, create stronger communication pathways, and provide opportunities for parents to have an active role in their children's education. Finally No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 brought forth other obligations upon K-12 schools that were intended to have a direct effect on the means schools take to improve children's academic achievement. The legislation also mandated that schools have written parental involvement policies and programs. All schools receiving Title I funds are "responsible for holding parent meetings to discuss parent involvement strategies and for helping parents to better understand school standards, assessments, and report cards" (Ji & Koblinsky, 2009, p.688). The act also requires schools to conduct annual evaluations of parental involvement programs to determine the extent and potential barriers that prevent or hinder parents' participation (No Child Left Behind, 2002). The imposed mandates on schools have forced schools to reconsider how and in what ways parental involvement can be addressed and increased within their districts.

The boundaries of parental involvement and the shifting roles of the parents in their children's education regulated through educational policies caused a disconnection with the schools for many parents preventing involvement from occurring. The manner in which public schools implement policies related to parental involvement focuses on (1) the presence of parents within the school and (2) the behaviors parents should assume in alignment with the school's objectives for their children. However, parents are involved in their children's education within and beyond the boundaries of school in ways that both conform and diverge from the standard activities associated with parental involvement, thus questioning the standard forms of parental involvement in children's education, our (researchers') understanding of the phenomenon, and the potential it may or may not hold to increase students' academic growth. Parental involvement is a complex phenomenon, in which several factors are at play in its definition and expectations as well as identification of existing indirect and direct barriers preventing it from occurring among parents. Issues concerning race, socioeconomic status, gender, language, and ethnic/cultural variations also affect the understanding of parental involvement in all capacities. Currently, the majority of research conducted on the concept of parental involvement has relied strictly on either qualitative or quantitative methods, all of which have contributed to the discourse of parental involvement. However, a gap still exists in the literature as it relates to the discourse of parental involvement and the methodologies used to study this complex phenomenon.

This conceptual paper describes an integrated research framework to gain a comprehensive understanding of parental involvement in children's education. The authors provide an argument for the need to search for alternative approaches and propose a new research framework that integrates transformative epistemological stance and feminist theoretical perspectives within mixed methods thinking. The underlying premise is that the merging of all three perspectives could provide a means to further explore the complex nature of parental involvement and the dynamics of relationships among actors (e.g., parents, teachers, school administrators, students), to empower parents to become involved in their children's education, and to move towards a deeper understanding of the role parents play in their children's education both within and beyond the context of school. In the remaining sections of the paper, the authors first describe the current literature of parental involvement by focusing on research methodologies, then develop an argument for the need to study parental involvement within a framework that integrates transformative epistemological stance, feminist theoretical perspectives, and mixed methods thinking, and finally provide concluding thoughts on future research focusing on parental involvement in their children's education.

1. *Conceptual Framework*

The concept of parental involvement in children's education has been conceived as the participation in or attendance to traditional school-centric activities (Lawson, 2003), and has been promoted through prominent parental involvement models, such as Epstein (2011) and Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005) to focus on engaging parents in activities that are directly linked to the objectives currently in place within the school. The idea of parental involvement surrounding the schools and educational policies tends to embrace what Auerbach (2007) and Reay (2008) identify as *white middle-class*i deals, which assumes that parents have the resources to be involved in their children's education in a way that aligns to the beliefs and values typically associated with white mainstream society. The defining attributes of parental involvement - those that are recognized by members of the educational field - are those that entail and expect parents to communicate with teachers, volunteer to chaperone field trips, participate in programs at the school (Lopez & Donovan, 2009), and attend parent-teacher conferences.

Teachers and administrators place a high priority on and emphasize parental involvement that is school-based; engagement and interactions that take place within the school or activities that may take place at home that align with the events taking place in the school. Pena (2000) asserts that administrators and teachers have more respect for parents who are involved in the school because the parents' presence within the school signifies increased support for teachers of the school and its programs. Jackson and Remillard (2005) claim that the activities identified as parental involvement are defined through the vantage point of the school, and thus, viewing parental involvement from the vantage point of the school excludes many parents who engage and participate in activities that deviate from those identified by the school as constituting parental involvement.

2. *Established Modes of Inquiry into Parental Involvement*

From the point of research approach, as of date, parental involvement has been thoroughly studied by utilizing either quantitative or qualitative research methods. Decades of research within the two approaches to inquiry have documented the multiple benefits of parental involvement in children's schooling, thus reinforcing the creation and implementation of past educational policies and programs addressing parental involvement as measures of effective reform efforts. Quantitative studies that are privileged within policy arena have contributed to the discourse of parental involvement and affected educational policies and models. Parental involvement is claimed to have a direct impact on the academic achievement of students, and studies have demonstrated the benefits to students whose parents are involved in their education. Specifically, research addressing parental involvement has shown that students whose parents are involved tend to have better overall grades and grade point averages (Chen & Gregory, 2009;Hill & Taylor, 2004), higher graduation rates (Fan, Williams, &Wolters, 2012), better school attendance (Chang & Romero, 2008), and higher standardized test scores (Hayes, 2011) than students whose parents are not involved in their education. Parental involvement in children's education has also been linked to lower rates of school suspension (Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2005), decreased use of drugs and alcohol (Wood, Read, Mitchell, & Brand, 2004), and fewer instances of violent behavior (Sheldon & Epstein, 2002). At the same time, many voices, specifically those of individuals who do not conform to society's standard nuclear family and/or do not belong to mainstream white culture, have been erased as outliers in the quantitative studies masking a thorough understanding of parental involvement (Auerbach, 2007).

Parental involvement has also been studied through qualitative studies, which have provided new and often times different perspectives and insights about the phenomenon of parental involvement in their children's education. Lareau (1987, 1992, and 2011) has devoted many years shaping and contributing to the parental involvement discourse. Most of Lareau's works as the sole author and in collaboration with others (see Lareau & McNamara-Horvat, 1999; Weininger & Lareau, 2003) are situated within Bourdieu's (2007) framework of capital and have contributed significantly to educators' understanding of the role capital plays in the interactions that occur between parents and school officials and among parents and their children, thus shedding light on how parental involvement varies between different races and among social classes. These studies have not only provided a critical view on the white culture of schools and the corresponding interactions and acceptable capital activation, but have also considered varying perspectives on parental involvement, especially as they relate to individuals who do not fall within the white, middle-class, two parent family demographic categories. Other existing literature pertaining to parental involvement in school based qualitative studies has primarily been informed by the work of Bronfenbrenner (1986) who suggested that parent teacher relationships cannot be studied in isolation of historical and social context.

Rather, Bronfenbrenner's spheres of development encompass the developmental interactions that occur outside of the school context, thus broadening the context of parental involvement to include the interconnectedness of school, home, and community. The works of Lareau (1987,1992)and Bronfenbrenner have served as foundational frameworks for the dominant models of parental involvement, including Epstein's (2011) and Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (2005) work, which have both advantages and disadvantages in their program implementation into K-12 public schools, sparking adaptations and critiques that continue to push the boundaries of exploration.

At the theoretical level, Auerbach (2007) calls for a move away from the traditional concept of parental involvement, which is socially constructed to fit in a white, middle-class norm and is signified through a presence in the school, towards a concept of involvement that recognizes the behind-the-scenes work of parents in the homes and in the community. Research conducted by Delgado-Gaitan (1991),Henderson (2007), and Lawson and Alameda-Lawson(2012), have also attempted to reconceptualize parental involvement by debunking deficit theory models and focusing more on identifying and breaking through barriers that prevent particular forms of involvement in addition to working towards the growth and development of the parent as a contributing human to their child's overall growth and development with community organizations.

Although all of the scholars discussed in this review with the focus on the mode of inquiry (i.e., quantitative or qualitative) have made substantial contribution to understanding parental involvement and the possible effects and implications that parental involvement has on children's academic achievement, a gap in the understanding of parental involvement still exists, specifically the definitions, the expectations, what counts as parental involvement, for whom, why, and under what circumstances, especially in relation to various racial, ethnic, gender, and social demographic characteristics. Yet, there is a growing need to (1) recognize the efforts of parents inside the home and within the community as parental involvement and(2)consider perspectives that will enable to include individuals whose experiences have traditionally been excluded, ultimately to re-think our conception of this phenomenon.

3. *An Integrated Framework to Inquiry of Parental Involvement*

Re-thinking is a reflexive and critical process that enables to "look outward into the world of human affairs and accomplishments" (Dimitriadis, 2012, p. viii) and discover creative approaches to look at a phenomenon that transcend established boundaries. What follows is a description of the research framework that integrates three perspectives, i.e., transformative epistemological stance, feminist theoretical perspectives, and mixed methods thinking to engage in critical examination of research processes and researchers' dispositions and to deepen our understanding of the concept of parental involvement in their children's education. The proposed integrated research framework is provided in Figure 1.

3.1 Transformative Paradigm to Understand Parental Involvement

Parental involvement as a targeted strategy to increase standardized testing scores and to ultimately improve the academic achievement of students has primarily been approached as a means to allow parents to support the goals and initiatives of the school and strictly encourage parents to be involved in *school-centric activities* (Lawson, 2003). As Lareau and Horvat (1999) demonstrated, teachers and school administrators believed that those parents who were compliant and appreciative of the efforts of the school were those who were deemed as involved parents. Those parents who did not fulfill the expectations of the school or failed to support the school according to the institution's critieria were seen to be undermining the authority of the school or empathic towards their children's education.

Aside from the selective few individuals chosen to participate in school-based decisions, schools do not allow parents to have a voice in the majority of the decisions that affect their children. Instead, as Auerbach (2007) and Auerbach and Collier (2012) describe, schools tend to hold training sessions and parenting workshops to teach parents how to be more involved in their children's schooling. What the majority of literature and prominent parental involvement policies and programs seem to fail to recognize are the many barriers parents face in order to become involved and the lack of space and opportunity for those excluded parents' voices to be heard, including parents' perspectives and their meaning making (and definitions) about their involvement in their children education. Since the majority of parents are those individuals who have been historically and currently marginalized, the transformative framework (Mertens, 1999, 2009) could provide the opportunity to engage and empower these individuals to become involved in their children's education in meaningful and effective ways.

The transformative framework (Mertens, 1999, 2009) places significance on the lives and experiences of individuals who have historically been excluded from the decision making process. From the epistemological standpoint, a transformative framework recognizes the social and historical situation of knowledge, and that knowledge is neither absolute nor relative but rather constructed within a context of powerful and privileged social forces and relationships within society. The transformative paradigm moves beyond the critical perspective toward a perspective based on action by first recognizing the asymmetric power relations, seeking ways to change the social inquiry into social action, and finally inquiring into broader questions of social inequity and social justice (Mertens, 1999).

When educational policies and school reform efforts place emphasis on parental involvement in children's education, the idea of parent insinuates mother, and the expectations that fall within the category of parental involvement are typically placed directly on the shoulders of mothers. Standing (1999) explains:

The ungendered rhetoric of parental responsibility and involvement hides the gendered nature of the debate: that it is women who 'parent'. It is primarily mothers who are involved in the day-to-day work of their children's schooling, regardless of their marital situation…. (p. 481).

Since parental involvement insinuates women's involvement, a marginalized group of individuals within mainstream society and rhetoric, the transformative framework would facilitate an advocacy process in terms of parent involvement for the women, especially single mothers. The principles of transformative paradigm are grounded in participatory action research by allowing marginalized individuals to engage with the research processes and have voices (i.e., assume a collaborative role) in developing the questions, designing a study, and making meaning of the results(Creswell, 2013). In addition, the overall goal of transformative research is to create an action agenda for reform or a specific plan for addressing the injustices of the marginalized group and, ultimately, raising the participants own consciousness and to advocate with those members of society who have been identified as marginalized as it relates to parental involvement.

3.2 Feminist Theoretical Perspectives to Understand Parental Involvement

Feminists make sense of the world in a variety of ways, even conflicting at times with each other, to their work and efforts in research. However, all feminist share in common an understanding that traditional research has not taken into account the presence and experiences of women (Esterberg, 2002).Olesen (2011) identifies, the dominant theme in feminist qualitative research is the issue of knowledge, "Whose knowledge? Where and how obtained, by whom, from whom, and for what purposes?" (p. 129). The purpose of feminist research is to gain an advance understanding of the lives of women and the issues surrounding gender inequality.

If, as Standing (1999) suggests, mothers are the individuals expected to fulfill the requirements of parent involvement, it is important to consider the implications of parental involvement from the standpoint of women utilizing feminist methodologies. As mentioned, the majority of research centering on parental involvement approaches the phenomenon from quantitative measures. Some feminist researchers, including Hartsock (1987) and Smith (1987) believe that quantitative research reinforces marginalization of women by operating from an and rocentric paradigm, and therefore, in order to truly hear the voices of women, those being targeted to become involved, it is necessary to move beyond strictly quantitative methods in order to gain the perspectives and experiences of women's everyday lives and to fully gain an understanding of what women must overcome in order to become involved in their children's education.

Although all women can be considered positioned on the margins, not all women have the same experiences within their marginalized lives. Standpoint feminist theorists recognize that a *universal* woman does not exist, and instead, embraces the idea of a situated woman surrounded by her experiences and knowledge specific to her place in society. Many standpoint feminist theorist, such as Hartsock (1987) and Hill-Collins (2008), have claimed that to truly understand a particular phenomenon for marginalized members of society, researchers need to begin from the standpoint of those individuals. The need to gather and understand different perspectives of all individuals is necessary to transform social inequities and social injustices, which ultimately will benefit all of society (Mertens, 2009). When the *construct* of women is further narrowed by dividing women across socioeconomic status, ethnicity, racial grouping, and even sexuality, the marginalization process is further enhanced making it more difficult, yet very much necessary, to gain women's (i.e., mothers') perspectives and understanding of their experiences as it relates to parental involvement.

The role of women as the involved parent in children's school exists in what Hesse-Biber & Yaiser (2004) identify as a dualistic space. The involved parent is living through "their personal perspective and the perspective of their oppressors, to whom they adapt" (Hesse-Biber, 2010, p. 130). Within society mothers are expected to raise *good* children who are law-abiding citizens and who will eventually contribute to society, and thus, the policies of parental involvement have been constructed to be a targeted strategy to solve societal problems as well. Women, who do not typically follow the norms and standards of society, such as women who either choose to be single mothers or have become single mothers due to life circumstances, are positioned within a discourse that views them as the cause of societal breakdown and the solution through good mothering practices (Bloom, 1992). Society views women who work outside of the home in a different light as well. As Wessels (2003) claims, "We come to see that when mothers engage in paid work and welfare, their motherhood is not valued. Thus their efforts to be *both* care-giving mothers *and* economic agents produce a disjuncture within the political and economic landscapes" (p.79). Quantitative research limits researchers to gain an understanding of the women positioned with these two spheres, in this dualistic space. On the other hand, qualitative research, although attempting to understand and hear women's stories, may not understand that some women may not know how to express themselves when positioned ina role of an active participant. Some women, based on their personal lived experiences, may not have had the opportunity to express themselves and may not know what to do when given the opportunity (Reinharz & Chase, 2002). Ralston (1996) claims:

The value of listening to these women's voices is the value of their testimony and experiences, which have been ignored and dismissed…[N]o one has thought to ask them about what they need or what would help them, either because people assume that they do not know what their needs are; or because people assume that they are stupid and lazy and have no potential anyway…(as quoted in Reinharz & Chase, p. 223).

In the realm of research, particularly in terms of scientific, rigorous studies women's voices, stories, and perspectives may be deemed invalid or unworthy if pursued solely through qualitative measures. Therefore, it is argued that the use of mixed methods research through a feminist lens within transformative epistemological stance provides the opportunity to place significance on women's lived experiences while legitimating women's knowledge (Hesse-Biber, 2010). The approach not only allows a way to advance social change for women, but also provides a new way for research to be practiced.

3.3 Mixed Methods Thinking to Understand Parental Involvement

As discussed, the majority of research focusing on parental involvement has been approached from either quantitative or qualitative studies. The 'either/or' dichotomy to studying parental involvement has left many questions unanswered and limited our understanding of this complex phenomenon. Mixed methods moves away from the either/or approach towards embracing a 'both/and' approach by integrating quantitative and qualitative methodologies to gain a deeper understanding of the concept. Within the proposed research framework, the authors are employing Teddlie and Tashakkori's (2009) definition of mixed methods research, which states "it is a type of research design in which qualitative and quantitative approaches are used in type of questions, research methods, data collection and analysis procedures" (p.139). This definition fits the argument presented in this narrative with its focus on examination within multiple views and phases of inquiry (i.e., complex designs) to create the larger picture of the social phenomenon of parental involvement.

Greene (2012) claims that mixed methods research inquiry offers the opportunity for scholars to engage in a dialogic conversation with the others, to arrive at a deeper understanding of the social phenomena under study as a collective unit. Those individuals who have previously been excluded from the conversation are given the opportunity to be heard and learn about the perspectives that have typically been included in the conversation. The literature pertaining to parental involvement in their children's education has typically only included data on those who are already engaged in their children's schooling, further alienating those who fail or are unable to become engaged according to the institution's standards. Mixed methods research would provide the opportunity to engage various groups of stakeholders to better recognize and understand the diverse perspectives and experiences of parents, including those who have previously been marginalized and to depict a more comprehensive picture of the social phenomenon of parental involvement in their children's education than findings from either quantitative or qualitative based studies alone.

As demonstrated, little to no research on parental involvement in children's education utilizing mixed methods inquiry was found as of date (i.e., 2015 at the time of this paper writing), which alone does not constitute a reason to pursue mixed methods.

However, parental involvement is a complex phenomenon that, despite the research conducted thus far, continues to have gaps and areas in need of further in-depth exploration. Morse and Niehaus (2009) justify the use of mixed methods in the event the phenomena under study are complex and cannot be thoroughly addressed by the use of a single method. Other scholars, such as Greene, Caracelli, and Graham (1989) provide broad reasoning to use mixed methodologies, including the need to complement, develop, or expand on previous single method studies of the phenomenon. Sammons (2010) explores the potential contribution of mixed methods designs to advance research on educational effectiveness. The current work on parental involvement has provided several perspectives, including but not limited to the roles of parental involvement (Hill & Tyson, 2009), the expectations of parents according to other stakeholders (LaRocque, Kleiman, & Darling, 2011), and the barriers for parents to become involved (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011), yet little research has considered bringing all perspectives together. Mixed methods can provide additional insights into the various concepts and forms of parental involvement in order to better understand the implications parental involvement can have on educational reform and policies efforts as well as the impact it may or may not have on the growth and development of school-aged children. In terms of parental involvement, mixed methods gives scholars the opportunity to gather multiple (various types of) data that may be helpful in (1) gaining an extensive understanding of parental involvement and the implications it may or may not have on children's education and (2) capturing individuals' stories, everyday experiences, and life situations within which parents are able to become involved, all of which becomes an integral part of the examination and recommendations generated from the inquiry.

The utilization of mixed methods inquiry in studying parental involvement provides just one layer of understanding and unpacking the complexity of this phenomenon. In order to gain a better understanding of parental involvement at a level to effect change in educational policy and programs; provide opportunities for voices to be included in conversations; and empower the individuals at which parental involvement policies are aimed, parental involvement could benefit from being studied through mixed methods research in conjunction with transformative paradigm and feminist methodologies. The combination of all three, i.e., the intersection at which mixed method, transformative and feminist methodologies merge, provides an integrated framework to examine the layers surrounding the socially constructed concept of parental involvement.

4. Conclusion

Conducting research of meaning and finding "new ways to use our research to reach wider audiences and to have real impact in the world" (Goodall, 2008, p. 13) are choices that we make as researchers. These choices are embedded in our perspectives about the nature of research and types of knowledge (Paul, 2005). Engaging in both *believing* and *doubting* (Maxwell, 2013; see also Goodall) the underlying assumptions that undergird our work and govern our actions is essential to the crafts of educational researchers. This critical *self-reflexive* process enables us to not only reflect on our current positions and "what they allow us to see and to understand," but, equally important "what they blind us" (Dimitriadis, 2012, p. 4).

The proposed integrated research framework described throughout this paper has been conceived through the transformative paradigm (Mertens, 2007; 2009), which focuses on empowering individuals, particularly those who have been historically marginalized in society, and to advocate for those individuals to become active agents in the process of change and social justice. Feminism, specifically feminist standpoint theory, serves as the theoretical lens from which understanding of parental involvement is grounded. Mixed methods thinking is the basis within which the two perspectives are integrated to further our understanding of parental involvement (Hesse-Biber, 2010; Mertens, 2011; Mertens, Bledsoe, Sullivan, & Wilson, 2010).

The proposed integrated framework is not to prescribe a particular approach, but rather the purpose is to explore new possibilities for conducting educational research and to extend our understanding of parental involvement in their children education. Being open and creative, engaging in self-reflective and critical thinking, imagining, pondering, wondering, and theorizing are essential attributes of researchers. Mixed method methodology enables placing focus on innovative and creative approaches to research designs informed by different perspectives and enhanced understanding of complex phenomena, while transformative and feminist methodologies allow for the silenced knowledge and voices of marginalized individuals to be heard and involved and act in an effort to effect social justice and change. The merging of all three perspectives explores the position of women and their potential to transform educational policy as involved parents in their children's education. Finally, the proposed integrated research framework is one of the potential possibilities that enable resisting methodological simplifications and engaging with research processes creatively (Koro-Ljungberg, 2010).

4.1 Scholarly Significance

In 1985 Howe wrote his piece arguing about the merits of employing both quantitative and qualitative methods in educational research and extending his thinking by stating, "there are no good reasons for avoiding combinations of methods" (p. 17). "Multiple wars, multiple histories" (Denzin, 2010, p. 421) have made their contributions to and left their footprints on the research landscape during a four decade period of time since the first wave of paradigm wars of 1970-1990. We now live in the third movement characterized by a need "for a new conversation about paradigms, race, methods, and social justice" and "a road map and an agenda to carry us through the third moment, and into the next decade, a new calls to arms" (p. 425).

In conceptualizing the proposed research framework to gain an in-depth understanding of parental involvement, an important educational phenomenon, the authors took an ecological perspective. That is to understand a particular theoretical framework is not to replace another, but, rather, to come to know how various and combination of approaches, theories, and perspectives may contribute to, enhance, and shape our continued evolving understanding of a phenomenon and its inquiry processes within which knowledge is generated and claims are made (Flick, 2009).Reflecting on and re-thinking the ways parental involvement has been studied, the authors embraced the notion of the continuum of modes of research inquiry (Krathwohl, 2009).

Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) position mixed methods research as "the third research paradigm in educational research" (p. 14) and emphasize the importance of engaging in a continued "writing about it and using it" (p. 22).In the described integrated framework the authors conceive mixed methods within the methodological perspectives (Creswell & Tashakkori, 2007). This work supports the need for a continued scholarly effort to search for alternative approaches to educational research by engaging with our (the researchers') creativity, exploring new ways, and opening up dialogical spaces to address complex educational issues and discourses.

The writing of this theoretical paper was centered in identifying a critical educational issue and examining the existing perspectives. The goal was to construct a new framework that would integrate several perspectives as a way to disrupt the established methodological simplification in researching about parental involvement. The focus was on the entire process of research, within which links between its essential components, i.e., epistemological stance, theoretical perspectives, and methodology (Crotty, 1998) are made explicit. The proposed research framework will also enable researchers asking research questions differently by looking at the phenomenon of parental involvement through multiple lens.

Finally, the field of education in the United States is driven primarily "by experimental designs and randomized field trials" (Dimitriadis, 2012, p.2) based on a *gold standard* to asses rigor and quality of educational research that was established and is being promoted by the United States Department of Education and its research arm the Institute for Education Science (IES). The body of institutions conducting, evaluating, and/or funding research, including the National Center for Education Research, the National Center for Education Statistics, and the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, directly impacts the approach to educational research, and thus educational policy. While insight can be gained through research conducted by means of experimental designs and randomized field trials, the findings from which to solely base educational policymaking is limited and oftentimes lacks an in-depth understanding of complex phenomena. The proposed research framework has the potential significance as it relates problematizing the established practices and considering integrating various perspectives in conceptualizing and designing educational studies to address complex educational issues/concerns.

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Figure 1. An Integrated Framework to Understanding Parent Involvement in Their Children Education
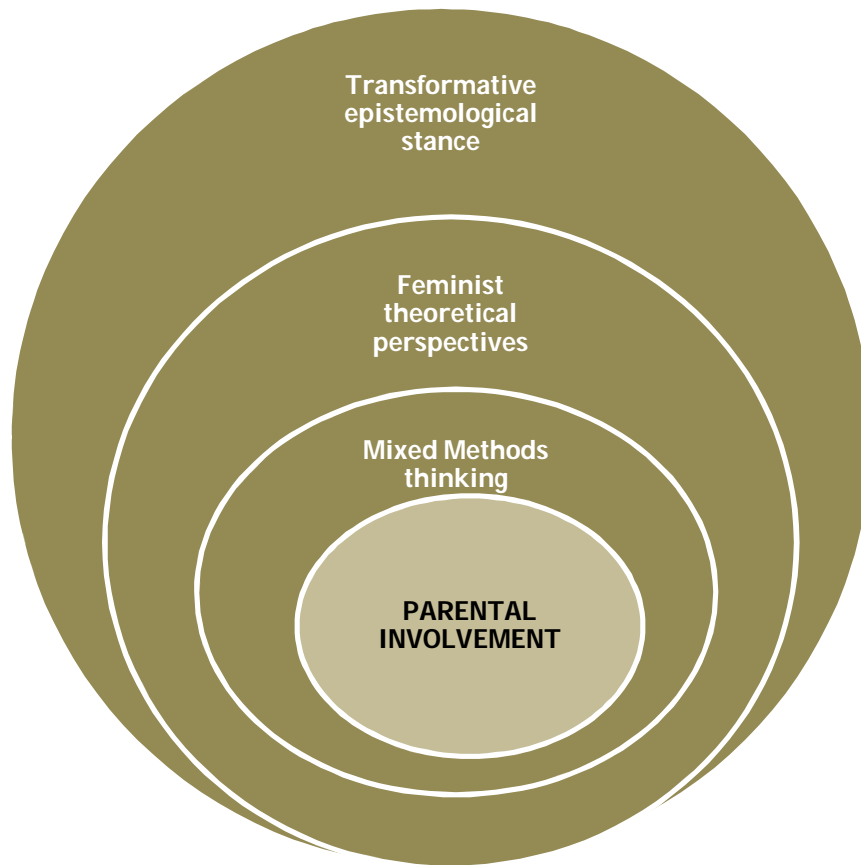
Figure 1. The diagram depicts the proposed research framework that integrates three perspectives, i.e., transformative epistemological stance, feminist theoretical perspectives, and mixed methods thinking to engage in critical examination of research processes and researchers' dispositions about and to deepen our understanding of the concept of parental involvement in their children's education.