# A Phenomenological Study on the Experiences of Middle-Class Parents Facilitating Homework

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Recommended Citation

Aichler, M. A. (2017). *A Phenomenological Study on the Experiences of Middle-Class Parents Facilitating Homework* (Thesis, Concordia University, St. Paul). Retrieved from https://digitalcommons.csp.edu/cup_commons_grad_edd/70

Spring 4-4-2017

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A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY ON THE EXPERIENCES OF MIDDLE-CLASS

PARENTS FACILITATING HOMEWORK

Megan Aichler

Concordia University—Portland

College of Education

Dissertation submitted to the faculty of the College of Education

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in Teacher Leadership

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Portland, Oregon

2017

ABSTRACT

This study explored middle-class parents' descriptions of their experience of the emotional "essence" of the conflicts that arose between themselves and their children as parents facilitated the homework process. This study on homework experiences sought to gain a deeper understanding and meaning experienced firsthand from the middle-class parents' point of view. The use of phenomenological methods allowed for the deep and thick description necessary to uncover the essence of the middle-class parental perspectives on the parent-child emotional experience embedded in the homework process. The identified themes included *creation of a homework routine*, *emotions of resistance and stress*, and *parental role construction*. The emergent constituents were: *paradox of parental role construction, tiers of stress,* and *desire for family harmony during homework time.* The study revealed the following ramifications resulting from the relationships between emergent themes and constituents: the intersections between *paradox of parental role construction* and *desire for family harmony, desire for family harmony* and *creation of a homework routine, creation of a homework routine* and *paradox of parental role construction* and, finally, *desire for family harmony* and *tiers of stress.* These intersections manifested in the following: *stress*, *resistance*, *confusion*, and *family tension*, respectively. The significance of this study rests in its extension of current research on the experience of homework facilitation among working-class families with elementary-aged children by focusing on learning at home in the middle-class. It identified stress during this period as tiered, that middle-class parents would like training on their role during homework, and that middle-class parents had a cathartic stress-relieving experience when they were given an opportunity to share their "homework" experiences

   *Keywords:* Middle-class parents, homework, phenomenology, emotions, stress

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my daughters, Marley and Lijah, and to my love, Greg Epman.

Marley and Lijah, from my very first thought of starting this degree, I wondered how I could simultaneously and gracefully manage a full-time doctoral program, my devotion to my career, and motherhood. This wonder quickly morphed into a sincere sense of awe as I watched you both handle my heavy schedule with confidence, ease, and genuine support. Countless times you encouraged me. Your unconditional love and belief in me is what has propelled me to complete this degree. This work would not be possible without your love. My ability to be graceful through any of this has been born of the grace I see in you both. I am go grateful to be your mother.

Greg, I am not sure how I can possibly express the depth of appreciation I have for who you are in this world. You are an amazing complement to my life, and for that I am forever thankful. Your enduring belief in the pursuit of dreams has set an example for me and for my girls. Whenever I expressed doubt in myself or in my work during the process of composing this study, you patiently listened. When I needed your insight and support, you always provided a rational perspective and helped me get back on track. I have tremendous respect for your clever mind and all the wit within it, but your heart is what has endeared me to you for the past 22 years. Every day, I am filled with gratitude for the opportunity to be your love.

I would also like to acknowledge my gratitude for the development of an unexpected friendship that resulted through the creation of this study. Dr. Carrie Kondor, we worked together to wade through the seemingly endless task of our dissertations. Your ethical perspective, your dedication to education, your kindness, intellect, and humor contributed significantly to my sanity throughout this process. Without you, I would have been lost. Thank you so very much for your friendship and support!

Finally, my colleague Taylor Weston provided unending edits, revisions, perspectives, and emotional support through her careful combing of every word contained in this dissertation. Taylor, you have been invaluable to this process! Thank you!

And, even though it goes without saying, I must thank my amazing daughters, Marley and Lijah.  Long before I believed I was capable of this, you believed in me. Your constant encouragement fuels me to achieve. I am in awe of your grace, and I am thrilled to be your mother.


We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit.

—Aristotle

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**Chapter 1: Introduction**

The type of parent-child conflict often instigated by the task of homework remains one of the largest complaints middle-class parents have in regard to the educational experience they share with their elementary-aged children (Cooper, 2001; Kohn, 2006; Donaldson-Pressman, Jackson, & Pressman, 2014). While research has shown parent-child conflict in regard to homework is more common in lower socio-economic groups, it has also shown that parents from all socio-economic classes, including the middle-class, are affected by the emotional stress and conflict that surrounds the completion of homework for the elementary-aged student (Cooper, 2001; Donaldson-Pressman at al., 2014; Kohn, 2006).

Involving parents in the schooling process through elementary homework support can have negative consequences both academically and emotionally for children. Parents often have unrealistic expectations of what the finished homework product should look like (Hoover-Dempsey, 1995). Parents may create confusion if they are unfamiliar with the content of the assignment and re-teaching is needed, and the same effect may be generated if their approach differs from that of the teacher.  Finally, the time commitment of homework can create stress in families whose lives are already busy (Lareau & Weininger, 2009).

Homework has been cited as a common source of stress and conflict between parents and children (Buzukashvili, Feingold, & Katz, 2012).  Many families struggle to balance extra-curricular activities, family time, and homework. Through the process of trying to create a healthy balance of homework and family life, many families report that homework is the largest and most frequent battle and source of stress within their household (Public Agenda, 1998).

A study released in 2015 by Desjarlais et al. in *The American Journal of Family Therapy* found that elementary students are getting significantly more homework than is recommended by

NEA and the National PTA. In addition, parent and student surveys reveal that the actual time spent on homework often doesn't match with developmentally appropriate attention spans or the national PTA suggestion of ten minutes of homework per grade level (Buell & Kralovec, 2000). This overload of homework has far ranging psychological implications for both students and parents (Cooper, 2001). When homework takes priority over family leisure time and other family routines, it can contribute to lower measures of emotional well-being among children and parents (Katz et al., 2012).

In addition to the stress that excessive homework puts on elementary-aged children, without academic gains, stress is experienced and transmitted via the family as they try and support their student through the homework process. *The American Journal of Family Therapy Study* (2015) also examined the stress homework places on families. They found that as parent's confidence in their ability to help their child with homework decreased, the stress in the household increased (Desjarlais et al., 2015).

Most research on homework focuses on the assistance provided by working-class and poor parents, but very little is known about learning and the homework process in the middle-class home (Kohn & Schoenbach, 1993). In addition, research on parent-child conflict with respect to the homework experience often centers on parents who don't have a college degree, who have English as a second language, or who are considered working class.

**Conceptual Framework**

Research on parental involvement with homework has shown that parent demographic variables contribute significantly to the amount of parent-child conflict that exists in regard to homework (Donaldson-Pressman et al., 2014). "Homework as it is now being assigned discriminates against children's parents who don't have a college degree, against parents who

have English as a second language, against, essentially, parents who are poor" (Donaldson-Pressman at al., 2014, p. 4). These parents experience parent-child conflict when facilitating homework (Cooper, Robinson, & Patall, 2006). Donaldson-Pressman et al.'s (2014) findings imply that current homework practices provide an unintended advantage for students whose parents have specific attributes, such as a college degree or English as a first language, essentially, middle-class parents who are socio-economically stable. Based on Donaldson-Pressman at al.'s (2014) demographic findings on higher levels of conflict around homework for working-class families, an implication is that the middle-class family would have little parent-child conflict while doing homework. However, However, in Cooper, Patall, and Robinson's (2006) synthesis of homework research, conducted between 1987–2003, the authors found that many students, regardless of their SES, consider homework to be the chief source of stress in their lives. In addition, Cooper et al. (2006) found that involving parents in the homework process could have negative consequences for the parent-child relationship. These negative consequences include middle-class parents pressuring students to complete homework with unrealistic rigor, creating confusion with their teaching approach, and contributing to parent-child conflict.

Conflict and stress around homework remains one of middle-class parents' largest complaints about educational experiences with their elementary-aged children (Cooper, 2001; Kohn, 2006). According to Donaldson-Pressman at al. (2014) the degree to which conflicts over homework occur is related to the level of parental education. Parents, who do not hold at least a college degree report over 200% more stress and conflicts than those with a degree. In addition, research has shown that parents from all socio-economic classes, including the middle-class, are

affected by the emotional stress and conflict that surrounds the completion of homework for the elementary-aged student (Cooper, 2001; Donaldson-Pressman et al., 2014; Kohn, 2006).

Members of the middle-class belong to diverse groups that overlap with one another, but irrespective of the differences, education is a priority for middle-class families (Lareau & Weininger, 2009). Middle-class parents actively utilize their resources and skills from their professions to monitor and guide their children's educational experience (Gordon, 2007). Another characteristic of middle-class parents is that they project and transmit their adult ideals of the educational experience, specifically the homework experience, to their child's learning environment (Lareau & Weininger, 2009). "Middle-class children are frequently the objects of adult micromanagement and control in precisely those contexts that are expected to promote self-direction" (Lareau & Weininger, 2009, p. 13). Behaviors of the middle-class parent that are in alignment with this, including expectations or aspirations to have highly educated children could lead to emotional strain between parents and their children.

Additionally, several studies illuminate learning as a highly charged emotional process (Slywester, 1994; Bertling, Lipneviche, MacCann, Naemi, & Roberts, 2012; Pekrum, 2014). We are not thinking beings that feel; we are feeling beings that think (Taylor, 2006). According to a study conducted by Cree, Hazel, Hounsell, McCune, and Tett (2005) on the emotive nature of the learning:

It is becoming clear that learning is a profoundly reflexive and emotional

construct that entails the undoing of earlier learning as students enter a new

environment with different subjects, learning approaches and teaching

styles. The entire person, group or even organization is part of the learning

process (p. 275).

Learning at home creates a space for an emotional construct. The parent or guardian may undo or interpret earlier learning in school in the home environment using various parental approaches and instructional styles as they support their child with the homework process (Castillo & Gamez, 2013). Greenberg (2002) asserts that home is the primary environment in which a child's potential and personality will take shape. Thus, it is important to make sure parents create a positive, open atmosphere that will not only support what goes on in the classroom, but will also instill the desire to learn. In the home environment, parents have the opportunity to provide children with protective, safe havens and secure bases from which to explore and engage with others and their environment (Ainsworth, 1991; Bowlby, 1973; Bretherton, 1992).

Most research on children learning at home focuses on the assistance provided by working-class and poor parents, but very little is known about learning at home in the middle-class (Kohn & Schoenbach, 1993). In addition, research on parent-child conflict, with respect to the homework experience, center on the children's parents who don't have a college degree, parents who are non-native English speakers, and parents who are working-class. To add to the existing body of knowledge, the purpose of the study is to gain awareness, knowledge, and an understanding of the "essence" of middle-class parental perspective and the emotions and conflict experienced between themselves and their children as they facilitate the homework process.

In order to understand the complex and conflicting nature of the homework process from the perspective of parents, this study will utilize a phenomenological research design. Phenomenology seeks to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning of everyday experience. Phenomenology is the reflective study of the essence of consciousness as experienced from the

first-person point of view (Smith, 2007). Phenomenology takes the experience of phenomena as its starting point and tries to extract from it the essential experiences and the essence of what we experience. In this study, phenomenological methods will allow for the deep and thick description necessary to uncover the essence of the middle-class parental perspective on the parent-child emotional experience imbedded in the homework process. In-depth interviewing will be used to provide insight into "the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience" of the homework phenomena for middle-class parents (Patton, 2015, p. 115).

The benefits or significance of this study may lie in its extension of the relevance of previous studies on the emotional constructs of the homework experience by focusing on middle-class parents. In this way, it may garner insight and provide knowledge on the shared experience and conflict of middle-class parents and children working on homework.

**Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study is to explore the essence (i.e. awareness, knowledge, and understanding) of the emotions experienced between middle-class parents and their children as the parents facilitate the homework process.

**Research Question**

Utilizing Giorgi's (2012) modified version of Husserl's descriptive approach to phenomenology, this study will explore the following primary research question from the middle-class parental perspective: How do middle-class parents who facilitate the homework process of their children describe the experience of the emotions encountered during the homework process?

**Research Sub-Questions**

1. What do middle-class parents perceive to be the strengths of the emotions they experience as they facilitate their children's homework process?

2. What do middle-class parents perceive to be the limitations of the emotions they experience as they facilitate their children's homework process?

**Rationale, Relevance, and Significance of Study**

Hoover-Dempsey (1995) argues that during elementary school, children are forming their views on the educational experience. They posit that it is important to create a positive homework environment for both parents and children. These early school years are formative in terms of homework interaction, as parents are influential in "forming attitudes – as well as patterns of strategy and accomplishment" (p. 436). While many parents and educators realize the importance of having positive homework habits with children, surprisingly, the past 70 years of extensive studies on homework has yielded little information on the emotional construct of homework completion within the home (Kohn, 2006; Pashal, 1984).

In this study, understanding the emotional construct of homework completion between middle-class parents and children may help to illuminate the stress and emotions that parents and children associate with homework sessions. Descriptions of homework experiences from class specific groups, middle-class in this study, may help educators and parents further understand the emotions encountered during homework completion that maybe linked to socio economic class specific issues, perspectives, and educational aspirations (Lareau & Weininger, 2009). The significance of the study may extend previous studies on the emotional construct of homework experiences through its focus on middle-class parents' insight and knowledge of the shared experience.

The results of the study may benefit educators and parents of elementary-aged students. This research is pertinent to educators and parents with essential goals of wanting to understand the conflict middle-class parents and children encounter during homework completion. These findings may provide an important look into the parental perspective of managing student emotions and conflict during homework time. In addition, this study may help practicing educators understand the complex emotional dynamic middle-class parents face when supporting the homework experience. It is my hope that this study's findings may add to the ongoing and extensive longitudinal quantitative studies that quantify homework stress, by providing a qualitative look at the phenomena of middle-class parental student conflict and stress surrounding homework.

**Definitions**

For the purposes of this study, these specific meanings will be used for the following terms:

**Experience of the emotions**. This refers to how parents describe the whole experience of the homework facilitation process as well as the emotions that are elicited by the experience.

**Parental facilitation of the homework process**. "Helpful monitoring usually includes being accessible, being willing to help the student understand directions, being able to respond to simple questions, maintaining awareness of the child's emotional state and work patterns, and offering positive feedback on engagement in homework" (Green, Hoover-Dempsey, Whetsel, & Walker, 2004, p. 4).

**Stress**. "A state which arises from an actual or perceived demand-capability imbalance in the organisms' vital adjustment actions and which is partially manifested by a non specific response" (Buzukashvili et al., 2012, p. 406; Mikhail, 1985, p. 37).

**Socio-economic Status (SES).** "Discrete categories of people who are simliar in their levels of education, income, occupational status, and housing" (Hoff, Larsen, Tardiff, 2001, p. 234).

**Working Class**. "Includes any American household that falls under the poverty line, meaning that they don't earn enough money to meet their basic essentials of life, such as food, clothing and shelter. The Census Bureau estimates that about 15% of the U.S. population (approximately 42 million people) live below the poverty line, and fall into this class today. (The Pew Research Centers, 2016; Blanchard & Willmann, 2016).

**Middle Class**. "Households with an income that is two-thirds to double that of the U.S. median household income, after the income has been adjusted for household size" (The Pew Research Centers, 2016; Blanchard & Willmann, 2016, p. 2).

**Upper Class**. This class makes up about 1 to 5% of the entire American population and can be divided into two different categories: those with old money or those with new money. Households with old money are those that have had wealth in their family for at least two generations (sometimes many more), and haven't had to necessarily work for an income. On the other hand, households with new money consist of households who have had wealth in their family for only one or two generations, and instead of inheriting their riches they had to work hard. (The Pew Research Centers, 2016; Blanchard & Willmann, 2016).

**Limitations**

There are several limiting factors in this phenomenological study. First, the limited number of participants (4) and the phenomenological nature of this study are limitations to the transferability of the study beyond the setting in which the study will be conducted. A further limitation is that the primary researcher is both a middle-class parent of two school-aged children

and an educator that supports middle-class families in homework completion. I come to this research with my own biases that include, but are not limited to, my experiences, culture, subjective perception, expectations, and position. In the case of this study, my personal experience as a mother of two elementary-aged students who have homework could create a personal bias. However, my personal experience with facilitating my children's homework involves minimal emotional conflict. Any parent-child conflict we encounter is resolved quickly through communication. Hence, my personal experience with my own children's emotions around homework completion contrasted with reported findings of stress and conflict in middle-class family homes has driven me to conduct this study.

**Delimitations**

This phenomenological study is intended to illuminate the lived experiences of middle-class parents in relation to the emotional conflicts that arise as they facilitate their elementary age child's homework process. This study will not include the parental perspective of the homework experience of parents who have children in grades sixth and above. The scope is narrow in order to allow for a depth of information about the targeted population and their specific experience.

**Organization of the Remainder of the Study**

Chapter 2 will explore the theoretical basis for the study, analysis and critique of literature related to the of middle-class parents in relation to the emotional conflicts that arise as they facilitate their elementary-aged child's homework process will be explored. Chapter 3 will include a detailed overview of the method of this study as well as the research steps included in this study. Data collection and analysis will be presented in Chapter 4. Finally, Chapter 5 will be a summary of the research findings, conclusions, implications for practice, and recommendations for further research.

## Chapter 2: Review of Research Literature

This chapter will investigate existing research literature to provide a framework for the study while concurrently providing understanding of the related theoretical perspective. The purpose of this chapter is to review literature related to the lived experience of middle-class parents in relation to the emotional conflicts that arise between them and their children as they facilitate their child's homework process. The literature topic sequence of the chapter is as follows:  The Impact of Socio-Economic Status and Emotions on the Homework Experience, Comparing and Contrasting Middle-Class Expectations with Other SES Classes, The Paradox of Homework in The Middle-Class, Theoretical Explanation of Parent-Child Relationships with Respect to Emotional Climate, The Emotional Construct of Learning Environments, Learning in The Classroom Versus Learning in the Home, Homework in The Home, and, finally, Justification of Phenomenology as a Method.

**The Impact of Socio-Economic Status and Emotions on the Homework Experience**

There appears to be a connection between SES, emotions, and the homework experience. Research on parent involvement in assisting students with homework has shown that parent demographic variables contribute significantly to the amount of child-parent conflict families have surrounding homework  (Donaldson-Pressman at al., 2014). For more than a century, homework has been a common instructional practice blamed for causing family problems (Gordon, 1980, 2006). Buell and Kralovec (2001) suggest one reason this phenomenon persists is that

> Homework reinforces social inequities inherent in the unequal distribution of educational resources in the United States. Some students go home to well-educated parents and have easy access to computers with vast databases. Other students have family responsibilities,

parents who work at night, and no educational resources in their homes. (Buell &

Kralovec, 2001, p. 40)

Additionally, "Homework as it is now being assigned discriminates against children's parents

who don't have a college degree, against parents who have English as a second language,

against, essentially, parents who are poor" (Donaldson-Pressman et al., 2014, p. 4).

Demographic variables of families are important to consider when one is evaluating the

homework process and the emotional encounters that may occur. In a Brown University study

(Loveless, 2014) on parent class and homework, the results indicate that working-class parents

may utilize different parenting values and face unique class-specific challenges to facilitate their

child's homework. Students from the working class may "come from families with one parent,

whose parents may be unavailable at homework time, and/or may not have the education,

temperament or language proficiency to assist the child" (Desjarlais et al., 2015, p. 309).

Homework conflict was measured to be significantly higher in working-class families as a result

of the inadvertent educational discrimination against parents who may be disadvantaged in

assisting their child due to being a non-native English speaker, limitations of skill, knowledge,

parent temperament, and working class parental values. The authors went on to argue that the

impact of family demographics and socio-economic status (SES) indicate that "the expectation of

parents to provide instructive guidance to a child with homework, would be, through no fault of

the child, a benefit to some children and a detriment to others" (Desjarlais et al., 2015, p. 309).

Thus, we see that demographic variables of parents impact the homework process and the

emotions that may arise during homework completion.

Regardless of their demographics, studies support that all parents value education and are

affected by the emotional stress and conflict that surrounds the homework experience (Cooper,

2001; Cooper et al., 2006; Donaldson-Pressman at al., 2014; Kohn, 2006). This includes middle-class parents and their experiences with elementary-aged students.

The impact of a family's SES on their child's homework experiences is evident and supported by many quantitative and qualitative studies (Cooper, 2001; Cooper et al., 2006; Donaldson-Pressman et al., 2014; Kohn, 2006; Kunter, Ludtke, Robitzche, & Trautwein, 2009; Lareau & Weininger, 2009). The concept of SES impacting children's experiences in education and in life has been studied for more than five decades (Kohn, 2006; Lan, 2004; Lareau & Weininger, 2009). The results of these longitudinal studies indicate that not only does access to educational resources, such as internet and research tools, impact different socio-economic groups educational experiences, but that parenting styles and beliefs about parental involvement in education differ dramatically from one social class to the next.

Lareau and Kohn, leading researchers on social class and its impact on families educational experience, found that parenting values associated with SES have a larger impact on children's educational experience than any other variable (Kohn, 2006; Lan, 2004; Lareau & Weininger, 2009). Differing parental perspectives through the social classes impact the type and amount of involvement parents decide to initiate with their child's homework (Cooper, 2001). Consequently, children have significantly different homework experiences depending on the economic position of their families (Lareau & Weininger, 2009). While research has shown parent-child conflict around homework can be magnified or more common in lower socio-economic groups, the middle class and upper class with elementary-aged children are equitably affected by the emotional stress and conflict that surrounds the completion of homework (Cooper, 2001; Donaldson-Pressman et al., 2014; Kohn, 2006). Lareau and Weininger (2009) argue that research in homework conflict should not be limited exclusively to one particular

socio-economic group, as that would limit our understanding of the phenomena at hand. Rather, research on homework conflict should focus on our limited understandings of how parents' SES shapes family dynamics.

**Comparing and Contrasting Middle-Class Expectations with Other SES Classes**

The research that examines the differences between SES and parenting values is extensive (Kohn, 1963, 1983, 2006). The American middle class is a prominent and very diverse class, distinict from the working and upper class. The middle class makes up the largest percentage of American households. Although an exact comprehensive definition of middle class varies between research organizations, according to The Pew Research Centers May 2016 report, the middle class is defined as "Households with an income that is two-thirds to double that of the U.S. median household income, after the income has been adjusted for household size" (Blanchard, & Willmann, 2016, p. 2). This would mean for a three-person household, the middle-income range would be about $42,000–$125,00 annually.  Based on these numbers, currently the middle-class constitutes about 26%–76% of American households.

However, the middle class cannot be strictly defined by income alone (The Pew Research Center, 2016). While income can be used to classify someone economically as middle class, there are other defining characteristics such as perceptions of education. Irrespective of definition, education is a priority for all middle-class families (Lareau & Weininger, 2009). Kohn's (2006) extensive research indicates that middle-class families have child-rearing values that focus on education and thus middle-class parents invest a significant amount of time in trying to transmit their educational ideals on to their children (Lareau & Weininger, 2009; Kohn, 2006). The goal of educational attainment is one of the most prominent determinants of class status, as education represents expertise, which is a necessary component of the capitalist market

(Foley, 1989; Kohn 2006; Weineger & Lareau, 2009).  Thus, while parents in the middle class themselves may not have a college degree, they prioritize their child's education and view education as a route to higher paying jobs for their children. The middle class focus on educational attainment because they believe it is the basis for occupational selection and that those with higher education tend to be positioned in occupations that have greater autonomy, influence of organizational process, and better financial compensation (Foley, 1989; Kohn, 2006; Weineger and Lareau, 2009).

In addition, membership in different social classes entails differences in the level of self-direction individuals utilize in their careers. These differences in social class expectations of self-direction have pronounced psychological consequences (Kohn, 1963; Kohn, 2006). The psychological perspectives of parents impact child-rearing and the values parents bring to parenting. Middle-class parents tend to stress the importance of self-direction and often place their children in situations where they must make decisions and then provide a verbal justification for the choices they make in both leisure and home life activities (Lareau & Weininger, 2009). This encouragement of children justifying their selections is to promote children's decision-making abilities, and being exposed to different perspectives with supporting reasons becomes the primary base from which children are able to see a rational for their decisions (Kohn, 2006; Lareau & Weininger, 2009). While middle-class parents want to promote the decision-making abilities of their children, it is important to note that often parents frame the choices available so a particular outcome would be most attractive to the child (Lareau & Weininger, 2009). This framing of choices and asking for an explanation of the child's decision is a form of subtle indirect control that middle-class parents utilize with the goal of instilling self-direction and consideration (Lareau & Weininger, 2009).

Middle-class families tend to value and emphasize the child's self-direction while exercising subtle forms of indirect control in order to instill self-direction (Gordon, 2007). Most middle-class parents hope to foster self-direction in their children by placing them in leisure activities to promote curiosity and provide a venue for developing self-control (Gordon, 2007; Kohn, 2006; Lareau & Weininger, 2009). The interesting part of middle-class leisure activities for children is while the parents are seeking out activities to foster curiosity and the development of self-control, many of these extra-curricular activates are highly controlled by adults and leave little room for development of self control and self direction (Lareau & Weininger, 2009). It is the hope of parents that through putting children in structured situations like extra-curricular activities, they will be better able to exert indirect control to foster the two values that middle class-parents report they want most in their children: self control and consideration of others. Thus, the value commitments and behavior of middle-class parents are complex and at times conflicting (Kohn, 1963, 2006).

In addition, middle-class parents utilize their resources and skills from their professions to monitor and guide their children's educational experience (Gordon, 2007), whereas working-class parents instead expect immediate behavior compliance and "stress conformity to external authorities" (Lareau & Weininger, 2009, p. 680). Based on their behavior, it appears that middle-class parents participate in the educational experience as their child's mentor in the homework process to promote self-direction, whereas working-class parents believe the homework is the responsibility of the student and should be completed to please an external authority, the educator who assigned the work. Parents project and transmit their adult ideals of educational, and specifically the homework experience, on to their child's learning (Lareau & Weininger, 2009).

In contrast to the working class and the middle class, upper-class parents utilize more verbal interaction with their children than parents of middle and lower-class children (Brody, 1968; Hoff-Ginsberg, 1992; Bradley & Caldwell, 1984; Hoff et al., 2001). Hoff et al. (2001) noted in their study of parents and parenting practices based on SES found "heavily loaded verbal responsivity is positively related to both parental education and occupation" (Hoff et al, 2001, p. 238). Meaning that parents in higher SES categories, who are educated and have higher-level occupations, utilize frequent and detailed verbal interactions with their children providing a better verbal database from which to learn than the middle-class and lower-class (Wright, 2013). Highly educated parents provide many opportunities for conversation and exploratory discussions with their children, thus giving a strong set of communication skills to support their children's education (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Hoff-Ginsberg, 1992).

When addressing their children's academic struggles, parents form the upper class use their financial affluence to hire college graduates to complete their child's homework, particularly when their child feels stressed or overwhelmed by homework (Davies, 2016)**.** Upper-class parents report that paying others to complete their child's homework helps relieve the excessive stress homework places on children. This delegation of the child's homework allows the child to focus on other important activities, such as sports and hobbies (Davies, 2016). This delegation of homework to third parties for pay is a socio-economic advantage that some upper-class parents utilize in their parenting practices (Schildberg-Horisch, 2015). They view this practice as a way to help their children prioritize their work and time, rather than a form of cheating (Davies, 2016).

While all parents are influenced by popular parenting theories, it is apparent that the upper class are more likely to adjust and change in response to parenting theories than parents in

the lower economic strata (Schildberg-Horisch, 2015). The consumption of news and information leads to reflective parenting practices where integration of the newest information on parenting is ongoing. Thus, this constant evolution of high-end SES parenting practices contributes greatly to widening the differences among the social class parental values.

**The Paradox of Homework in the Middle Class**

The middle-class homework experience with respect to conflict ought to be different from the other SES groups, but the frequency of middle-class parent-child conflict is simliar to the working class experience. Donaldson-Pressman et al.'s (2014) findings imply that current homework practices provide an unintended advantage for students whose parents have specific attributes, such as a college degree or English as a first language, essentially, middle-class parents who are socio-economically stable. Based on Cooper et al. (2006), a second implication is that the middle-class family would have little parent-child conflict while their children do homework. However, conflict and stress around homework remains one of middle-class parents' largest complaints about educational experiences with their elementary-aged children (Cooper, 2001; Kohn, 2006).

Kohn's (2006) research on child-rearing and SES found a relationship between socio-economic class and child-rearing values as they relate to educational attainment. Middle-class families' child-rearing values focus on children developing internal working processes to help them negotiate their educational experience. This often comes in the form of parental involvement or over involvement in the homework process (Deckers, Falk, Kosse, Shildberg-Horisch, 2015).  While these parents want their children to focus on intention, judgment, and verbal justification of decisions, middle-class parents often look to cultivate these internal working process skills during the homework experience (Kohn, 2006; Wright, 2013).

This focus of middle-class parents wanting to foster internal processes and then verbalize them as a justification for actions creates a unique middle class SES-specific parent-child dynamic where the child is expected to process and think about life from an adult view of the world. While middle-class children are encouraged to process and make decisions on their own, their parents often put them in leisure activities that include a substantial amount of adult control and few opportunities to develop internal processing, decision-making, and verbal justification of choices (Lareau & Weininger, 2009). It creates what Kohn refers to as a "mixed picture" where children receive messages from parents that they are to think about, make, and justify their choices while engaged in activities that have an external authority who dictates how activities are to be completed (Lareau & Weininger, 2009, p. 685). This encouragement of middle-class parents to have their child develop independence and self-control in exactly the situations that promote ultimate acceptance of an external authorities requirements send confusing messages to children; think for yourself and justify your decisions, yet parents consistently place you in leisure activities that require submission to an adult authority (Kohn, 2006). Kohn's (1959; 2006) well-documented arguments concerning class-specific variation in parental childrearing values remain some of the most widely discussed research on SES and its impact on family life. His studies elaborate on how conflicting parental values within the middle class can send mixed messages to children about expectations. These mixed messages later can manifest in the realm of conflict and emotional encounters around activities that are parent and child specific, like homework.

The relationship between parenting and social structure has been a long standing interest in the social sciences, yielding large amounts of literature to explain the variations in child-rearing across social classes (Lareau & Weininger, 2009). Kohn's (1993, 2006, 2011, 2014,

2015) extensive research over the course of five decades on the socio-economic status of parents reveals parenting styles vary based on socio-economic class. Parents from different socio classes emphasize different values through which parents approach child-rearing. Thus, "children have substantially different experiences depending on the economic position of their families" (Lareau & Weininger, 2009, p. 681).  Kohn (1993, 2006, 2011, 2014, 2015), Hoff et al. (2001), and Lareau and Weininger's (2009) research emphasizes the difference between upper class, middle class, and working-class parenting approaches and how they impact the child's upbringing and the educational perspective of the family. Thus, "the existence of class-specific differences in family life is now widely accepted, with numerous investigators having reported contrasts with greater or lesser similarity to Kohn's self-directional conformity distinction" (Lareau & Weininger, p. 682).

The middle class faces a unique paradox when it comes to the intersection of their parenting values and homework completion. One can imagine a parent who encourages their child to develop autonomy, self-reflective thinking and verbal justification of decisions may encounter some conflicts with their child when approaching homework. Homework after all is prescribed by an external authority, the teacher, but completed in the home environment with another authority, the parent. This puts children in the conflicting position of trying to meet the authority requirements of the teacher, whom is not present, while simultaneously their parents try to cultivate internal working process skills throughout the homework experience. This troublesome and conflicting intersection of middle class parental values on the homework experience places additional class-specific stress on middle-class children during the homework process.

The behaviors of middle-class parents coupled with many expectations, including aspirations to have highly educated children, impact the parent and child relationship. Each parent approaches parenting with values they hope to cultivate and encourage in their children. While working class parents value obedience to an external authority and neatness, middle class parents value self-direction, self-control, curiosity, justification of choices and consideration. These parental values are projected on to children and influence not only parenting style and adult decision making, but also influence the unique relationship between parents and children (Kohn, 2006).

Regardless of SES, parents and children have a unique bond. This bond that parents and children have is based on the culmination of a variety of experiences between parent and child since birth. Throughout these experiences, both parent and child are learning about themselves, their relationship, and the world around them. There are many opportunities over the course of a child's development to test the security of the parental-child bond in a way that allows children explore and learn about the world around them.

**Theoretical Explanation of Parent-Child Relationships with Respect to Emotional Climate**

A theory which could shed light on the possible impact of parent-child relationships is attachment theory. According to the attachment theory, which was developed by psychologists Ainsworth and Bowlby in their work on human development, nurturing adult attachments to their children have a long lasting impact on the formation of satisfying relationships and building the capacity of children to regulate emotions (Bowlby 1988; Siegel, 2012). Research on secure attachment relationships between parent and child correlates strongly with higher academic attainment, better self-regulation, and social competence (Bath, 2014). Those without secure

attachments are fearful, less willing to seek out and learn from new experiences, and may struggle with emotional regulation (Glaser & Prior, 2006).

This connection of attachment theory and its implications for the development of self-regulation of emotions and willingness to try new experiences is essential when one considers homework occurs between the two people attachment is most directly associated with, parent and child. This unique parent-child bond and the type of attachment it entails either supports the child to develop emotional regulation of self and curiosity to explore new experiences, or it creates a child who is more prone to emotional outbursts and fearful of new experiences. Infant primary attachment experiences are reflected later in childhood, in a child's behaviors and relationships in education. Children with secure attachments are less likely to have overly emotional reactions to homework (Fernandes-Richards, 2006). In addition, secure attachments are associated with a greater emotional regulation that is essential to "take on academic challenges, such as homework" (Bath, p. 120.) In elementary school, children with secure attachments are associated with higher grades and standardized test scores (Fernandes-Richards, 2006). This connection of secure attachments, emotional stability, and learning has been extensively documented, and it is fully accepted that people do not learn in highly emotional situations (Bowlby, 1988; Glaser & Prior, 2006; Siegel, 2012).

It then becomes apparent the presence of a sensitive and responsive caregiver during infancy is crucial to providing the infant with what attachment theorists would refer to as a "safe base" from which the rest of the world can be explored. This safe base provides an emotional foundation in which children learn about their own self-regulation and feel safe to try new tasks and experiences. It should be noted "that even sensitive caregivers get it right only about 50 percent of the time" (Howe, 2011, p. 13). Daily life interruptions, such as the doorbell ringing,

another child's needs, or out of sync communications can all lead to sensitive caregivers missing or not being able to meet all of the child's needs or requests. While the percentage of accurately meeting a child's needs at only 50 % may seem low, the basis of attachment theory includes that attended interactions can be disrupted frequently but that "the hallmark of a sensitive caregiver is that the ruptures are managed and repaired" (Howe, 2011, p. 14). In effect, attachment is not simply about meeting a child's needs perfectly; it is also about how parents handle those needs when they cannot be met.

If attachment theory explains that not every caregiver can meet a child's needs all of the time, and it gives room for guardian error and self-correction, then it becomes apparent that the perception of the child as to whether or not their needs have been met is a significant factor in the parent-child dynamic. Early care giving has a long-lasting impact on development and the ability to learn (Siegel, 2012). A child's initial dependence on a primary caregiver for protection and care provides the child "with experiences and skills to help the child cope with frustrations, develop self-confidence and all qualities necessary to promote positive engagement with learning" (Bath, 2014, p. 12).  When one considers the conflicting parental values that middle class parents impart on their children, the unique type of attachment each child may have with their parents, and the intersection of homework completion within the home, it becomes easy to see that middle-class parents may have struggles with creating positive working dynamics with their children when it comes to homework completion (Geddes, 2006).

Attachments between infants and primary caregivers form naturally, even if the caregiver is not responsive or sensitive in social interactions with the infant. It is important to note the implications that accompany attachments, as infants cannot leave insensitive or unresponsive caregivers. Instead, these infants must learn to manage themselves as best as possible within the

confines of their relationship to their primary caregiver. Mutual attachments are common in adult

relationships, where humans seek the company of other adults based on personal preference, but

infant attachments are based on proximity and exposure to a primary caregiver, not on personal

preference. This means that different children develop attachments differently based on how they

experience their early caregiver.  These attachments between parent and child are based on the

psychological and biological need of the infant/child, not on mutual preferences.

Through studies conducted in the 1960's and 1970's, Mary Ainsworth found that different

children have different patterns of attachment depending primarily on their experience of their

early caregiving environment. These early patterns of attachment in infants shape, but do not

determine, an individual's expectations in later relationships (Bretherton & Munholland, 1999, p.

86). In infants and young children, four different attachment classifications have been identified:

secure attachment, anxious-ambivalent attachment, anxious-avoidant attachment, and

disorganized attachment. Children who have secure attachments in early childhood are more

competent and enjoy academic success in later childhood and adolescence (Fernandes-Richards,

2006).

Our early experiences with our caregivers gradually combine to create a system of

thoughts and beliefs, expectations, emotions and behaviors about self and others. This system in

attachment theory is called the "internal working model of social relationships" and it continues

to develop with time and experience (Ainsworth, 1991)**.** This internal model helps to regulate

and interpret attachment related behavior about self and those that surround us. This model is not

fixed, and as it develops it adapts to both environmental and developmental changes while

incorporating the ability to reflect and communicate about previous and future attachment

relationships (Bowlby, 1973). This internal working model continues to develop through our

entire lives helping us cope with friendships, marriage, and parenthood, all of which involve different feelings and behaviors. Thus, though specific attachments are made between infant and caregiver early on, ongoing relationship dynamics with those that we are attached to form our understanding of emotional situations. Research shows the child's ability to form relationships and to learn is shaped by the child's early experiences and style of attachment to their parent (Fernandes-Richards, 2006). In early life, children learn through interactions within their family environment. If we better understand why and how some children behave during moments of conflict with their parent/s, such as during homework completion, we can find ways to help them enjoy and succeed in education.

**The Emotional Construct of Learning Environments**

Studies have illuminated that learning is a highly charged emotional process (Slywester, 1994; Bertling et al., 2012; Pekrum, 2014). "We are not thinking beings that feel; we are feeling beings that think" (Taylor, 2006). In 2005, Cree et al. conducted a study on the emotive nature of the learning process, and concluded:

> It is becoming clear that learning is a profoundly reflexive and emotional construct that entails the undoing of earlier learning as students enter a new environment with different subjects, learning approaches and teaching styles. The entire person, group or even organization is part of the learning process (p. 275).

Consequently, parents who are helping children with homework in the home have to contend with the emotional construct of learning, while providing a positive learning environment for their child.

As Turner and Meyer (2004) have concluded from their studies, learning that is challenging and stimulates emotional support is necessary for promoting positive motivation in

children. Emotional support can be modeled in many forms, but the most common among parents when supporting their children with homework are in the form of enthusiasm, humor, and risk taking (Turner and Meyer, 2004). The importance is not in the form through which the emotional support is rendered. Rather, it is in the perception of the child's experience that the situation is emotionally supportive. Hence, different children may need different forms of parental support to influence positive motivation. While parental enthusiasm may encourage one child to try something new, another child may need emotional support in the form of humor or encouragement of risk taking. All parent-child relationships are unique. However, the component of parental emotional support to promote positive motivation is a universal need. Emotionally supportive relationships and learning environments help to generate meaningful engagement of the activity at hand and positive motivation, and both are essential to the completion of homework (Wright, 2010).

Recent developments in cognitive science are beginning to unravel the complexity of emotions and how they impact learning (Slywester, 1994; Bertling et al., 2012; Pekrum, 2014). Educators know that emotions are essential and have a major impact on learning. For example, our attention and memory is impacted by our emotional state, but we do not yet fully understand the entire human emotional system. Current theories and research on emotions and learning generates more questions than answers, however, the impact of emotions on learning is widely accepted (Slywester, 1994; Bertling et al., 2012; Pekrum, 2014).

A student's emotional reactions during learning have been shown to relate to and impact a number of important educational and life outcomes (Slywester, 1994; Bertling et al., 2012; Pekrum, 2014). Because the process of learning is not uniform among humans and it comprises

many situations that differ dramatically from one another, learning can elicit a variety of emotional and behavioral responses from all that are involved in the learning process.

Most studies on emotions and their impact on learning have focused on emotions in the classroom, with fewer inquires examining student affect during homework (Knollmann & Wild, 2007). Researchers Slywester (1994), Bertling et al. (2012), and Pekrum, (2014) all suggest that there is a need to investigate emotions during homework from both the parental and the child's perspective. Data on emotions with regard to homework have been limited to mostly quantitative studies of self-reported feelings (Donaldson-Pressman at al., 2014). While self-reported feelings in large quantitative studies provide generalizations of what families report to feel during homework time, they do not unearth the actual experience of emotions during homework time between parent and child (Cooper, 2001; Donaldson-Pressman et al., 2014; Kohn, 2006). This study seeks to contribute qualitative data to help illuminate the lived experiences of middle-class parents in relation to the emotional conflicts that arise from homework completion.

**Learning in the Classroom versus Learning in the Home**

A large amount of research has been conducted on the importance of educators creating positive learning environments within the school setting. Research on classroom learning environments, with roots in psychological aspects of social environments, has established that learning environments strongly influence student achievement and play an important role in the effectiveness of learning (Schaps, 2015).

Fraser (1994) reviewed a set of 40 studies in which the effects of the classroom environment on student academic outcomes was investigated. The pattern that resulted from this extensive review of 40 studies illustrated that "students learn better when their perceptions of their classroom is positive and that this association has translated into the ability to predict

student cognitive and affective learning outcomes" (Cheng, p. 290). This pattern of positive association with school environment and student learning outcomes was supported through the results of meta-analysis conducted in 1981 involving 12 studies encompassing 17,805 students in 823 classrooms in four countries (Haertel & Walberg, 1981).

Classroom environments have a number of characteristics (e.g. social climate, instructional quality, goal orientation, cohesion), which influence student development, growth, and achievement. Classrooms that are supportive, safe, warm, and non-threatening encourage work and promote a sense of accomplishment and enjoyment in students. Interestingly enough, the particular characteristics of the classroom environment are not the main factor in promoting a positive learning environment. Student perceptions of their learning environment directly relates to learning outcomes (Haertel & Walberg, 1981).

From a phenomenological point of view, student perceptions of their learning environments hold extensive importance, as "a given student's behavior can be assumed to be more affected by his or her interpretation of the classroom context than by any objective indicator of that context" (Kunter et al., 2009 p. 120). In school learning environment research, we see students are used as informants on their learning environment, hence their perceptions are valuable. If student perceptions of learning environments are closely tied with positive student outcomes, the importance of the students' perceptions of their learning environments becomes evident.

Research using student ratings and perceptions of learning environments to analyze the effects of learning environments can entail some major mythological challenges (Kunter et al., 2009). Primarily, positive student perceptions of learning environments have shown to be dependent on favorable GPAs and student achievement. Hence, students that are not performing

well or have low grades rate their learning environments as less favorable. This leaves researchers in the unique position of needing both a student's individual perception of their independent learning and a student's "shared" perception of that same learning environment once the information has been aggregated on a class level. To compound the complex study of learning environments, "educational researchers interested in effects of differed aspects of students' learning environments need to observe a large enough number of learning environments that exhibit sufficiently large differences in the characteristics examined" (Kunter et al., 2009, p. 122). Consequently, researchers examining differences in learning environments must use aggregated student ratings, which requires considerable sample sizes at the group level, making studies analyzing learning environments rather costly. Given the expense of needing a large sample size, it becomes apparent why research on learning environments is a relatively new field of study that is currently limited to institutionalized controlled group learning environments.

While ongoing research in this field is beneficial, the current scope has been limited to not include the home as a learning environment. Most research on children learning at home focuses on the assistance provided by working-class and poor parents, but very little is known about learning at home of the middle class (Kohn & Schoenbach, 1993; Kohn 2004). This researcher understands the limitations of current research and data surrounding learning environments and its exclusion of the home, however, it is imperative that the scope of learning environments is appropriately extended into the home setting.

Learning in the home is an emotional construct in which the parent or guardian may undo or interpret earlier learning in school in the home environment using various parental approaches and instructional styles as they support their child with the homework process (Castillo &

Gamez, 2013). Greenberg (2002) asserts, "Your home is the primary environment in which your child's potential and personality will take shape. It's important to make sure to create a positive, open atmosphere that will not only support what goes on in the classroom, but will also instill the desire to learn" (p. 1). In the home environment, parents have the opportunity provide children with protective, safe havens and secure bases from which to explore and engage with others and their environment (Ainsworth, Bowlby & Bretherton 1992).

The currently accepted definition of learning environment is to describe institutionalized and naturally occurring group settings that stimulate learning in students (e.g., schools, classes, small groups) (Kunter et al., 2009, p. 121). While this definition is helpful for organized group learning environments, it does not include the home. Given a child's first learning environment is the home, and that they spend an immense amount of time learning and completing homework, this researcher acknowledges that the home is in fact a learning environment with its own unique features and characteristics.

Many researchers support Greenberg's view of the importance of both the home environment and the requirement that it be an emotionally positive environment to foster learning. Roberts, Jurgens & Burchinal's study (as cited in Oest, 2011) established that parents who provide a home environment that is structured, organized, and maintains a positive emotional climate facilitate children's academic development. While the process of learning is not consistent from environment to environment, as researchers Lipneviche, MacCann, Bertliing, Naemi, & Roberts acknowledge, "learning comprises numerous domains and situations that differ dramatically from each other, and, as a result, elicit various emotional responses from all involved" (Lipneviche, MacCann, Bertliing, Naemi, & Roberts, 2012, p. 388). Rotter's social learning theory (1954) explains the complexity of individual emotional responses to

environments and the emotions and motivations that drive emotional responses to varied learning

contexts. Rotter's learning theory states that people are motivated to seek out positive stimulation

and reinforcement in order to avoid unpleasant situations. This intersection of individual

emotional responses to environments and the desire to seek out positive learning environments

exemplifies the importance of considering learning environments for children. Given that

students' emotional reactions to learning environments impact educational and life outcomes, its

not surprising that the home environment plays a critical role in the homework process

(Lipneviche, MacCann, Bertliing, Naemi, & Roberts, 2012).

To date, there have been few studies on the impact of the home environment on the

homework process (Cooper, 2001; Donaldson-Pressman et al., 2014; Kohn, 2006). Though

researchers know the importance of quality learning environments, parents are given few tips on

adjusting their home environment and interactions in a positive way in order to impact both the

process of homework and the emotional experience of facilitating homework. Most studies have

focused on the environment and emotions within the classroom, with few studies investigating

emotions during homework and afterschool activities completed in the home (Lipneviche,

MacCann, Bertliing, Naemi, & Roberts, 2012). The lack of research on the arena of the

emotional complexity of the homework dynamic between parent/guardian and student is

important, as students report having the most negative emotions associated with homework

compared to any other academic task (Lipneviche, MacCann, Bertliing, Naemi, & Roberts,

2012). Given that students have the most negative emotions associated with homework,

researchers advise students learn best in positive learning environments. The research in the area

of creating positive learning environments indicates that "learning environments strongly

influence student outcomes and play an important role in improving the effectiveness of

learning" (Oest, 2011, p. 301). Thus, the need for research in the cross section of home learning environments, cultivating a positive home learning situation, and the emotionally charged construct of learning within the home is evident.

**Homework in the Home**

With the complexities and variety of homework assigned by teachers and the variation of family attributes, many families find themselves immersed in a stressful emotional battle surrounding homework. Parents approach homework with a range of preconceived notions about its importance, strategies to support their child, and what the parental role in homework should look like based on their SES. Research reveals, regardless of family background, that typically "Parents choose to become involved in homework because they believe they *should* be involved, believe their involvement will make a positive difference in their child's learning, and perceive that their involvement is invited, expected, and valued by school personnel" (Green et al., 2004, p. 1). Parents also engage in a wide range of activities while trying to support the homework process of their child. Some examples of these activities are establishing a time and place for homework, efforts focused on teaching for understanding, helping students develop effective learning strategies, correction of work, and ensuring homework is completed in a timely manner (Green et al., 2004). While these activities are helpful for students, research indicates that the specific activities and needed support vary dramatically depending on the SES of the family (Wright, 2010). These activities help to create structures and dynamics that support children through the homework process. However, because there are different student needs, parental involvement must "fit" the student, family context, student developmental level, and personal characteristics (Corno & Xu, 1998; Wright, 2004, 2010; Goldhaber, 2000). Given the above referenced list of factors needing consideration to create successful structures around homework,

and the amount of individualization students need to be successful at homework, it is not a surprise that many parents report feeling stressed when supporting their child through the homework process (Loveless, 2014).

For an ideal learning environment in the home, parents create a comfortable, quiet learning environment and maintain consistent rules for homework completion. In addition to the proper environment, parents must be aware of the level and type of monitoring necessary during homework time, based on their student's individual needs. "Helpful monitoring usually includes being accessible, being willing to help the student understand directions, being able to respond to simple questions, maintaining awareness of the child's emotional state and work patterns, and offering positive feedback on engagement in homework" (Green et al., 2004, p. 4). Thus, while the homework may be the student's responsibility, through a review of research, it becomes apparent that creating the appropriate positive learning environment, understanding the type of monitoring needed, promoting positive student motivation, implementing positive feedback and the wide range of activities needed to support the homework process requires parents to have the above listed variety of skills on hand (Loveless, 2014; Green et al., 2004).

Given the complex nature of homework, parents could also benefit dramatically from additional information about teaching strategies that may be helpful (Loveless, 2014, Green et al., 2004). Authors Cancio, West, & Young (2004) explain the complex nature of teaching strategies parents must utilize through the homework process in the following quote:

> Parents may also benefit from knowing that direct teaching strategies are often most appropriate for students who are younger, experience difficulty with work, or request help. Suggestions for the amount of direct teaching that is appropriate for students at different

developmental and grade levels can be particularly helpful, as are suggestions for teaching

activities that meet individual student needs. (Cancio et al., 2004, p. 12)

Cancio et al.'s statemeant emulates the complex nature of teaching itself. Parents are not

trained in the art of teaching, and thus may not have an understanding of teaching strategies, the

amount of teaching that is appropriate on homework, and developmental and grade level

expectations. Green et al. (2004) touch on the complexity of parental involvement in homework

and the need for further parental training.

Parental involvement focused on helping children understand learning tasks often

requires considerable knowledge. Parents whose own schooling did not include

experience in understanding principles underlying varied learning tasks often benefit

from school-based educational programs designed to support relevant knowledge and

understanding. (Green et al., 2004, p. 7)

The Harvard Family Research Project (2015) suggests the best way to promote parental

involvement through homework support is to supply parents with a set of strategies that are

grounded in information about specific attributes that help students learn more effectively.

Research suggests that these include positive student attitude about learning and

homework; positive student perceptions of personal competence and efficacy for

learning; student perceptions of personal control over learning outcomes; and self-

regulation skills pertinent to goal-setting, organizing and planning, persistence in the face

of difficulty, and management of emotional responses to homework. (Green et al., 2004,

p. 7)

For many parents who struggle to balance their family's daily life schedules, on top of

work and other commitments, the above strategies prove to be both complicated and

overwhelming. In essence, the homework process is complex, and while families report it to be the single biggest source of family stress, many parents feel lost in how to best support their child's needs (Green et al., 2004). If parents had information about the emotional conflicts encountered during homework regardless of student skills and attributes, they could then focus their homework support in an emotionally supportive way to promote positive academic outcomes for their child (Wright, 2004).

Stress related to homework is the largest reported source of academic stress in elementary-aged children's family's lives (Loveless, 2014). Cooper complied 120 studies in 1989 and another 60 studies in 2006, which resulted in a comprehensive analysis of multiple research studies about homework and its impact on achievement and family relationships. His results from both studies found no academic benefit of homework at the elementary level (Cooper, 1989; Cooper et al., 2006). Cooper's comprehensive analysis did find homework has a negative impact on children's attitudes toward school. This negative attitude of elementary children towards school impacts the parent-child dyad in a way that it promotes stress among all family members.

Stress induced by homework is common and it negatively affects family relationships (Buzukashvili et al. 2012; Cooper, 2001; Pomerantz, Ng, & Wang, 2006; Walker, 2004). For example, Pomerantz et al. (2006) found that a mother's negative affect was elevated on days when they had to provide more assistance to their child. In addition, an ethnographic study by Varenne and McDermott (1999) suggests that homework "may force parents into unwanted roles that strain family relationships" (Buzukashvili et al., 2012, p. 406). While stress has been a topic of interest to medical professionals, social scientists, anthropologists, and psychologists, there is still not a universally agreed-upon definition of stress (Buzukashvili et al., 2012; Lararus &

Monat, 1985). For the purposes of this study, I will limit the focus of stress related to homework to Mikhail's (1985) well-utilized and holistic definition of psychological stress: "stress is a state which arises from an actual or perceived demand-capability imbalance in the organisms' vital adjustment actions and which is partially manifested by a nonspecific response" (Mikhail, 1985, p. 37). Mikhail's nonspecific responses are psychological stress reactions that might include tension, irritability, the inability to concentrate, and a variety of physical symptoms that include a fast heartbeat and headaches (Mikhail, 1985). The stress-related responses listed above all negatively impact the emotional and academic functioning of both children and their parents during homework time. This is important as substantial research indicates that minor stressors are an important focus for research as they describe stressful features of enduring relationships and roles (Huizink, 2000; Kohn 2006; Cooper, 2001; Buzukashvili et al., 2012). While homework is considered a minor daily stressor, its enduring nature and accumulated influence might cause emotional reactions that are greater than situational occasional stress (Pope & Simon, 2005). As a result, the implications of daily stressful homework interactions between parent and child are significant on the parent-child relationship and merit further study.

Stress during homework time can manifest as a result of quantity and type of parental support, quantity of homework assigned to students, demographic variables, and parental beliefs about self-efficacy. A review of the literature indicates regardless of demographic background all families are susceptible to homework-related stress listed above (Cooper, 2001; Donaldson-Pressman et al., 2014; Kohn, 2006; Buell & Kravovec, 2001; Lareau & Weininger, 2009).

Many elementary-aged children require parental assistance with homework, and while some parents are able to provide effective homework assistance without conflict, others are unable to do so. According to the quantitative study, "A Delicate Balance of Challenge and

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Support: Parental Scaffolding of Children's Learning and Its Influence on Emotions During Homework" (2006), when conflict arises during homework time "homework interactions can be unpleasant; parents may have trouble gauging their child's needs and be unable to provide the precise amount of guidance necessary to ensure success" (Fernandez-Richards, 2006, p. 11). Negative homework interactions can become frustrating and stressful for both the parent and the child, while setting the stage for negative attitudes about education (Donaldson-Pressman et al., 2014). While the homework process appears simple, it requires the parent to find a balance between supporting and challenging their child. If parental support is excessive, the child may lack autonomy or become uninterested. Lahey (2015), states that excessive parental involvement leads to children "checking out" of their homework assignments. He posits, "in order to be invested in our own learning, we need to feel like we have some control over the details of it. We need to feel competent " (Lahey, 2015, p. 3). Consequently, if the parent provides too much challenging, insufficient support, or excessive corrections, the child may feel overwhelmed, shut down, and unable to attempt or complete the task at hand. An extensive study conducted in 2000 by Corno and Xu, went so far as to describe the current state of homework in the United States as a "battleground for many parents" where it seems impossible for the parent-child dyad to come to agreement regarding the individual needs of the child and how much parental assistance is required (Corno & Xu, 2000; Fernandez-Richards, 2006, p. 14).

The primary way in which homework promotes stress between parents and children during the elementary years is based on the quantity of homework children are prescribed at the elementary level. Many families struggle to balance extra-curricular activities, family time, and homework. A study released in August of 2015 in *The American Journal of Family Therapy* found that elementary students are getting significantly more homework than the recommended

amount (*American Journal of Family Therapy*, 2015). In response to studies revealing that students were spending excessive amounts of time on homework, The National Education Association (NEA) and the National Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) created and agreed on the standard referred to as the "10-minute rule" (NEA, 2015). This rule states that students should get 10 minutes of homework per grade level per night. This would mean a first grader would have about 10 minutes a night of homework, and second graders would have 20 minutes per night, with an additional 10 minutes added on for each grade level (NEA, 2015). This study revealed that the average first grade students had up to three times the homework load recommended by NEA and the National PTA. This overload of homework has far ranging psychological implications for both students and parents (Cooper, 2001). When homework takes priority and the place of family leisure time and other family routines, homework has been associated with lower measures of emotional well-being among children and parents (Buzukashvili et al., 2012).

Stephanie Donaldson-Pressman (2014), the contributing editor of a study conducted on the amount of time students spend on homework and the clinical director of the New England Center for Pediatric psychology, stated that

> It is absolutely shocking to me to find out that particularly kindergarten students (who) are not supposed to have any homework at all are getting as much homework as a third-grader is suppose to get. Anybody who's tried to keep a 5-year-old at a table doing homework for 25 minutes after school knows what that's like. I mean children don't want to be doing, they want to be out playing, they want to be interacting and that's what they should be doing. That's what's really important. (Donaldson-Pressman, 2014, p. 4)

Experts like Donaldson-Pressman clarify the purpose of the creation of the 10-Minute Rule was in response to a number of studies that researched the effects of families having too much homework. Donaldson-Pressman clearly states that "the data shows that homework over the 10 minute rule level is not only not beneficial to children's grades or GPA, but there's really a plethora of evidence that it's detrimental to their attitude about school, their grades, their self-confidence, their social skills and their quality of life**"** (Donaldson-Pressman et al., 2014, p. 4).

In addition to the stress that excessive homework puts on children, without academic gains, stress is partially experienced and transmitted via the family depending on the parent's SES. *The American Journal of Family Therapy* Study (Desjarlais et al., 2015) also examined the stress homework places on families and found as parent's confidence in their ability to help their child with homework went down, the stress in the entire household went up. Parents who completed college felt more confident, not necessarily in helping their child with homework, but in their ability to communicate with schools to make sure the homework level was appropriate to the child's age and grade level (Wallace, 2015). Parents who had not completed college believe that

> Their children are supposed to be able to do (homework), therefore, their children must
>
> be doing something else during school, instead of focusing on their studies. This belief
>
> translates into parents arguing with kids, kids feeling defeated and dumb and angry, very
>
> angry, and the parents are fighting with each other. It's absolutely a recipe for disaster.
>
> (Desjarlais et al., 2015)

The connection between parent demographics and homework stress is apparent in all SES groups, but more pronounced in families where parents do not have a college degree (Hoff et al., 2001). While middle-class parents are a diverse group, their unifying value, commitment to

education, is universal, regardless of the parent's educational attainment (Deckers et al., 2015). Middle class parents value and encourage educational performance in their children, however, if the parent does not have a college degree, that family is susceptible to up to 200% more conflicts during homework time (Donaldson-Pressman et al., 2014). This is due to the reality that parents who do not have a college degree report lower confidence, or self-efficacy, in supporting their child's homework experience.

Parental perceived self-efficacy is another important factor in family stress related to homework (Desjarlais et al., 2015). Self-efficacy as defined by Bandura (1997; Maddux, 2002) as "the person's sense of competence and confidence in executing behaviors that would achieve a desired outcome" (Buzukashvili et al., 2012, p. 408). Self-efficacy beliefs are strongly related to adaptive functioning in education, career, social relationships, and physical health (Bandura, 1997; Maddux, 2002). People with low self-efficacy often perceive experiences as more difficult than they are and are more prone to experience negative emotions such as "Stress, anxiety, depression, and manifested limited cognitive behavioral coping" (Pajaras, 1996, 2002). In contrast, parents with high perceptions of self-efficacy have been found to have reduced stress when dealing with difficult tasks and an overall increase in motivation to handle challenges (Bandura, 1997; Fogle, Huebner, & Laughlin, 2002; Hueber, Gilman, & Lughlin, 1999; Pajares & Schunk, 2001; Saarni, 2000; Zimmerman, 2000). Thus, the impact of parental self-efficacy on the homework experience between the elementary-aged child and parent is important and meaningful.

When parents feel they have greater efficacy to help their children with their homework, parents tend to engage more with their child's school and homework. When parents engage more with their child's homework, whether it is due to self-efficacy or a perceived need for help when

their child struggles academically, parents may believe they are helping their child, but, in reality, their assistance may cause tension or confusion for the child (Cooper et al., 2006). When parent's engagement in homework has negative undertones or is controlling in nature, children are more likely to experience negative academic outcomes in the form of lowered grades and self-confidence (Cooper, 2001; Donaldson-Pressman et al., 2014; Kohn 2006; Buell & Kravovec, 2001; Laureu & Weininger, 2009). "These negative outcomes could be related to higher parent child conflict surrounding homework, children's greater dislike of homework, and higher family stress related to homework" (Desjarlais et al., 2015, p. 299). In comparison, parents who are involved in homework in both limited and in positive ways (allowing children to take initiative, problem solve for themselves, focus on the joys of learning, only help when help is requested and needed) tend to have children that are higher achieving (Donaldson-Pressman et al., 2014).

The common practice of educators assigning homework to elementary-aged children and the unfortunate finding that homework is commonly associated with family stress calls for research that will investigate the lived experience of middle-class parents in relation to the emotional encounters that arise between them and their children as they facilitate their child's homework process. In the following section, I will provide an overview of the justification of the method utilized in this study in order to provide a foundation for the following chapter, Methodology.

**Justification of Phenomenology as a Method**

Lead field researchers in the arena of homework all comment in their quantitative studies that more research is needed on each socio-economic group to identify the less quantifiable, and more qualitative, perspective of the experience of homework from both the parental and student

perspective (Cooper, 2001; Donaldson-Pressman et al., 2014; Kohn, 2006; Buell & Kravovec, 2001; Lareau & Weininger, 2009).

To add to the existing body of knowledge, the phenomenological method will be utilized to gain awareness, knowledge, and understanding of the "essence" of the perspective of middle-class parents, regarding the emotions experienced between themselves and their children as they facilitate the homework process. The phenomenological approach makes it possible to understand the perspective of parents on the complexity of facilitating the homework process. Phenomenology is a methodological approach applied to veteran researchers that seeks to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning of everyday experience. Phenomenology is the reflective study of the essence of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view (Smith, 2007). The purpose of the utilization of the phenomenological method is to extract people's first person point of view so the experience of phenomena is understood at its starting point, while extracting from it the descriptions of each participant's essential experiences and the essence of what we experience. In this study, phenomenological methods will allow for the deep and thick description necessary to uncover the descriptions of the middle class parental perspective on the parent-child emotional experience of the homework process.

The utilization of phenenmological methods for this study allows me to use semi-structured, open-ended interviews, which provide an "informal, interactive process… aimed at invoking a comprehensive account of the person's experience of the phenomenon" (Moustakas, 1994, p.114). It focuses on capturing the *lived experience of the particpant* (Van Manen, 1990), which is the underpinning of phenomenology. Bunnell (2006) utilized a phenomenological study to describe parents' concepts and practices of involvement in the religious education of their children**.** His usegae of phenomenlogical interviewing practices unearthed the expressed

experience of his participants in order to provide an ideftification of themes related to parental involvement in the religious education of their children. The phenomenological interview is unique as it evokes "descriptions of lived-through moments, experiential anecdotal accounts, remembered stories of particular experiences, narrative fragments, and fictional experiences" (Adams & Van Manen, 2008, p. 618). In *Lived Expereinces of Elementary Principals: A Phenomenological Study of The Lived Experiences of Elemetanry Principals in Dual-Career Realtionships with Children*,  Kirk A. Zeeck (2012) effectively utlized the phenomenological - menological interview process to unearth hid findings that pricipals in dual-career relationships are unable to recognize the gap between their actual and percieved values due to a string commitment towards both their profession and family.

In the study *Beliefs of Families, Students, and Teachers Regarding Homework For Elementary-Aged Children* (Wright, 2010), which explores families, students and teachers beliefs about their experiences of homework completion, phenomenological methods helped illuminate the perceptions and lived experiences of parents. In a study that explored parental experience of parenting children with two homes, Laird (2008) also utilized phenomenological semi-structured open-ended interviews in order to view the human experience with the aim to describe as precisely as possible the pre-reflective lived experiences of parents as they present themselves to consciousness. In the current study, Phenomenological methods may extend previous studies on the emotional construct of homework experiences by focusing on middle-class parents and may garner insight and knowledge into the shared experience and conflict of middle class parents and children working on homework.

**Summary**

In this study, I will explore how middle-class parents describe the emotional experience of facilitating the homework process of their children, how they construct their role, and what meaning they attribute to that experience. Additionally, it will describe the participants' experiences with facilitating homework, and get a sense of the holistic experience, from the parents' descriptions.  It is important in this study to understand challenges, limitations, and attitudes toward homework from the perspective of middle-class parents, first-hand to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning of everyday homework experiences and the reflective essence of consciousness as experienced (Smith, 2007).

**Chapter 3: Methodology**

In this study, I used a phenomenological research design to explore the perceptions of middle-class parents in regard to the emotional construct of the homework process of their children. This chapter is divided into several sections that provide an overview of the study's purpose, research questions, design of the study, participants of the study, data collection methods, variables, data analysis procedures, limitations of the research design, validation of trustworthiness and credibility, expected findings, and ethical issues.

**Purpose of Study**

The purpose of the study was to explore how middle-class parents describe the emotional experience of facilitating the homework process of their children, how they construct their role, and what meaning they attribute to that experience. Additionally, the purpose was to describe the parents' experiences with facilitating homework and form an understanding of the experience from parent descriptions. This study sought to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning of everyday homework experiences and the reflective essence of consciousness as experienced firsthand from the middle-class parents' point of view (Smith, 2007).

**Research Question**

Utilizing Giorgi's (2012) modified version of Husserl's descriptive approach to phenomenology, this study explored the following primary research question from the middle-class parental perspective: How do middle-class parents who facilitate the homework process of their children describe the experience of the emotions encountered during the homework process?

**Research Sub-Questions**

1. What do middle-class parents perceive as strengths of the emotions they experience as they facilitate their children's homework process?

2. What do middle-class parents perceive as limitations of the emotions they experience as they facilitate their children's homework process?

**Research Design**

The aim of this study was to explore emotions parents experience while engaging in the homework process and the effect of these emotions on the process. In order to understand the nature of the homework process from the perspective of parents, this study utilized a descriptive phenomenological approach (Giorgi, 2012). Giorgi's phenomenology allowed the study to shed light on the essence of how middle-class parents who facilitate the homework process of their children experience the emotions sometimes encountered during the homework process. Using this method, the parents described their experiences without interpretation. It is through the utilization of descriptive concrete examples of the parents' experiences that a description of the experience, not cause, explanation, or interpretation, that the full essence of the experience can be understood. In descriptive phenomenology, the researcher acknowledges, "that there is a 'given' that needs to be described precisely as it appears and nothing is to be added to it nor subtracted from it" (Giorgi, 2012, p. 6). Descriptive phenomenology seeks to uncover and illuminate, while the mere act of describing an experience provides interpretations of our world from which valuable data about common experiences can be garnered.

**Research Population, Sampling Method, and Related Procedures**

**Research population**. The population consisted of parents of approximately 100 middle-class families whose elementary-aged children sought tutoring in a private tutoring program

located in an urban city in the Northwest. The selection of participants for this phenomenological

study required that parents are information rich and have experience with emotions that arise

through the process of homework completion with their children.

**Sampling method and sampling size**. I informed all 112 families of the target

population of the study's purpose and invited families to participate. Out of the 112 asked to

participate, 14 families responded and expressed interest in the study. I purposefully chose six

middle-class parents who, based on their interactions at the tutoring center, were information rich

with respect to emotional homework sessions with their children. The parents chosen were

"'*information rich* and illuminative,' that is, they offer[ed] useful manifestations of the

phenomenon of interest" (Patton, 2015, p. 46). The utilization of information rich parents in this

study was a crucial element in the effort to illuminate the experiences of middle-class parents as

they facilitate the homework process. In addition to needing parents rich with information, this

study required parents who were willing to share personal experiences about the emotions and

conflicts that can arise during homework facilitation. Open sharing about one's child and their

behaviors requires parents that are willing to be emotionally vulnerable while elaborating in

detail about the homework experience. As a result, six met the requirements of the study as

information rich with respect to emotional homework sessions with their children. Of the six

potential participants, only four were verbally expressive to the extent that they could provide

deep and rich descriptions of their homework experiences. Based on the definitions of middle

class I gleaned from the literature, I purposefully chose a middle-class parent who was born into

middle class, two who were college graduates, and one who had risen to middle class status but

was not a college graduate. As a result, the study had four middle-class parent participants whom

were information rich, verbally expressive, had a variety of different educational backgrounds, and qualified as middle-class families.

**Data Collection, Instrumentation, and Measurement Tools**

Data collection was instituted primarily with semi-structured, open-ended interviews in an effort to provide an "informal, interactive process…aimed at invoking a comprehensive account of the person's experience of the phenomenon" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 114). Data collection focused on capturing the *lived experience* (Van Manen, 1990), which is the underpinning of phenomenology. The phenomenological interview is unique, as it evokes "descriptions of lived-through moments, experiential anecdotal accounts, remembered stories of particular experiences, narrative fragments, and fictional experiences" (Adams & Van Manen, 2008, p. 618). In the phenomenological study, *Beliefs of Families, Students, and Teachers Regarding Homework For Elementary-Aged Children* (Wright, 2010), which explores the beliefs of families, students, and teachers in regard to their experiences of homework completion, open-ended interview questions in semi-structured interviews were utilized in order to illuminate the perceptions and lived experiences of parents. In a study that explored the parental experience of parenting children with two homes, Laird (2008) also utilized the phenomenological method of semi-structured, open-ended interviews in order to view the human experience with the aim to describe as precisely as possible the pre-reflective lived experiences of parents as they present themselves to consciousness.

I executed in-depth interviews with each parent (See Appendix D for interview protocol) until we reached a point of saturation (Patton, 2015). Merriam (2009) describes data saturation as an indicator of triangulation, where "the researcher begins to see or hear the same things over and over again, and no new information surfaces as you collect more data" (p. 219). During the

interview process, participants were asked questions in several different ways to ensure each participant had ample opportunity to address each question thoroughly. As a result, each participant in the study reached data saturation. The interviews were audio recorded for transcription. I engaged in member checking of the transcripts to allow parents to have an opportunity to add ideas or clarify thoughts while ensuring for internal validity, or credibility and triangulation. Maxwell (2004) defines member checking as

> The single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misrepresentation the meaning of what parents say and do and the perspective they have on what's going on, as well as being an important way of identifying your own biases and misunderstanding of what you observed (p. 11).

**Attributes.** The primary attribute that defined my study was the emotional construct of parental facilitation of the homework process. Emotions "are a response to what information means to an individual (i.e. whether that information has a valence of good/bad or desirable/undesirable to a person, in the greater context of their life)" (Karnaze, 2016). The body's response to that meaning is expressed through the physical sensation of feeling. It is emotions, often in the form of motivation, that move people to action and response. The importance of emotions in the parental facilitation of the homework process becomes an important attribute as parents and children experience emotions throughout the homework process. These emotions can drive students and parents to behave, act, think, or respond in a wide variety of ways.

The second attribute in my study was parent facilitation of the homework process. Parent facilitation of the homework process is a description of how parents become involved in their children's homework. That is, how parents choose to be involved, to what level of involvement,

and in what way they are involved in the homework process. An example of parent facilitation of homework could be as simple as a parent asking a child if they have homework, or could be as complex as a parent sitting down and completing homework with their child.

**Data analysis procedures**. The data analysis procedures utilized in this phenomenological study mimic the psychological phenomenological reduction process suggested by Husserl (1970) and refined by Giorgi (2012). The focus on the data analysis was descriptive analysis, rather than interpretive. Descriptive analysis focuses on the parent's lived experience without adding an interpretation of that experience by the researcher. For descriptive analysis, I employed Giorgi's four-step (2012) phenomenological reduction process to note general impressions related to the emotions parents encounter when helping their elementary-aged student with homework. First, I read transcripts of the parental interviews for general impressions related to the parent-child homework process. Analysis at this stage involved the notice, think, and collect process (Giorgi, 2012; Seidel, 1998). This initial read through was essential in the phenomenological process, as "the phenomenological process is holistic and so no further steps can be taken until the researcher has an understanding of what the data are like (Giorgi, 2012, p. 5).

Next, I sent copies of transcripts to parents to engage in member checking. Member checking is the process of parents verifying what they have said. It is an opportunity for them to clarify information and confirm their data in order to further provide validity to data before it is examined. Next, I returned to the beginning of the description, reread it, and indicated each time there was a shift in attitude. I divided the data into parts, or arbitrary units of meaning, which helped me to identify themes within the data across the parents. These meaning units (extracted in the form of direct phrases of the parents) revealed expressions that were directly related to the

conflicts present during the course of parental facilitation of the homework process. This process of transforming parental descriptions into revealing expressions is the heart of the phenomenological method, and it involves the method of "free imagination variation," which is deemed "critical for this completion" of the phenomenological process (Giorgi, 2012, p. 6).

Next, the "direct and psychologically more sensitive expressions [were] then reviewed, and with the help of free imagination variation and essential structure of the experience [was] written" (Giorgi, 2012, p. 6). From the process of free imagination, new themes emerged and data was coded and sorted to note these themes. This essential structure was used to help clarify the raw data of the research study and divide the data into thematic units.  These thematic units, or meaningful statements, reflected the lived experiences of the parent.

Phenomenology as a method seeks to "describe the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences from a concept or phenomenon"(Creswell, 2013, p. 119). Given that I hoped to study parents' lived experiences in relation to the emotional conflicts that arise as they facilitate the homework process for their children, I was interested in the commonality present in the descriptions of those human lived experiences.

Data Analysis procedures for this phenomenological study began while the study was in progress. Data was collected from 4 purposefully sampled parents using multiple in-depth, semi-structured open interviews. Each step of the data analysis procedures were be documented, and all data was be coded utilizing ATLAS.ti (2016). ATLAS.ti assisted me in providing qualitative thematic coding based on the codes and themes found during data analysis. These themes informed cross case analysis throughout the study and allowed for indicators of themes holistically common to lived experiences (Corbin & Strauss, 1998).

**Limitations of the Research Design**

The study was delimited to middle-class parents of elementary-aged students who sought tutoring services of an urban K–12 tutoring program. This selection of limiting the research population to parents of students in grades K–5 was deliberate in order to maintain a window of developmental behavior that may be common among students in elementary years.  One limitation of the study design revolved around the researcher as the primary instrument. Patton (2015) indicated the researcher neither manipulates the data nor predetermines the categories, themes, or variables throughout qualitative research that emphasizes a holistic approach.

**Trustworthiness and credibility**. In order for a qualitative researcher to establish credibility, they must first take into account all of the complexities of the study at hand and address problems that may not be easily explained (Ary, Jacobs, Sorenson, & Walker, 2010). For this study, addressing the main instrument of the study, myself, as a qualitative researcher was primary. I was the instrument of data collection, and therefore I had to establish trustworthiness and credibility.

I came to this research with my own biases that included, but were not limited to, my experiences, culture, subjective perception, expectations, and position. In the case of this study, my personal experience as a mother of two elementary-aged students who have homework could have created a personal bias. However, my personal experience with facilitating my children's homework has involved little emotional conflict. It was my lack of personal experience with children's emotions around homework completion in the home that partially drove me to conduct this study.

Creswell (2013) recommends two methods that are helpful for dealing with the threat of the researcher being the sole investigator. First, the research should involve outside qualified

investigators to peer-review data collection instruments and methods (Merriam, 2009). This enhances "the credibility of the study is established by turning to individuals external to the project..." (Creswell & Miller, 200, p. 128). External content experts reviewed and edited all interview questions to make sure they were clear and focused on the study at hand. The second method that was employed was collaboration. As Creswell and Miller (2000) state, "collaboration means the parents are involved in the study as co-researchers…" (p. 128). This involved member checking and sharing findings with parents. The researcher made all findings and data collected available for parental review.

Finally, to support the cultivation of trustworthiness and credibility each participant participated in interviews until all questions were answered and the participant began to repeat himself or herself. Looking for repetition of answers from participants is an indicator that the participants have reached data saturation (Creswell and Miller, 2000). Data saturation is an important part of triangulation, as it allows the researcher to know that all the information has been collected. Data saturation is specific to each individual and is only apparent when repetition begins to occur. Each participant was interviewed until data saturation was apparent to both the researcher and the participants.

**Researcher Position Statement**

I am a novice researcher at the university and the founder of the tutoring office that will be supplying the projected population under study. These two roles, while complementary in my profession, afforded me the dual role of both learner and leader. As a doctoral student, I spent the previous three years studying leadership in education with the hopes of supporting the families who utilize tutoring services in my office. This meant my intentions of my study and work in my office complemented one other. I am motivated to better support families in need as they

navigate the educational system, however, a risk of personal bias may have stemmed from these dual roles as well the previous involvements I may have already had with parents in the study. The parents already had a working professional relationship with me; one where I seemed to be an expert on the learning needs of their children and best practices for the implementation of their curriculum. These previously established relationships might have lent towards frankness and feelings of security between parents and myself. As a leader and learner, I had to make sure parents understood that their participation in the study did not impact (or was in any way directly related to) their student's services in my tutoring office.

To minimize bias and possible conflicts of role and interest related to my parents, I carefully bracketed out my biases before collecting data and after data collection. I maintained a bracketing journal, in which I would log entries pre and post each participant interview, as well as throughout the research study. This journal was exceedingly helpful in allowing me, as the researcher, to maintain my focus on my participant's experiences rather than my thoughts abut their experiences. The bracketing journal also allowed me to keep my participants experiences and the descriptions of their experiences at the forefront of my mind. In addition to an extensive bracketing journal utilized during data collection I also utilized the APA's Ethical Principles and Code of Conduct (American Psychological Association, 2015). All interview questions were in alignment with the APA's Ethical Principles, the data collection informed protocol, and analysis procedures were organized and analyzed according to the APA's Code of Conduct.

I recognize there may have been credibility margins based on both parent sampling and time constraints. Because I was studying the lived experiences of parents as they helped facilitate the homework process, my sample size was limited to the 103 middle-class families that have pursued private tutoring services in my office. In addition to the limitations of sample size, I

utilized purposeful sampling methods in order to identify four parents that are information rich. The time constraints associated with this study were specifically attributed to the traditional local public school calendar. Data collection took place during the fall months of the 2016 school year. This period of time was deliberately selected, as the researcher had 18 years of historical experience of many middle-class families looking for additional information and support with the homework process during this time in the school year. Hence, this time was an excellent time for the researcher to find parents who were not only information rich but who were also currently experiencing the phenomena under study.

As described in detail in my data collection and analysis procedures, I increased the credibility of the research and data by employing measures including bracketing, member checking, triangulation, and researcher reflection. I understood the results from this study were not generalizable, as qualitative phenomenological methods seek to illuminate a given phenomenon.

**Dependability**. To combat the influences of the researcher, the researcher used thick descriptions when reporting findings. A rich and thick description allowed the parents and other researchers to determine procedures and methods utilized at points in the research process. These thick descriptions provided dependability to parents and fellow researchers and allowed for readers to determine if the study was dependable. To further support dependability, parents engaged in member checking to verify all data gathered was an accurate account of their experiences. Finally, all interview questions were sent out to three educational professionals for an external audit to ensure questions were clear and reflected the purpose of this study.

**Ethical issues**. Potential ethical issues related to the study were reviewed, addressed and approved by the university's Internal Review Board. Research was not commenced until I received IRB approval.

In addition, parents were invited to participate as co-researchers to help illuminate the lived experience of middle-class parents as they facilitate the homework process. Co-researchers were informed of the purpose of the study and signed consent forms. These forms were submitted to the researcher prior to data collection. Co-researchers were encouraged to ask questions or seek clarification prior to signing the consent form, during the interview process, and after they gave consent to participate. Co-researcher's names were replaced with a number, and these numbers were saved on a password-protected file on the researchers' computer. Any confidential information, as deemed by the parent, remained confidential. In addition, co-researchers had the right to view and provide input on their interview transcripts, and could withdraw from the study at any point prior to the final report.

Throughout the data collection process, parents were asked to reflect on and describe their lived experience in relation to the emotional conflicts that arise as they facilitate their child's homework. Reflections on such experiences were not considered a risk beyond what parents would encounter in daily life.

Parents were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they could leave the study at any time without consequence. At the onset of data collection, I explained the purpose of my study, data collection procedures, and member checking so parents were aware of the level of commitment prior to enrolling in the study.

I kept data about parents on a secure server that was password protected. Second, I utilized pseudonyms in the form of numbers for parents; so actual names were never utilized in

the study. Finally, I aggregated and coded data collected via interviews and utilized these codes during data analysis to avoid reference to personal information while protecting parent's identities. All documentation was electronic and stored on my password-protected computer. All consent forms were scanned and stored electronically for at least three years following the study, however, upon completion of the study any links to personal information were deleted. After removing identifiable information, only interview transcriptions and field notes were kept on the password-protected computer for approximately three years.

**Transferability of Data**

Themes identified in this research study were views reflective of middle-class parents who facilitate the homework process of their children's homework, and how they describe the experience of the emotions encountered during the homework process. However, results were limited in scope and are not generalizable beyond the population interviewed due to the small sample size. Themes identified in this research study may be generalizable to other situations, but not necessarily to other parent-child collaborative situations. This study included depth of information of parent's lived experiences, but not breadth in terms of parents and grade levels.

**Expected Findings**

The researcher is a parent who has two children, and thus had personal experiences with her own children around homework completion. As a phenomenological researcher, I suspended all personal expectations for the findings and analyzed data with the view of wanting to understand the actual experiences of my co-researchers. In order to do this prior to interviews, this researcher engaged in bracketing and answered interview questions in order to recognize personal biases. Once biases were identified as the researcher, I made a conscious decision to suspend those biases while exploring the experiences of my co-researchers. Biases were

addressed through bracketing and were suspended in order to have a fresh view of the lived experiences of the co-researchers.

In addition to any personal bias, the extensive readings undertaken to formulate this study impacted the researcher's perspective. While I was unsure as to what to expect from the findings of this study, my research perspective informed my belief that homework between parent and child may be a source of significant emotions. The emotions that arise during homework completion between parent and child may be different than those that arise between an educator and student due to the specific and unique attachment between parent and child.

**Summary**

This chapter describes the research methodology while providing a rational for how this design aligns appropriately with this study's problem and research question. The research question to be explored is: How do middle-class parents who facilitate the homework process of their children describe the experience of the emotions encountered during the homework process? Details in this chapter include the purpose and design of the study, sampling methods and procedures, instrumentation, data collection, data analysis procedures, limitations of the research design, credibility, dependability, transferability of data, ethical considerations, and mitigation strategies. The purpose of this chapter is to provide reviewers and other researchers enough information to critique and replicate this study for future contributions to the field of education with regard to the overall homework experience from the parental perspective.

**Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results**

Parent-child conflict, often instigated by homework, remains one of middle-class parents' largest complaints about their child's educational experience (Cooper, 2001; Kohn, 2006; Donaldson-Pressman et al., 2014). Homework has been cited as a common source of stress and conflict between parents and children and many families struggle with emotional homework sessions. In this study, a descriptive phenomenology method was employed to explore emotions experienced between middle-class parents and their elementary-aged child as they facilitate the homework process. The phenomenological interview methods used invoked deep and thick reflections from participants to uncover the essence of the middle-class parent perspectives on the parent-child emotional experience imbedded in the homework process.

This chapter begins with a description of the sample and an overview of the research methodology and analysis. A summary of findings is followed by a presentation of descriptive data. Data is presented first with an overview of parents' prior experiences with homework. Next, emanating emotional themes are presented in a descriptive narrative that reflects the words used by participants, followed by a description of the phenomenological essence of the lived experience of homework facilitation, as understood based on the phenomenological analysis process.

**Description of the Sample**

The sampling of parent participants occurred at a tutoring center, which serves over 100 middle-class families and a few working-class families. Out of the 17 parents who volunteered to participate in the study, I purposefully selected four middle-class parents who, based on their interactions at the tutoring center, were information rich in respect to emotional homework sessions with their children The sample consisted of four adult female mothers between the ages

of 34–47 years old, with varying education levels that ranged between some college to completion of graduate school. All mothers in this study were married, cohabitating with the father of their children, and had children enrolled in elementary school for the 2016–2017 school year. The parents selected to participate were "*information rich* and illuminative, that is, they offer[ed] useful manifestations of the phenomenon of interest"(Patton, 2015, p. 46). The utilization of information rich parents in this study was a crucial element in the effort to illuminate the emotional experiences of middle-class parents as they facilitate the homework process. This phenomenological study required participants who were information rich and had experience with the emotions and conflicts that can arise through the facilitation of their child's homework. It is the detailed descriptions from information rich participants that illuminated and helped unearth the lived experience of the emotions parents contend with during the homework experience.

**Research Methodology and Analysis**

The aim of this study was to explore emotions parents experience while engaging in the homework process and the effect of these emotions on the process. In order to understand the nature of the homework process, from the perspective of parents, this study utilized a descriptive phenomenological approach (Giorgi, 2012). Giorgi's phenomenology allowed the study to shed light on the essence of how middle-class parents who facilitate the homework process of their children experience the emotions sometimes encountered during the homework process. Using this method, the parents described their experiences without interpretation. It is through the utilization of descriptive concrete examples of the parents' experiences that a description of the experience, not cause, explanation, or interpretation, that the full essence of the experience can be understood. In descriptive phenomenology, the researcher acknowledges, "that there is a

"given" that needs to be described precisely as it appears and nothing is to be added to it nor subtracted from it" (Giorgi, 2012, p. 6). Descriptive phenomenology seeks to uncover and illuminate, while the mere act of describing an experience provides interpretations of our world from which valuable data about common experiences can be garnered.

This study utilized the descriptive phenomenology method (Giorgi, 2012) to explore emotions experienced between middle-class parents and their children as they facilitate the homework process. Descriptive phenomenology allows the researcher and participants to utilize language to describe, in detail, their individual experiences. These individual experiences are analyzed for themes that appear across all of the participant's experiences with the aim of looking for the commonality of the experience. Giorgi (1997) explains data analysis as follows:

> While a structure can be based upon one subject or many, it is desirable to use several subjects. However, it is likely that a study with many subjects will produce several typical structures rather than only one. That is, for the sake of simplicity, a researcher should always try to derive a single structure (synthesis) for all subjects in the study. However, it is not a requirement of phenomenological research, and one should never force the data into a single structure.  One does it only if the data lend themselves to the process. Otherwise, one writes as many structures as required. For example, if a study is conducted with five subjects, the results could be a single structure or five structures— one for each subject—or any number in between (p. 243).

The research began with the goal of exploring emotions that parents and children experience during homework completion, and the study's research questions were translated into common language to be used as interview questions. These interview questions were vetted through a group of three experts in the field of elementary education: a school psychologist, a

speech language pathologist, and a veteran teacher. All three provided feedback on both content of questions and wording of questions, with the aim of eliciting detailed descriptions from the participants. The interview questions (see Appendix D) were then revised and resubmitted to the experts for a second round of input. This second round did not generate any further input and the interview questions remained unchanged after the second round of expert feedback.

After interview questions were vetted and clarified, the process of self-bracketing was conducted. Bracketing is a method of demonstrating the validity of the data collection and analysis process (Chan, Fung, & Chien, 2013). In bracketing, the researcher answered the interview questions in order to recognize bias in personal or past judgments about the topic under study and thereby be able to control those biases. Giorgi (2012) describes the process of bracketing as assuming the right attitude to view data through the eyes of the participants. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with each participant until data saturation was apparent. Three of the participants participated in face-to-face interviews, while one participant was interviewed via video call. Data was audio recorded for each interview, then transcribed and entered into Atlas.ti (2017) for coding.

Once all data was transcribed, the researcher read the data as a whole to get a sense for the overall experiences of emotions experienced during the facilitation of homework completion. A second reading in which the researcher noted a transition in meaning or experience in each individual transcript followed this initial reading. The data was then coded by separating out direct quotations drawn directly from the words of each participant. These phrases became the essential structure to describe and understand the lived experience of each participant and to illuminate any individual or common themes of the overall experience of homework facilitation. These themes, identified through oral descriptions of each participant's experience, became the

framework for description of the raw data in this study. These themes were further refined and quotes illustrating themes were extracted directly from the data. Data analysis was completed through a review of the themes; supporting quotes associated with these themes were used to describe the essence of the parental perspective on the lived experience of the emotions encountered during homework facilitation and completion.

     **Bracketing**. In order to unearth meanings within data, researchers must maintain an open attitude to let meanings emerge (Giorgi, 2011). In descriptive phenomenology, bracketing is utilized as a methodological device of inquiry that requires the researcher to deliberately set aside their beliefs about the phenomena under investigation in order to focus the experiences of participants (Chan et al., 2013). Bracketing is a method of demonstrating the validity of data collection and analysis process in descriptive phenomenological studies.

     In order to bracket, Giorgi (1997) suggests the researcher must first step back from the phenomena and examine its presence. First, the phenomena of conflict and emotions elicited during homework facilitated by a parent have to be accepted as real by the researcher. It is experienced in some way, and that experience becomes the reality of the person who is experiencing it. In order to achieve suspension of the researcher's own perceived reality regarding the phenomena, the central researcher began the study by engaging in the process of bracketing.

     Bracketing began with the researcher answering each of the research questions and all interview questions, in order to identify areas of bias, or areas in which the researcher had certain expected outcomes. Answering research and interview questions provided an opportunity for the researcher to recognize and then put aside personal expectations and experiences so the focus of the study could remain on the experiences of the participants.

Bracketing continued throughout the study in the form of an ongoing audio bracketing journal. This bracketing journal was utilized before and after each interview to acknowledge the state of mind of the researcher before and after data collection. This bracketing journal proved to be very helpful for the central researcher to set aside personal thoughts and ideas about the phenomena at hand and to focus on the participant being interviewed. This audio bracketing journal was also helpful for maintaining consistency in regard to interview protocols. Before each interview, interview protocols were reviewed via the bracketing journal to acknowledge the interview procedure. Post interview, the bracketing journal was utilized to reflect on the experience and as a source to note areas for follow up or clarification.

**Interview process**. The researcher conducted semi-structured, open-ended interviews with four participants. These interviews were designed in an effort to provide an "informal, interactive process… aimed at invoking a comprehensive account of the person's experience of the phenomenon" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 114). Interviews focused on capturing the *lived experience* (Van Manen, 1990), which is the goal of phenomenological research. The phenomenological interview is unique, as it evokes "descriptions of lived-through moments, experiential anecdotal accounts, remembered stories of particular experiences, narrative fragments, and fictional experiences" (Adams & Van Manen, 2008, p. 618).

After participants had been selected for participation in the study, each was scheduled for an in-person, one-on-one, audio-recorded interview. These interviews lasted for a total of 90 minutes each. The interviews consisted of the questions listed in Appendix D. Some of the abbreviated versions of the questions are listed below of immediate reference.

**Lived Experience Questions**

1. Please describe your experience with homework when you were in elementary school.

2. Describe what the homework process in your home looks like.

3. Tell me about your experiences with your child and homework.

4. Think about any positive effects the homework experience has on your family. Can you describe those positive effects to me?

5. Think about any negative effects the homework experience has on your family. Can you describe these negative effects to me?

6. How does your historical perspective on homework impact interactions with and expectations for your child during the homework process?

7. How do you perceive your ability to manage and organize homework sessions?

After completion of each interview, the audio recording of the interview was transcribed and all identifying information about participants was removed. Once transcription was complete, the original audio file was deleted. All participants were sent copies of their transcript in order to engage in member checking. Member checking gave each participant the opportunity to review the transcript and offer any corrections, clarifications, or changes. This also allowed the opportunity for the participant to omit information that was not deemed appropriate for the final report.

While all participants were invited to engage in member checking, interestingly, none of the four participants decided to review or read their transcripts. Each participant responded to the member checking invitation by declining (in writing) their desire to reread the transcripts. Participant One (P1) said she declined to read her transcript as she felt "It would be similar to

watching myself on TV." When asked to elaborate on this thought, she clarified that "watching

one's self is an awkward and uncomfortable thing to do" and that she felt comfortable she had

been "frank and accurate" in her interview. As a result, she had no interest in going back and

rereading her transcripts. The second participant (P2) shared that she declined member checking

as she found "the experience of the interview as cathartic for me. I guess I feel that reviewing the

transcripts would take away from the clarity the interview has given me." When asked to

elaborate on this thought, she explained as follows:

> Hearing myself answer your questions and talking about homework with you made me
>
> see the situation from another perspective. It started to click for me that there were
>
> changes I could make so that my negative homework experiences with my kid, was less,
>
> you know… negative. I guess I just feel I learned something through this process and I
>
> don't want to undo that...

The other two participants sent simple declining emails. One stated, "Thank you for

sharing the transcript, but I feel no need to review the document. Best wishes for your study; I

was glad to participate!" The other stated she was busy and didn't feel the need to review the

transcript.

**Steps of Data Analysis**

In this phenomenological study, data analysis was conducted while the study was in

progress. The data analysis procedures utilized in this phenomenological study mimic the

psychological phenomenological reduction process suggested by Husserl (1970) and refined by

Giorgi (2012).  The focus on the data analysis was descriptive analysis, rather than interpretive.

Descriptive analysis focuses on the parent's lived experience without adding an interpretation of

that experience by the researcher. For descriptive analysis,  Giorgi's four-step (2012)

phenomenological reduction process was utilized to note general impressions related to the emotions parents encounter when helping their elementary-aged student with homework. First, transcripts of the parental interviews were read for general impressions related to the parent-child homework process. Analysis at this stage involved the notice, think, and collect process (Giorgi, 2012; Seidel, 1998). This initial read through was essential in the phenomenological process, as "the phenomenological process is holistic and so no further steps can be taken until the researcher has an understanding of what the data are like (Giorgi, 2012, p. 5).

Next, the researcher sent copies of transcripts to parents to engage in member checking. Member checking is the process of parents verifying what they have said, and presented an opportunity for them to clarify information and confirm their data in order to further provide validity to data before it was examined. Next, the researcher returned to the beginning of the description, reread it, and indicated each time there was a shift in attitude. The data was divided into parts, or arbitrary units of meaning, which helped the researcher to identify themes within the data across parental interviews. These meaning units (extracted in the form of quotes from participants) revealed descriptions that were directly related to the conflicts present during the course of parental facilitation of the homework process. This process of transforming parental descriptions into revealing expressions is the heart of the phenomenological method, and it involves the method of "free imagination variation," which is deemed "critical for this completion" of the phenomenological process (Giorgi, 2012, p. 6).

Next, the "direct and psychologically more sensitive expressions [were] then reviewed, and with the help of free imagination variation and the essential structure of the experience [was] written" (Giorgi, 2012, p. 6). From the process of free imagination, new themes emerged and data was coded and sorted to note these themes. This essential structure was used to help clarify

the raw data of the research study and divide the data into thematic units.  These thematic units, or meaningful statements, reflected the lived experiences of the participants.

Phenomenology as a method seeks to "describe the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences from a concept or phenomenon" (Creswell, 2013, p. 119). Given that the researcher hoped to study the lived experiences of parents in relation to the emotional conflicts that arise as they facilitate the homework process for their children, this researcher was interested in the commonality present in the descriptions of those lived human experiences.

Data analysis procedures for this phenomenological study began while the study was in progress. Data was collected from four purposefully sampled parents using multiple in-depth, semi-structured open interviews. Each step of the data analysis procedures were documented, and all data was coded utilizing ATLAS.ti (2016). ATLAS.ti assisted in organizing qualitative thematic coding based on the codes and themes found during data analysis. These themes informed cross case analysis throughout the study and allowed for indicators of themes holistically common to the participants lived experiences (Corbin & Strauss, 1998).

**Summary of the Findings**

General impressions gleaned from coding revealed prominent themes that were experienced by all four participants. The themes identified were creation of homework routine, emotional themes of stress and resistance, and finally parental role construction.  While these themes may be separated thematically, data coding revealed the interconnectedness of these themes. For example, while the families' homework routine may be set, in all four families the routine had been crafted around avoidance of the emotions of stress and resistance, the

homework routine had been impacted heavily by the parents' own historical perspectives on homework and their current role construction as a parent facilitator of homework.

## Presentation of Data and Results

The following sections of this chapter will provide an overview of themes that emanated: the creation of a homework routine, the emotional experiences of resistance and stress, and the parental role construction of the participants of the study. A    description of the limitations and strengths of the emotions experienced between parents and children as they facilitate the homework experience will also be provided.

## Theme: Creation of a Homework Routine

**Prior experience and expectations of participants.** All participants were interviewed about their historical experience with elementary homework. I was curious to learn about my participants and what their experience with their own homework had been like in elementary school. All four participants reported not having any regular, or daily, homework through their elementary school years. Even after multiple probes and asking the questions several different ways and at different times during the interview process, all participants were adamant that they didn't have homework as an elementary student.  P1 stated, "I can't remember doing homework." P2 said, " I don't recall my parents being involved (in homework). I didn't really have any." P3 stated, " I don't remember receiving homework. If I did, I did it by myself." P4 stated, after multiple probes to get her to recall homework, "I didn't have any homework in elementary school." After multiple probes to think back on their experience, each participant could only recall one specific homework experience from elementary school. Each of these singular experiences was a recollection of a single project that was to be completed by the student at home. These projects ranged from book reports to social studies dioramas to state reports.

When asked to describe the process of doing these projects, each participant stated the homework was completed independently and parents had little to nothing to do with the experience. Participants made it clear that they had no memory of interacting with their parents on these projects. The projects were completed without the help of parents. Each participant was adamant that this one example of elementary homework was an assignment that they recalled planning and completing on their own. Participants were clear that not only were their parents "Not involved" or "not aware" of the project, but that the expectation that their parent would help with the project was "laughable," P1; "ridiculous," P2; "wasn't going to happen," P3; or "Not possible," P4. In addition, participants clarified that homework was something that "rarely" or "almost never" happened and that when it did, their parents had very little to do with the facilitation of the homework experience, process, or project completion.

**Lived experience of the homework routine.** While all four participants reported having little to no homework themselves as a child, each participant expressed their belief in the importance of having a regular homework routine for their child. All four participants had set up regular windows of time in which their child's homework was to be completed. These arranged windows of homework time were identified by each parent based on the family's routine and schedule, and with the goal of completing the homework. In addition, each family had a system of indicating that the homework routine would begin shortly. Each participant believed that assuming a positive attitude in the form of a positive disposition and helpful prompts before the start of homework time could have a positive impact on the homework experience. In P3's family, the mother used verbal reminders alerting the children that homework would begin in a designated time. In P2's family, the mother says she "deliberately takes on a positive attitude" when it comes time to let her children know homework time will be starting soon. In P1's

family, the mother asks about homework on the way home from school and reminds the children that when they get home they are to start homework. She says this process helps to "mentally prepare them" for homework by reminding them that when they get home the children must go straight to homework, instead of going straight to playtime. This mother believes these prompts helps mentally prepare her children for homework time by clarifying her expectations. In P4's family, the mother asks about homework on the car ride home from school, but then upon arrival home the mother states, "As soon as she gets home, I open the backpack. I see what the homework is."

Homework routine in each of the participants' families involved a designated time and space for homework, and the inclusion of each parent "preparing the child" for homework time with verbal reminders, as described above. In addition, each family indicated they had designated their homework time window based on the need "to get homework done so we can do our family things." In some families, that meant waiting for neighbors and extended family to vacate the home, and in other families it meant not seeing neighbors and extended family until homework was completed. In either situation, participants made it clear they felt the need to prioritize their child's entire afternoon schedule based on homework routine, rather than on family or personal needs.

While homework routine was a prevalent theme in this study, it should be noted that deeper probing of homework routine indicated that all participants are more involved in homework than simply making time for homework, reminding children it is time to start, and giving them the time and space to complete the task. Parents reported being actively involved in their child's homework. This active involvement in their child's homework manifested in many

forms. However, regardless of form, each involvement seemed to involve some type of emotional response between parent and child.

For example, when parents were giving verbal reminders that homework time was eminent, each participant expressed that while they "try to remain positive about homework time" the children often respond in a negative manner to the homework reminder. These negative responses were in the form of the child whining, complaining, reluctance to start homework time, refusal to start homework, hiding homework, yelling, and physical refusal to come to the designated homework area. In the family of P1, when probed for details of negative responses given when the mother indicates homework time, she stated that they manifested mostly in questions from the children as to why they had to do homework. P1 described these conversations as "smart ways to avoid work." P2 explained that when she prompts her child to start homework, she is met with contention and many negative responses. "My son has taken on his role of being disrespectful. So, I get a lot of "shut up," or "you're a jerk," or "don't tell me what to do." P3 describes her child's reluctance to start homework as manifesting in both a physical response and an extensive list of reasons the child provides on why they can't start or do the homework.

My child becomes limp. Puts her head on the table and says I can't do this. This is boring. My eyes are tired. My brain hurts. My head hurts. My stomach hurts. I have to go to the bathroom. I'm hungry.

In the family of P4, verbal reminders to start homework are faced with comments like " I don't want to do this. I hate this. Why do I have to do this?" Participants reported these responsive behaviors as typical and as happening frequently. Participants also reported that these negative responses to their positive reminders that it is homework time, often made parents feel "they

were preparing for battle," or were "being punished" for trying to help their child meet their academic responsibilities. The responses to these reminders were, in general, the start of a "negative and stressful experience." P2 described her household's feelings when her positive requests to start homework are met with resistance.

> We have elevated anxiety in the house. I think, oh gosh. We have to get this done. There's this time frame. We've got to have this work done. They respond with "I don't want to do it." And that's stressful, because they're upset. It is stressful because I will potentially end up getting upset because I often do end up feeling frustrated or upset after homework is done.

Another example of active parental involvement in their children's homework was the dichotomy of independence and dependence. Each participant expressed their desire to have their child be able to complete their homework independently. Parents expressed that homework that required parental assistance, explanation, or help were major sources of stress and emotional conflict between parent and child. While they wanted to help and support their child's learning, most parents were uncertain about how much support and what type they should be providing. In these families, parents sat with children while they completed homework. These parents expressed if they didn't sit with their child during homework, the work would not be completed. Other parents did not sit with children during homework time, but were close by "at arms length" and kept themselves "completely available to help, if they want or need it." In either situations, with the parents sitting at the table while the child worked, or if they were nearby in arms reach, parents expressed the desire for their child to be able to manage and complete their homework without parental assistance, but felt that "it simply was not possible (for their child) to get their homework done on their own."

This desire for their children to be able "to do homework on their own" was strong and repetitively communicated by all participants. However, it was not stronger than the belief that if the parent didn't facilitate, oversee, and be available during the entire homework process, the homework would not be completed. P4 described her confusion over her role and the expected level of independence as follows:

Am I supposed to be there the whole time? What's my guideline? Am I supposed to be sitting here 15 minutes a day with them? How do I do this as their facilitator? I don't think I have to be doing this, but I feel like I have to be doing it. It's kinda confusing, you know, what is expected of me as a parent.

P1 also expressed her confusion over independence and the level of involvement she was meant to provide when her children needed homework help:

I don't know if I'm supposed to be telling them the right answer or just saying that it's wrong. How are they supposed to send in their homework? Is it supposed to be 100% correct or is it supposed to be their own work? That's a little confusing.

Parents were fully aware of both their desire for their child to be able to do their homework independently and the competing reality of the belief that their children were not capable of independent homework completion. This dichotomy of wanting a homework experience that their children could enjoy independently while consistently involving themselves in the homework process was not lost on the interviewed parents. This active involvement in their child's homework was a confusing role for each parent, and all participants repeatedly expressed the desire that their child have homework that they need little to no assistance completing.

**Theme: Emotions of Resistance and Stress Experienced**

**Prior experience of participants: resistance and stress.** All participants reported not having any memories or recollections of emotions associated with their own experience of homework in elementary school. All participants pointed out that they felt this was reflective of the fact they didn't have homework in elementary school. All of four of my participants explained that even if they had been assigned homework as a child, their parents would never have been involved. When probed about why they believed their own parents wouldn't have been involved in their homework (had there been some), the responses all described that their parents were either too busy, not interested, or would have told them it was their (the child's) homework, not their (the parents) homework. One would think that if the interviewed parents didn't have homework as children and also believed that if they did have homework, their parent's would not have been involved, those prior experiences and expectations in regard to homework would impact the expectations and experiences they have with their own children.

**Lived experience of resistance.** All participants expressed that they are faced with their child's resistance to starting, doing or completing homework on a regular basis. Each mother explained she had to adjust her behaviors and attitude before the start of homework so as to be more positive in anticipation of the resistance she could possibly face. Each mother described in detail the resistance they faced when trying to have their children start or continue the homework process. P2 stated,

> I am a very positive mother. I'm like, "It's homework time, I can help you." But it takes
> almost an hour sometimes of me pushing, pushing, trying to get them to start homework,
> and I get yelled at. My kid is like, "No, I don't want to. I'm too tired. Don't tell me what

to do," or "shut up"… then there is the yelling. It's always the yelling. I don't think we have had a night where I haven't lost it because he's not doing his homework.

P3 described trying to get her children to the table to start homework as follows:

It can take 20 minutes or it can take an hour, depending on how long they are distracted, whining, disinterested, crying, or fighting with me. They fuss, they whine, they often cry. They refuse to do their homework. I'd say every time we have to sit down to do homework there is some sort of protest

P4 also described the resistance she faces in trying to get her children to do homework:

It gets to the point where I have to raise my voice and I yell. They see I am serious and then they'll quiet down. I give them plenty of warnings. I try to do what I need to do to keep it positive, but then it gets to the point where I need to yell. So I do, and then they are quiet and will get their work done.

Even when each mom tried to present a positive attitude, the child's resistance to start and complete homework was a consistent theme that permeated each participant's experience in the study. Resistance was identified by participants not just at the start of homework sessions, but also as being prevalent throughout the homework process.

**Lived experience of stress**. While all participants experienced and described child-based resistance towards homework, the interviewed parents' main emotional experience was the excessive amount of stress they felt their entire family experienced as a result of the elementary-aged homework experience. This was not a surprise, as a review of the literature indicates stress related to homework is the largest reported source of academic stress in elementary-aged children's family's lives (Loveless, 2014).

Parental descriptions of stress experienced between them and their children during homework revolved around the resistance their children express, the amount of time homework takes, the impact of stress on other family activities, and their belief that homework appears to be a "unnecessary busy work." The stress related to the resistance of children to start or complete their homework was fully described above. The parents try and take on a positive attitude towards homework completion, they prompt their children when it is homework time, and they are met with resistance to start or complete homework, which results in arguments and generates stress. It should be noted that while the process of homework facilitation looks like stress would enter at the resistance phase of homework, the reality is that all of the participants prepared themselves for stress before the start of homework time. P3 explained the stress she feels before they start homework, "I take a deep breath and realize I'm most likely in for a battle and that I need to go in and make sure that I'm in a good, calm place. So when I do sit them down to do homework I'm not exasperated before it's over." P1 said, "How do I feel stress? I think for me, actually, it's the anticipation of a battle. I don't know if it is going to come. The walking on eggshells is tough." The result is, these parents are spending four school days a week approaching homework from a stress perspective even before homework has begun. One participant explained, "I feel like I've been living in a homework nightmare for, like, ten years." This would seem excessive or reactive to some people, but these stress perspectives are based on their actual experience of facilitating their own child's homework. This perspective is based on their lived experience.

Parents also described quite a bit of stress when discussing the amount of time the homework process takes. Many families struggle to balance extra-curricular activities, family time, and homework. A study released in August of 2015 in *The American Journal of Family*

*Therapy* found that elementary students are getting significantly more homework than the recommended amount (*American Journal of Family Therapy*, 2015). In response to studies revealing that students were spending excessive amounts of time on homework, The National Education Association (NEA) and the National Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) created and agreed upon the standard referred to as the "10-minute rule" (NEA, 2015). This rule states that students should get 10 minutes of homework per grade level per night. This means a first grader would have about 10 minutes a night of homework, and second graders would have 20 minutes per night, with an additional 10 minutes added on for each grade level (NEA, 2015).

These guidelines for time on homework are researched based in regard to what children at each age should be able to do independently at home. However, in this study, interview questions on quantity of homework revealed that all families in the study regularly had at least two times the recommended amount of homework per grade level. Two of the four families reported up to five times the amount of homework recommended by the PTA. In addition, the amount of time participants reported their family spends on homework did not include the battles of resistance that all participants reported. If these were calculated into the entire time, the facilitation of homework for the families interviewed, and for any other family that experiences resistance at homework time, the suggested grade level time on homework is exceeded by a minimum of three times the daily-recommended time.

The emotional battles parents endure with their children can set the stage for absorbing large amounts of after school family time. All participants reported that time spent on the homework routine detracted from family activities, and impacted the overall mood of the family. P3 is a stay at home mom whose children come home directly after school. She explained that

It just gets frustrating because it (homework) really does shut down the afternoon. We set aside 20 to 30 minutes to do homework, but it ends up taking 40 minutes to an hour. That is 40 minutes to an hour of our very short amount of time at home together at the end of the day. We could have used that amount of time doing other activities together.

P1's children stay after school in a daycare program until their mother gets off work. Her children often do not arrive home until 5:00–5:30 P.M., just about 2.5 hours before the children's bedtime. She explains that adding homework to her families' already busy lives is complicated.

Just fitting it in the schedule and getting it done and rushing. It always seems to kind of boil down to a rushed situation and that just creates stress that they don't need. For me, I have to be on top of it (homework). One more thing I feel responsible for added to my list…then there is this emotional battle, it just wears me out. It wears the whole family out. We are all jumping from something to something. That's my feeling about homework these days. There are just so many hours in the day.

P3 expressed how after homework consumes a good portion of their afternoon, the emotional battle of homework seeps into other areas of family life, impacting the overall family mood. P3 states, "It creates extra challenges for us at home and can often make other activities, bedtime activities, more difficult. Bath time activities are more difficult. [It is] because they are annoyed and frustrated and looking for ways to express that annoyance."

P4 expressed that her child's forth grade homework can easily take three hours from start to finish. The time span does not include the time the mother spends on resistance or emotional conflicts before any work actually commences. She stated her desire to have less stressful afternoons with her children:

I think they need their downtime and they need to just play. It would be nice just as a

family to not have to battle every night, or just stress about something. I don't like having

to constantly facilitate them doing homework because there's strife in our relationships

when it comes to evening time. We don't have a calm evening in our house. I guess part

of it is, and I just realized this now, I like to relax in the evening. I want to sit and read or

watch a show with my kids. Make dinner and have this calm experience. I don't want to

have to take an hour and half, or more, of time to force my kid to do homework. I feel

like it takes away from our family time.

All four participants expressed not only the desire to not have to endure the stress and

conflict associated with facilitating their child's homework, but also the belief that most of the

homework sent home was busy work. Participants were all aware of what their child was able to

do or not do academically, and felt comfortable gauging whether or not the homework sent home

was "busy work" or "meaningful activities." All participants shared the concern that they see

very few meaningful activities come home as homework, and that they view most homework

coming home as busy work.

The impact of busy work was communicated in the form of emotional resistance and

stress in each of the families. P4 said, "The biggest problem is the busy work. Sometimes I feel

like they're sending home this busy work and I'm like, "why?" It is not necessary." P1 explained

that when she gets stressed during homework time she tries to relieve her stress by reminding

herself the homework should be easy for her advanced student, "I think, oh my gosh! I know

he's so well above what they're asking him to do and the teacher knows it!" While this strategy

may be helpful to her, in that it reassures her that her child is able to easily complete his

schoolwork, she still felt that the homework was a waste of time and mainly was comprised of

busy work. P3 expressed that she didn't feel the busywork was helpful in solidifying knowledge due to the major emotional battles they have each day over homework completion. "His homework is mostly repetitive worksheets that they have to do again, after already doing them in class. They have to come home and redo them at home. I get frustrated and then I start to feel guilty because I'm pushing him into doing this when I know very well that it is not doing a lot to cement any knowledge that he may have got over the day."

Parents' descriptions of stress experienced between them and their children during homework revolved around the resistance their children communicate, the amount of time homework takes, the impact of stress on other family activities, and their belief that homework appears to be a "unnecessary busy work."

**Theme: Parental Role Construction**

**Prior experience and expectations of participants.** All participants were interviewed about their historical experience with elementary homework. I was curious to learn about my participants and what their experience with their own homework was like in elementary school. Fascinatingly enough, all four participants reported not having any regular, or daily, homework through their elementary school years. When probed to think back on their experience, participants could only recall one homework experience from elementary school. Each of these singular experiences were recollections of a single project. These projects ranged from book reports to social studies dioramas or state reports.

When asked to describe the process of doing the report, each participant stated the report was completed independently and parents had little to nothing to do with the project. Participants made it clear that they had no memory of interacting with their parents on these projects; the projects were completed without the help of parents. Participants also clarified that homework

was something that "rarely" or "almost never" happened and when it did, their parents had very little to do with the facilitation of the homework experience, process, or project completion.

In essence, each of the participants had very little prior experience either having their homework facilitated by parent or facilitating homework for a child. All participants also expressed that homework was completed independently without any or much help from their parents. P3 explained,

> I think because I had a very easy go of homework, that homework wasn't tedious because there was so little of it. Sometimes I have that same expectation of my kids. That they should be able to just get home, knock it out, be done with it and move on. I think that my experience not being as academically rigorous as theirs probably has some impact on how I perceive homework.

**Lived experience of parental role construction.** In the absence of a historical model of what homework looks like between a parent and a child, each participant was creating their parental role in the facilitation of their child's homework. While each participant felt comfortable and confident that they could accurately gauge whether their child's homework was too difficult or too easy, they each expressed concern over how involved they should actually be in their child's homework experience. The main themes of concern in parental role construction were the parents concern about their uncertainty of the teachers' expectations of parental involvement and the child's level of independence during homework time. It appears as if each participant is both creating their role while simultaneously questioning whether or not it is an appropriate role.

In the theme of role construction all participants expressed their dislike of having to facilitate their child's homework experience and their very strong preference that elementary-aged children to not be assigned homework. However, participants described their reason for

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having their child complete homework as rather singular. They felt that, while they did not see any academic benefits to homework and that it is a major source of stress and conflict in the home, they were having their children complete homework because the teacher was assigning it. In essence, each parent was seeing the teacher as an external authority that could send homework for the child to complete. As a result, the parents felt it to be their role to enforce the teacher requirements.

Participants' descriptions in relation to the concept of an external authority assigning homework, and their desire to meet that requirement, are telling. P2 said "I feel like I take on their homework as a stress for me. That if they aren't going to get it done, that it looks poorly on me as a mother." In essence, she felt her child's homework completion reflected on her as a mother. Each participant expressed similar feelings. P4 said,

> Sometimes I am wondering why I am making such a big deal? And I think it must come from my own feelings. I don't want the teacher to look badly at the mother for not getting the kids to do their homework.

When P1 was probed on why she has her children do homework if it is such a point of conflict in her home, she simply stated that when it comes to education, "I tell my kids if there are expectations, you need to meet them." Each of the participants were adamant that they believed their family lives would be greatly improved without homework, but also felt that homework in elementary school had few benefits. At the same time, each expressed that, regardless of personal belief, if their teacher required a task be done, the children needed to do it.

In the theme of parental role construction, each participant described that they felt a significant period of their time was spent on facilitating homework, and were simultaneously confused about what exact role they should take on in their child's homework experience. P2

stated, "I feel like my life is helping my kids do their homework, but I am not sure how I should be doing that." Every participant went into detail about their personal confusion as to what exactly their role in the homework experience should be. Parents believed they needed to set a routine of a time and place homework should be done, and let the child know it was time for homework. However, each parent was unsure of how to facilitate homework in a helpful manner or even what the teacher's expectations were. P4 stated,

> I don't even know how parents are supposed to do homework, honestly, I don't know. I don't know if I am suppose to tell them the right answer or just say that it's wrong. How are they supposed to turn in their homework? Is it supposed to be 100% correct or is it supposed to be their own work? That's a little confusing. I don't know the guidelines for that.

Each participant in the study had confusion about whether or not they were supposed to correct their child's homework or to what extent they should be correcting the work. Three of the four participants do review their child's work and make corrections, but each of them were confused about whether or not they should be correcting their child's homework. "I do notice I correct for them. If I see something wrong I'll be like, 'Oh, you missed one.' I don't know if I need to do that, but I do." P3 expressed she doesn't correct her child's homework because the teacher made it clear she does not want parents to. However, when probed, she revealed she did in fact correct their homework. Her corrections revolved more around, "polishing work," such as capitalization, direction of letters, handwriting, and the editing of written work. While this was clearly correction, she felt she was still following the teacher's expectations of not providing corrections. In her situation, the teacher expressed that parents should not correct homework, but

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she still reviewed the work and is simultaneously uncertain about the level of correction she should be providing.

A second area of confusion for participants regarding teachers' expectations revolved around the level of expected independence children should have during homework time. Each participant expressed numerous times their desire to either not have homework for their child, or that the child only be given homework they can do independently. Three of the participants had been given little to no information about the level of independence that should be expected from their child during the homework process. Meanwhile, the forth participant had been told by the teacher, "He really should be doing it on his own. You shouldn't even have to be sitting there." However, the teachers' suggestion was not possible if the expectation was that the homework must be finished and turned in on time. The mother expressed that the homework would never be completed if she didn't stay with her child and check in with him at regular intervals. She explained, "But I have to sit there, otherwise he is staring into space, he's tapping his pencil, he doesn't want to do it."

The three participants that had not been given information about the expected level of assistance they should provide and the level of independence the child should be working at. This created a challenging situation for parents. The parents' feelings and desires were that they would not need to facilitate homework, other than providing the routine needed to get homework done: time, space, and the reminder to do it.  However, each parent found themselves in the situation of having to not only facilitate their child's homework routine, but having to deal with emotional resistance before, during and sometimes even after the homework process. This alone was a major point of contention for participants.

In addition to the emotional resistance each parent was enduring on a daily basis, parents found that their children rarely could complete their homework independently. Parents were either sitting with children during the homework process or were in close proximity with frequent involvement in their child's homework. In both situations, parents expressed not only their desire to have their children compete their homework independently, but also their confusion as to whether their child was expected to complete it independently. P1 expressed her confusion about independence and asked, "How invested are parents supposed to be? What is that expectation and what is the point of it?" P4 expressed that when her child was working on a school project she received an email from the second grade teacher saying that if her child were doing a PowerPoint presentation, the teacher would like advanced notification. This parent, who wants independence for her children during homework time, was floored over this email and troubled by what it was implying.

> What parent is going to put [on] a Power Point presentation for their kid? That's just ridiculous to me. That means I'm doing the presentation. Why should I do your presentation? If that's your (the teacher) requirement for them, to do a PowerPoint presentation, then you guys should be teaching them and having them do it at school or something. That was just ridiculous to me.

During our interviews, her frustration and confusion over the topic of independence was palpable. She went on to explain,

> I want them to be more independent. I don't want them to be needing me (during homework time). It is constant, "Oh Mom, I don't know how to find something, I don't know how to do something." I want them to be able to figure out how to do it. I think it is

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an important quality for kids to have. They need to figure out how to do something. They

are so quick to say I don't know.

P1 expressed her confusion over the teachers' requirement that the parent make sure the child

completes their homework each night. The parent felt this was enabling the child to not take

responsibility for his or her own work. If it is the child's work, why must the parent make sure it

is done? She described this thought process and the confusion that resulted from this expectation

of the parent in the following quote:

I initially objected to that. I just think if they are going to do it (homework), they need to

learn how to be accountable… the consequences of not doing it (homework), I don't

know when that starts. Why do I have to be the intermediary there, you know? What's the

point of homework, especially in third grade, if I'm checking her homework; I'm making

sure it's right. I don't think that's what it's meant to be. That's where I am confused.

Her point is telling. If parents are making kids complete homework and are correcting the

homework, then when does the child feel and develop accountability?

In essence, the combination of parental desires for their child to have independence, the

lack of clarity on how much independence their child should have during homework, and the

feeling that they were required to shoulder the responsibility of homework completion created a

troubling situation for each interviewed parent. Parents already felt they were too involved in

their child's homework, but also that, if they weren't, then their child will not get the homework

completed. This created confusion among the parents in regard to their understanding of their

own role in the homework facilitation process. P1 expressed that they were surprised their role in

their child's homework was such an instigator for confusion, stress, and otherwise negative

emotions in their family. "It's really weird, I didn't realize that when you have kids that the homework would be such an area of negativity in our family."

**Limitations and Strengths of the Homework Experience**

The described experience of participants in this study indicate that all parents had established homework routines, experienced the emotions of resistance and stress frequently, and were creating their role as facilitators of the homework process while simultaneously questioning that role. The entire homework experience was frequently referred to as stressful and emotional for all participants, and as a result, participants expressed that negative emotions seriously limited the homework experience.

Participants felt the primary limitation of the homework process was the negative emotions parents and children felt before, during and after the homework process. These emotions of resistance and stress, described in detail above, permeate the entire homework experience. Participants felt confused by the resistance their children expressed while simultaneously feeling stressed abut the homework process. In addition, each parent expressed the desire for clarity on how involved they should be with their child's homework and the level of independence their children should display.

Parents described that the emotional component of homework facilitation is the biggest limitation of the homework process. Each participant felt they spent more time managing resistance and stress emotions than actual time spent on homework. Parents felt the limitations attached to emotional homework experiences could only be addressed either by not having homework for elementary-aged students, or by having teachers provide homework that can be completed independently of the parent, with clear guidelines on how involved the parent should be in the homework process.

Parents were unable to describe strengths or positive perspectives about homework facilitation. Even after repeated probes and asking the question in several different ways, parents still could not provide descriptions or examples of how the emotions experienced during homework facilitation had strengths or a positive impact on themselves or their families. The participants met these probes on the positive impact or strengths of the emotions experienced during homework with humor and disdain. Responses ranged from "Are you crazy? I can't think of a single good thing about our homework experience." To "the only positive thing about homework is when we don't have any. It's a party of happiness in our home on the rare days they don't have homework. Everyone feels good and we get to do our family thing." P2 went on to say that "Not only is homework a negative experience for us all, but it is like subjecting yourself to torture every single day after school. I am over it. They hate it. I hate it. The idea that homework could have any positive impact on our family is ridiculous." She laughed and continued, "Please let me know if you find a family who feels good about homework. I would like to know how they got there." It became evident no matter how many times or ways the question was addressed, families not only couldn't come up with strengths in regard to the elementary-aged homework experience, they thought it was ridiculous that anyone could experience its strengths.

Unable to find reported strengths of the homework experience from direct quotes of the participants, this researcher noted through coding that each family was trying a new approach to homework during the 2016–17 school year. Each family expressed that homework had been such an issue with them since their child first got homework, that they were all experimenting with a different approach to the homework process. This minor theme of "trying something new" was present in all of the participants. When I delved into the theme of "trying something new, " each

participant was clear that they were trying something new as a result of past excessively

emotional homework experiences in previous school years. They viewed their trying a new

approach this school year as something they had to do for self-preservation, and with the hopes

of changing the perspective of homework from a negative experience to a positive one. P1

explained,

> I approached this year differently with my daughter. Right off the bat, just to protect
>
> myself. I want her to do her homework. My daughter said, "but I need your help."
>
>> I just said, "You need to try it yourself, or you need to be explicit about how you
>
> need my help in this particular assignment. Otherwise, I will not be involved. You are on
>
> your own."

While P1 felt that her child was demonstrating more independence this year she still feels that

her child uses homework as an emotional plea.

> It's emotional time, a way to not do this or to get yourself worked up about it, and then
>
> I'd get worked up about it. I just said, "Timeout. I can't. I'm just not going down that
>
> road with you this year." I can't say there is any strategy I have…I mean I will go back to
>
> asking her how can I explicitly help. What do you need help with? You have to articulate
>
> it, otherwise I can't (help).

This parent's strategy for "trying something new" was to have her children articulate clearly

what her needs were, instead of accepting generalized requests for assistance that had previously

and frequently elicited emotional responses.

> P2 was trying to adjust the homework experience this year by incorporating technology

to meet her child's fine motor needs.

The year before he struggled a little bit with his handwriting, and so I was there just to be like, "okay, I can't read that, you have to erase it and write it over." So this year he's actually typing. And that, we just started this year, has made a huge difference.

The change in approaches to having him type his writing assignments instead of handwriting them, have proven to be helpful. The mother reported he would write more and enjoy the process if he gets to do it on the computer instead of handwriting his projects. In addition, having her son write on the computer removed her from the need to correct his handwriting, thus providing the child with more independence.

P3 described that they have stopped focusing on homework as much as they have in previous school years: "Right now we have stepped back on homework because it was starting to negatively impact their school experience." This parent described that because previous school years included such intense homework battles, she decided her children would do their homework, but she would put less emphasis on it as she felt it was negatively impacting the children's attitudes toward school.

In each of the participant's experiences, the participants themselves could not describe any strengths or positives about the emotions encountered during homework. However, each participant took the negative homework experience from the previous school year and tried to adjust their approach or strategies in order to find a way to make the homework experience more positive. While participants themselves, may not have described this, in itself is strength, it appears that each participant's ability to see the need and implement changes is an unexpected positive strength from the experience.

**Summary**

This chapter explored elements in the thematic structures related to the emotions experienced between middle-class parents and their elementary-aged child during the facilitation of the homework process. Phenomenological interview methods invoked deep and thick reflections from participants to uncover the essence of the middle-class parent perspective on the parent-child emotional experience imbedded in the homework process. Through constant comparison, analysis, and coding, this researcher identified themes connected to middle-class, parent-facilitated homework as follows: the creation of a homework routine, the emotions of resistance and stress, and the issue of parental role construction. Chapter 5 will explore the relationships between these themes and investigate the ramifications of their interactions within the larger framework of the homework facilitation experience.

**Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion**

Descriptive phenomenology was employed as a methodological approach to explore the

emotions experienced between middle-class parents and their elementary-aged child during the

homework process.  A purposive sample of four middle-class parents participated in the study.

Based on their interactions at the tutoring center, these parents were information rich with

respect to emotional homework sessions with their children. These participants provided

descriptive insight into the parental perspective of the emotional experience of facilitating

elementary homework. This chapter presents, describes, and discusses the implications of the

findings of the study, as well as the, connections of the findings to the literature, the limitations

of the study, the implications of the findings for practice, recommendations for further research,

and a conclusion of the research study.

**Summary of the Findings**

The essence of emotions experienced during homework facilitation between middle-class

parents and their elementary-aged children was explored through Giorgi's (2012) descriptive

phenomenology. Data were analyzed and themes were identified in a thorough read through of

interview transcripts. The identified themes were: *creation of a homework routine*, *emotions of*

*resistance and stress*, and *paradox of parental role constructio*n.  While the themes in the

thematic structure appear distinct, data coding revealed the interconnectness of these themes.

In addition, emergent psychological structures (referred to as constituents in Giorgi

phenomenology) that are a part of the overall experience and yet are distinct within the

experience (Giorgi, 2009) were uncovered. Constituents are determined by identifying the

alterations of all of the participants for convergent meanings.  Each constituent's title must be

descriptive of its psychological meaning (Broomé, 2011): for example, paradox of parental role

construction. Constituents are context dependent and therefore cannot be independent of each other, but are necessarily part of the whole structure (Broomé, 2011). Thus, the thematic structure of the experience presents an overview of parental facilitated homework as a lived experience, and the relationship among the constituents provide clarity of the ramifications of the experience itself (Giorgi, 2009).

In this study, the researcher could see the shared meanings of the participants pertaining to their general psychological consistencies: i.e., participants' experiences were similar. As a result, a general thematic structure of all participant experience was created from the identified themes, instead of unique themes per participant. Within this thematic structure, three constituents were identified.

The following descriptions of each constituent will set the stage for explaining the interrelationships of the constituents. The paradox of parental role construction refers to the historical experience of the middle-class parents describing "little to no homework" when they were in elementary school, and the current expectation for them to facilitate, an experience of which they have little to no expertise. Additionally, when they did have homework, it was infrequently assigned projects that they completed independently of their parents. Thus, their view is that their elementary-aged children should be able to do their homework independently. The paradox also refers to middle-class parents wanting to instill independence in their children as a middle-class skill for success in life, and yet finding that they are providing support and assistance to their children during homework so the children can meet the needs of the general authority and have a foundation for becoming middle class or higher in the future.

The second constituent, tiers of parental stress, refers to three distinct feelings of stress that parents feel during the homework process of their child. See Figure 1.

Impending stress



Reactionary Stress



Post Experience Stress
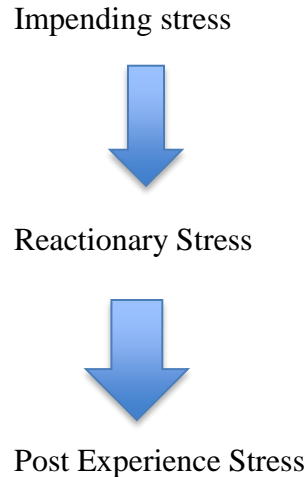
*Figure 1.* Tiers of Parental Stress

The three-tiered stress experience involves stress before (impending), during (reactionary) and after (post) the homework experience. The thought of homework to be completed, coupled with past negative homework experiences generated stress in parents before the homework process began. The stress during homework time was reactionary to their child displaying excessive resistant behaviors to the process.  The post experience stress was due to either the perception of needing to rush through family and evening activities in order to get to the bedtime routine on time or brushing any conflicts that had happened during homework time "under the rug."

The third constituent, desire for family harmony, is the family atmosphere all parents and children strive for in their homes.

**Discussion of the Findings**

This section will explain the ramifications of the relationship between the constituents and the findings of the study.

The parental desire for their child's independence during homework time permeated this entire study of middle-class parents and their experience of the facilitation of elementary

homework. Participants found that the independence they desire from their children during homework time was unattainable. The paradox of parental role construction resulted in the unattainable goal of independence of the child. The interdependence of the paradox of parental role construction and the constituent desire for family harmony manifested in the "contained frustration" of the parents, and this had the ramifications of elevated parental stress with respect to the homework experience, future homework experiences, and the homework routine.

Another finding was the relationship between the theme creation of the family homework routine and the constituent, the desire for family harmony. The middle-class parents interviewed believed the creation of homework routines would reduce or eliminate the emotions of resistance in their child and consequently alleviate parental stress. They were mistaken. Unfortunately, the result of that intersection left parents confused and stressed by the routine, not to mention frustrated by the resistance their children expressed before and during homework.

In relation to the paradox of parental role construction, parents preferred to not be involved in their child's homework at all, other than to create a homework routine, or to set the time, place and space for homework completion. However, every participant in the study said that no matter what adjustments they made to the homework routine, or to their role in the homework experience, independence was not possible in the process due to the excessive emotion displayed by their child. Once their child became emotional, the child was unable to concentrate, think clearly, problem solve, or complete homework. This led to parents getting involved in the homework process more than they intended, and they expressed their concern over the expectations of their role in the process of homework facilitation. This lack of child independence during homework time fueled feelings of stress and generated confusion over their role in their child's homework.

The interdependence of the desire for family harmony and the tiers of parental stress, led participants to believe that if they pretended to not feel stressed and employed a positive attitude towards homework time, their child would not display resistance and stress behaviors during homework time. The parents found the pretense approach did not work in any of the three tiers. Regardless of lack of success with this approach, parents continued to integrate this positive approach into the homework routine.

The ramifications of ignoring any conflicts that had happened during homework time, or isolating the negative emotional homework experiences that occurred during homework time from impacting family time, was, on the contrary, the permeation of the negative emotions post homework on the rest of the family's evening activities and the feeling of family post homework stress.

**Discussion of the Findings in Relation to the Literature**

For the purposes of this study, stress was defined as, Buzukashvili et al.'s (2012, p. 406) holistic definition of psychological stress: "a state which arises from an actual or perceived demand-capability imbalance in the [individual's] vital adjustment actions and which is partially manifested by a nonspecific response[s]" such as psychological stress reactions that might include tension, irritability, the inability to concentrate, and a variety of physical symptoms that include a fast heartbeat and headaches (Mikhail, 1985).

The focus of the study was the lived experience of the middle-class parent and the emotions experienced by the parent while facilitating a child's homework. While homework is considered a minor daily stressor, its enduring nature and accumulated influence might cause emotional reactions that are greater than situational occasional stress (Pope & Simon, 2005),

between a parent and a child. This supports the finding of the lingering and permeating effects of homework stress, after homework was completed.

Parents in this study reported the excessive emotions expressed by their child during homework. This is supported by developments in cognitive science on the complexity of emotions and how they impact learning processes such as homework (Slywester, 1994; Bertling et al., 2012; Pekrum, 2014). The parents believed their child was overly emotional and reactive during homework time as compared to other regular parent-child required activities such as meal time, bed time, and grooming routines.

Stress induced by homework is common and it negatively affects family relationships (Buzukashvili et al., 2012; Cooper, 2001; Pomerantz et al., 2006; Walker, 2004). In a study by Pomerantz et al. (2006), it was found that a mother's negative affect was elevated on days when she had to provide more assistance to her child. That study's results concur with the results of this study: Parents experience elevated stress on homework days compared to non-homework days. However, this study further extends previous studies on homework stress by identifying three phases of homework stress: impending stress, reactionary stress, and post homework stress.

In an ethnographic study by Varenne and McDermott (1999), it was suggested that homework "may force parents into unwanted roles that strain family relationships" (Buzukashvili et al., 2012, p. 406). Varenne and McDermott's study also supports the findings of this study, wherein parents expressed a paradox in trying to construct their roles as homework facilitators and also shared the inability to attain the harmony they desired during homework time.

Another finding of this researcher's study was the paradox of middle-class parents advocating for independence of their child and yet over-facilitating their child's homework,

leading to a high dependence in their child. Kohn's (2006) extensive research reflects this finding. Kohn, in his work on child rearing and SES, found that middle-class families' child-rearing values focus on children developing internal working processes to help them negotiate their educational experience, yet there is parental involvement or over involvement in the homework process (Deckers et al., 2015). Middle-class parents want their children to focus on intention, judgment, and verbal justification of decisions, and often look to cultivate these internal working process skills during the homework experience (Kohn, 2006; Wright, 2013). Yet, at the same time, they offer assistance with the intention, judgment, and decisions of their child during the same experience. During the homework experience, this expectation creates what Kohn refers to as a "mixed picture" where children receive messages from parents that they are to think about, make, and justify their choices while engaged in activities that have an external authority who dictates how activities are to be completed (Lareau & Weininger, 2009, p. 685). This way of learning sends confusing messages to children and parents. These mixed messages, manifested during the homework experience, contributed to the emotional encounters of resistance in the child and the ensuing stress of the parents.

The economic position of a child's family determines the homework experience (Lareau & Weininger, 2009). The social class of the parent determines the type and amount of involvement they decide to initiate with their child's homework (Cooper, 2001). According to this study, the middle-class parent demonstrates high involvement in the homework process. The behavior of participants in this study may be explained by one of the defining characteristics of the middle class: the belief that education is a priority. Kohn's (2006) research over four decades shows that middle-class families have child-rearing values that focus on education and thus middle-class parents invest a significant amount of time in trying to transmit their educational

ideals onto their children (Kohn, 2006; Lareau & Weininger, 2009). The goal of educational attainment is one of the most prominent determinants of middle-class status (Foley, 1989; Kohn 2006; Weineger & Lareau, 2009). Consequently, if the child of a middle-class parent is unable to complete homework independently, the parents feel obligated to help their child through the homework experience. In the case of these middle-class families, the parenting values of education compelled parents to put their personal desire for their child's independence during the homework process aside to engage in highly verbal interactions with their child. These verbal interactions are a dominant characteristic of middle-class parenting values (Kohn 2006). Each participant in my study described highly verbal interactions where the child was expected to express and verbalize what they were doing and why. These verbal interactions were instigators of parent-child conflict during homework time and a source of stress for the parents.

**Limitations**

The findings of this descriptive phenomenological study were limited to several factors. The phenomenological nature of this study limits generalization of the study beyond the setting in which the study was conducted, but allows for transferability of the findings. A further limitation is that the primary researcher is both a middle-class parent of two school-aged children and an educator who supports middle-class families in a homework-tutoring center. This researcher came to the research with biases that include, but are not limited to, experiences, culture, subjective perception, expectations, and position. To reduce biases, this researcher chose and followed Giorgi's phenomenological approach, which provides a prescriptive approach to data analysis, including extensive bracketing before, during, and after the data collection phase. Additionally, to reduce bias, this researcher engaged in member checking with

participants in regard to the data collected from them through interviews. Findings were dependent on the accuracy and honesty of the answers provided by participants.

**Implications of the Findings for Practice**

While descriptive phenomenological findings are not generalizable, they are transferable. In addition, the phenomenological methods revealed that all four participants had very similar experiences in homework facilitation, making the results dependable. Based on this data, I would like to discuss possible implications for practice.

**Parent trainings**. Parents felt that trainings would not only be helpful to them in clarifying their role, but that it would create a communication feedback loop where parents felt they could engage the teacher in homework struggles and successes families had at home. This engagement between parent and teacher, in the form of trainings, could create a communication loop where after trainings parents could let teachers know of any homework issues their family was facing, and get advice from an experienced educator on how to address those issues in a positive way.

Results of the study indicate that all four participants would like to have teacher-led trainings on what they expect of parental role in homework facilitation. Participants believed that if they had more information from teachers on how they should and should not be involved in the homework process, then they possibly could adjust their homework routine in a positive way. In essence, parents felt alone in the process of facilitating homework while they were trying to meet the unknown requirements of the teacher. All participants expressed the need for clarification and trainings from teachers on the following:

1.  What is the level of independence expected of the child during homework?
2.  What is the amount of time homework should take?

3. What should parents do when it takes longer than expected?

4. Should parents correct homework?

5. What are the clear guidelines on when, how, and to what degree they should correct homework?

6. How should they address the resistance and stress emotions that surface before, during, and after homework?

**Participant appreciation**. Without prompting from the researcher, every single participant in the study followed up on the research to express their appreciation for the process, and to share the cathartic effect the interviews had had on them.  The parents also expressed how the interviews and their answers had got them thinking of new and novel ways to approach homework facilitation. This corollary finding implies that a *parent conversation group* could help reduce the stress parents feel during homework and could serve as an idea bank or support group for parents with similar issues.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

The following are the recommendations this researcher has for further research:

- This study should be replicated with lower and upper-class parents.

- A study should be conducted on middle-class parents with middle school and high school-aged students.

- Subsequent studies could consider the middle-class child or teacher perspective.

- The middle-class parents in this study were of a generation that had either little to no homework, or no recollection of homework being an emotional experience.  Further studies could consider the perspective of middle-class teachers from that generation and their experience facilitating homework with their own children.

- A study should be done to determine the impact of parent trainings on homework facilitation and the parent-child homework experience.

- A study should be conducted to explore the cathartic and stress reducing effects of middle-class parent group conversations on the topic of homework

- Finally, there should be a study to explore the paradox of SES specific values in the middle class, i.e., valuing education and wanting to cultivate verbal justification of children's choices, against the reality of unattainable student independence during homework time.

**Conclusion**

This phenomenological study revealed that middle-class parents who use tutoring services experience homework as a source of stress in their lives. The middle class is not exempt from the emotional stress and conflict that surrounds the completion of homework for the elementary-aged student (Cooper, 2001; Donaldson-Pressman et al., 2014; Kohn, 2006).

Learning is a highly charged emotional process (Slywester, 1994; Bertling et al., 2012; Pekrum, 2014), and learning at home creates space for an emotional experience. The essence of the emotions experienced during homework facilitation between middle-class parents and their elementary-aged children is in part due to the parental desire for their child's independence during homework time, and in part due to the parent/s succumbing to their child's dependence at some point within or throughout the entirety of the homework completion process. This means that the parents interviewed compromised their own middle-class values. These findings are confirmed by prior research that indicates homework to be the largest reported source of academic stress in elementary-aged children's family's lives (Loveless, 2014).

This study extends current research by uncovering that parents experience homework stress in three tiers that involve stress before (impending), during (reactionary) and after (post) the homework experience.  The lingering of the post stress adversely affects family activities that follow homework time, disrupting the desired family harmony.  Parents are consistently seeking and trying different approaches to reduce stress, and these approaches include pretending to not feel stressed, employing a positive attitude towards homework time, and adhering to a routine. None of these reduced the stress the middle-class parents interviewed encountered. They expressed a strong desire to have school-based parent trainings on their expected role in their elementary-aged child's homework, as well as how to properly facilitate their child's homework. Parental hopes were that proper trainings for parents in regard to homework facilitation could lead to more independent students, less time spent on the homework process, and the negation of the emotions of resistance and stress that surface between children and parents before during and after homework time. The desired effect of this would be to help families have more harmonious after school hours together while simultaneously supporting the development of positive attitudes toward educational experiences.

Finally, parents who participated in the study expressed appreciation for the catharsis they experienced as a result of descriptively sharing the thoughts and emotions they experienced while facilitating their children's homework assignments. It appears that while parents seek a solution, descriptive conversation could be the easiest and most immediately helpful remedy in the interim.

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**APPENDICES**

## Appendix A: Statement of Original Work

The Concordia University Doctorate of Education Program is a collaborative community of scholar-practitioners, who seek to transform society by pursuing ethically-informed, rigorously-researched, inquiry-based projects that benefit professional, institutional, and local educational contexts. Each member of the community affirms throughout their program of study, adherence to the principles and standards outlined in the Concordia University Academic Integrity Policy. This policy states the following:

### Statement of academic integrity.

As a member of the Concordia University community, I will neither engage in fraudulent or unauthorized behaviors in the presentation and completion of my work, nor will I provide unauthorized assistance to others.

### Explanations:

### *What does "fraudulent" mean?*

"Fraudulent" work is any material submitted for evaluation that is falsely or improperly presented as one's own. This includes, but is not limited to texts, graphics and other multi-media files appropriated from any source, including another individual, that are intentionally presented as all or part of a candidate's final work without full and complete documentation.

### *What is "unauthorized" assistance?*

"Unauthorized assistance" refers to any support candidates solicit in the completion of their work, that has not been either explicitly specified as appropriate by the instructor, or any assistance that is understood in the class context as inappropriate. This can include, but is not limited to:

- Use of unauthorized notes or another's work during an online test
- Use of unauthorized notes or personal assistance in an online exam setting
- Inappropriate collaboration in preparation and/or completion of a project
- Unauthorized solicitation of professional resources for the completion of the work.

**Statement of Original Work**

I attest that:

1. I have read, understood, and complied with all aspects of the Concordia University-Portland Academic Integrity Policy during the development and writing of this dissertation.

2. Where information and/or materials from outside sources has been used in the production of this dissertation, all information and/or materials from outside sources has been properly referenced and all permissions required for use of the information and/or materials have been obtained, in accordance with research standards outlined in the *Publication Manual of The American Psychological Association*

Digital Signature

Megan Aichler
Name (Typed)

4/26/17
Date

# APPENDIX B: Final Recruitment Letter

Dear Parents,

I am pleased to report that I am ready to move into the final phase of my studies as a doctoral candidate at Concordia University by completing a dissertation research study. The study, titled *A Phenomenological Study on the Experiences of Middle-Class Parents Facilitating Homework*, will take place during the fall of 2016. I am curious about how parents who facilitate the homework process of their children describe the experience of the emotions encountered during the homework process.

I am asking for 4–6 parents of elementary age students (during the 2016–2017 school year) who have used _____ tutoring during the last three years to volunteer to participate in this study.  This research study will begin in September 2016 and conclude in December 2016. Your participation will involve three one-on-one audiotaped interviews conducted at your convenience after tutoring hours at the tutoring facility.  Additionally, there will be opportunities for you to check interview transcripts to confirm accuracy of your contributions and my descriptions of data.  The total time commitment for participation is estimated at less than 8 hours over 10 weeks.

Participation in the study is voluntary and you can remove yourself from the study at any time. Participation will be confidential and your name will not be used in the study.  Participation in the study may benefit you by enhancing your understanding of the homework process.  Your participation may benefit others by adding insight to the process of understanding the patterns of homework emotions and behaviors. Please note that all personal identifying information will be

protected and confidentiality will be maintained on all information provided during the research process.

Should you agree to participate, you will be asked to sign a consent form in order to inform my university of your involvement. The consent form will no longer be binding should you decide to withdraw. If you have questions about this research study, I would be happy to discuss them with you.

If you are willing to participate, please notify me via email at [researcher's email] or via phone at [researcher's phone number].

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Megan Aichler

**Research Study Title:** A Phenomenological Study on the Experiences of Middle-Class Parents

Facilitating Homework

**Principle Investigator:** Megan Aichler

**Research Institution:**  Concordia University

**Faculty Advisor:**  Angela Owusu-Ansah

**Purpose and Involvement.** The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore how middle-class

parents interpret the emotional experience of facilitating the homework process of their children,

how they construct their role, and what meaning they attribute to that experience. I expect

approximately 4–6 parent volunteers to participate. No one will be paid to be in the study. We

will begin enrolment on September 20th of 2016.  To be in the study, you will need to participate

in two or three one-on-one audio-recorded interviews with the researcher. Your interviews will

assist the researcher in understanding your perspective on the emotions middle class parents

experience while facilitating the homework process. Participating in these interviews should take

less than 3 hours of your time.

**Risks.** There are no risks to participating in this study other than providing your information.

However, we will protect your information. Audio recordings of your interview will be

permanently deleted following the transcription of the recording into a word document. Any

personal information you provide will be coded with a numeric code so it cannot be linked to

you. Any name or identifying information you give will be kept securely via electronic

encryption or locked inside a file cabinet. When I look at the data, none of the data will have

your name or identifying information, as each participant will be assigned a numeric code. I will

not identify you by name in any publication or report and will only use a numeric codes when

reporting interview data. Your information will be kept private at all times and then all study

documents will be destroyed 3 years after we conclude this study.

**Benefits.** Information you provide may benefit educators and middle-class parents by extending

teacher and parent knowledge about the emotional experience of homework completion.

**Confidentiality.** The research being done will happen in the tutoring facility after hours of

operation and should not draw attention. If you participate, you maybe asked questions by other

people using that facility. I will not be sharing information about you with anyone. The

information I collect from this research project will not be distributed to any other agency and

will be kept private and confidential.  Any information about you will have numeric code instead

of your name. Only the researcher will know the numeric code assigned to you. The researcher

will keep all personally identifying information secure. The only exception to this is if you tell us

about any abuse or neglect that makes us seriously concerned for your immediate health and

safety.

**Right to Withdraw.** Your participation is greatly appreciated, but we acknowledge that the

questions we are asking are personal in nature. You are free at any point to choose not to engage

with or stop the study for any reason. Discontinuing your participation in the study, if you desire,

will have no repercussions to you or your student. You may skip any questions you do not wish

to answer. This study is not required and there is no penalty for not participating. If at any time you experience a bad emotion from answering the questions, we will stop asking you questions.

**Contact Information.** You will receive a copy of this consent form. If you have questions, you can talk to or write the principal investigator, Megan Aichler**,** at [researcher's email]**.** If you want to talk with a participant advocate other than the investigator, you can write or call the director of our institutional review board, Dr. OraLee Branch, via email at [email] or via phone at [phone number].

**Your Statement of Consent.** I have read the above information. I asked questions if I had them, and my questions were answered. I volunteer my consent for this study.

_____          _____

Participant Name                                                Date

_____          _____

Participant Signature                                           Date

Megan Aichler_____          _____

Investigator Name                                               Date

_____          _____

Investigator Signature                                         Date

**APPENDIX D: Interview Questions**

**Questions for Interview One: A Historical Perspective of Participant's Homework**

**Experience**

**Interviewee:** _____

**Interviewer:**_____

**Date:**_____


**Interview Section Used:**

**__X___A: Historical Perspective**

**__X__ B: Parent Facilitation of Homework**

**_____ C: Emotional Constructs**

**_____D: Self-Efficacy**


**Interview Sequence**


**Introductory Protocol**

*To facilitate our note taking, we would like to audio tape our conversations today. Please sign*

*the release form. For your information, only the researcher on the project will be privy to the*

*tapes, which will eventually be destroyed after they are transcribed. In addition, you must sign a*

*form devised to meet our human subject requirements. Essentially, this document states that: (1)*

*all information will be held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary and you may stop at*

*any time if you feel uncomfortable, and (3) we do not intend to inflict any harm. Thank you for your agreeing to participate.*

*We have planned this interview to last no longer than one hour. During this time, we have several questions that we would like to cover. If time begins to run short, it may be necessary to interrupt you in order to push ahead and complete this line of questioning.*

**Introduction**

*Thank you for being willing to participate in this study. I believe you have important insights that will provide a valuable perspective on helping elementary-aged students complete homework. My research project focuses on the experiences parents have while helping their children with the homework process, as I am interested in how parents experience and explain the emotions they encounter with their children. My study does not aim to evaluate your homework process or experience. Rather, I am trying to learn more about how parents feel while supporting their child. Hopefully, by learning more about the emotions encountered during the experience of homework completion, we can learn more about the homework process as a whole.*

**Background Questions:**

(Note**:** These background questions are meant to be brief part of the interview. Rather than providing substantive data that will be later analyzed, they are meant to provide some factual information, a general context, and a comfortable start to the interview.)

*Before we begin exploring your experiences of homework facilitation with your child, it would be helpful to learn about you so I can have a context in which to place the discussions we will be having.*

1. Please tell me some details about you and your child's education including:

   a. Where did you go to elementary school?

   b. Was it a public or private elementary school?

   c. How many children do you have altogether?

   d. Are your children in public or private elementary school?

   e. Are your children boys or girls and what grades are they in?

   f. How many of them are currently in elementary school for the 2016–2017 school year?

   **Probes:**

   - How did your family decide where your child (children) should go to elementary school?

   - Why public or private elementary school?

   - Did the school's homework policy inform your decision?

**Lived Experience Questions: Parent's Historical Perspective**

(Note: The following examples of open-ended, conversational interview questions are designed to help participant identify and describe—as fully as possible—their lived experiences of facilitating the homework process of their children. These questions focus only on participant's childhood experience with homework and are meant to help build the participant's comfort level and sense of ease when examining and verbalizing the topic.)

2. Please describe your experience with homework when you were in elementary school.

**Probes:**

- Did you have homework?

- Did you do it alone or with assistance? If you had assistance, can you describe the assistance?

- Did you enjoy homework as a child?

- What emotions did you experience during homework time?

- What else would you like to tell me about doing homework as a child?

- Has your experience with homework as a child impacted your beliefs about homework?

3. Describe what the homework process in your home looks like. Tell me about your experiences with your child and homework.

**Probes:**

- What was homework like in general during your time as an elementary student?

- Where?

- When?

- With who?

- How?

.

**Questions for Interview Two: A Perspective of Participant's Homework Experience With**

**Their Children**

Interviewee: _____

Interviewer:_____

Date:_____

<u>**Interview Section Used:**</u>

**_____ A: Historical Perspective**

**___X__B: Parent Facilitation of Homework**

**___X__C: Emotional Constructs**

**_____ D: Self-Efficacy**

<u>**Interview Sequence**</u>

**Introductory Protocol**

*To facilitate our note taking, we would like to audio tape our conversations today. Please sign*

*the release form. For your information, only the researcher on the project will be privy to the*

*tapes, which will eventually be destroyed after they are transcribed. In addition, you must sign a*

*form devised to meet our human subject requirements. Essentially, this document states that: (1)*

*all information will be held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary and you may stop at*

*any time if you feel uncomfortable, and (3) we do not intend to inflict any harm. Thank you for*

*your agreeing to participate.*

*We have planned this interview to last no longer than one hour. During this time, we have several questions that we would like to cover. If time begins to run short, it may be necessary to interrupt you in order to push ahead and complete this line of questioning.*

**Introduction**

*Thank you for coming back to meet with me. As you know, you have been selected to speak with me today because you have been identified as someone who has a great deal to share about the parental perspective on helping elementary-aged students complete homework. My research project focuses on the experiences parents have while helping their children with the homework process, as I am interested in how parents experience and explain the emotions they encounter with their children. My study does not aim to evaluate your homework process or experience. Rather, I am trying to learn more about how parents feel while supporting their child. Hopefully, by learning more about the emotions encountered during the experience of homework completion, we can learn more about the homework process as a whole.*

**Lived Experience Questions: A Description of the Parent's Perspective on Their Child's Experience of Homework**

(Note: The following examples of open-ended, conversational interview questions are designed to help participant identify and describe—as fully as possible—their lived experiences of facilitating the homework process of their children. These questions focus only on participant's childhood experience with homework and are meant to help build the participant's comfort level and sense of ease when examining and verbalizing the topic.)

    1. Describe what the homework process in your home looks like.

2. Tell me about your experiences with your child and homework.

3. When was the last time you facilitated your child's homework, and what did that help look like?

4. Do you correct your child's homework? What does that look like?

5. Does your child have more or less homework now than they used to? Please explain.

6. Think about any positive effects the homework experience has on your family. Can you describe those positive affects to me? Can you give an example?

7. Think about any negative affects the homework experience has on your family. Can you describe these negative affects to me? Can you give an example?

**Probes:**

- How does homework time sound, look, feel?

- How do you feel during homework time?

- How do you think your child feels during homework time?

- Do you enjoy homework time?

**Questions for Interview Three: A Perspective of Participant's Homework Experience With Their Children**

Interviewee: _____

Interviewer:_____

Date: _____

<u>**Interview Section Used:**</u>

_____**A: Historical Perspective**

_____ **B: Parent Facilitation of Homework**

___X__**C: Emotional Constructs**

___X__**D: Self-Efficacy**

<u>**Interview Sequence**</u>

**Introductory Protocol**

*To facilitate our note taking, we would like to audio tape our conversations today. Please sign the release form. For your information, only the researcher on the project will be privy to the tapes, which will eventually be destroyed after they are transcribed. In addition, you must sign a form devised to meet our human subject requirements. Essentially, this document states that: (1) all information will be held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and (3) we do not intend to inflict any harm. Thank you for your agreeing to participate.*

*We have planned this interview to last no longer than one hour. During this time, we have several questions that we would like to cover. If time begins to run short, it may be necessary to interrupt you in order to push ahead and complete this line of questioning.*

**Introduction**

*Thank you for coming back to meet with me. As you know, you have been selected to speak with me today because you have been identified as someone who has a great deal to share about the parental perspective on helping elementary-aged students complete homework. My research project focuses on the experiences parents have while helping their child with the homework process, as I am interested in how parents experience and explain the emotions they encounter with their children. My study does not aim to evaluate your homework process or experience. Rather, I am trying to learn more about how parents feel while supporting their child. Hopefully, by learning more about the emotions encountered during the experience of homework completion, we can learn more about the homework process as a whole.*

**Lived Experience Questions: A Description of Parental Perspectives on Their Child's Experience of Homework**

(Note: The following examples of open-ended, conversational interview questions are designed to help participant identify and describe—as fully as possible—their lived experiences of facilitating the homework process of their children. These questions focus only on participant's childhood experience with homework and are meant to help build the participant's comfort level and sense of ease when examining and verbalizing the topic.)

1. What is the typical attitude and behavior of your child when they come home and do not have homework?

2. What is the typical attitude and behavior of your child when they do have homework?

3. How do you feel when your child does not have homework?

4. How do you feel when they do have homework?

5. Has your child ever not been able to finish homework? If so, how did you handle that situation?

6. How does your historical perspective on homework impact interactions and expectations with your child during the homework process?

7. How do you perceive your ability to manage and organize homework sessions?

8. Do emotions (negative or positive) affect homework process?

9. Do you think your self-esteem and academic competency affect the emotions (or instances of conflict) encountered during the homework process?

**Probes**

- Is there anything else you would like to say to better describe the emotional experiences encountered during the homework process?