

University of Nevada, Reno

**Parental Involvement at the High School Level:
Parents' Perspectives**

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in
Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning

by

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THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

This study of parental involvement in high school focused on parents' descriptions of their experiences of involvement. The study is best described as a qualitative study. Guided by a phenomenological approach, the researcher attempted to describe parents' experiences of involvement in their child's high school and elicit themes found in the interviews. The primary data source for this study was interviews with parents. Nine parents participated in the interviews. The analysis of data was based on a combination of Kvale's (1996) and Creswell's (2007) processes for analyzing qualitative data. Four themes that describe parent descriptions of their experiences of involvement were identified: technology and parental involvement, economy and parent work schedules, potential for parent growth, and parental involvement outside the school. The results of the study are informative and significant to those who research and practice in the field of parental involvement in education. Three viable conclusions concerning parents' descriptions of their experiences of involvement in their child's high school were evident. First, the major barriers for parents were the influences of the present economy on their ability to provide for their families, and their work schedules that limited available time for involvement. Second, parents believed that they were the recipients of the greatest benefits of involvement in their child's high school. Finally, the data suggest that most parents wanted teachers and administrators to know that the main reason for coming to school was to represent their children, not the agenda and priorities of the school.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

For many decades, research has shown that parental involvement in the educational experiences of their children increases student achievement and strengthens school programs (Christensen & Sheridan, 2001; Lopez, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001; McDermott, 2008; Riggins-Newby, 2004; Ritenour, 2004). Studies reveal benefits to students that include higher grades and test scores, better school attendance, higher graduation rates, improved self-esteem, and more positive attitudes about school (Henderson & Berla, 1994; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). These and other studies reported benefits to parents that include more confidence in the school, higher teacher expectations of their children, higher teacher opinions of them as parents, increased self-confidence, and increased likelihood that the parents would continue their own education (LaBahn, 1995).

While most educators and researchers agree that parental involvement is essential to children's academic success (Henderson & Berla, 1994; Henderson & Mapp, 2002), parents have been given few opportunities to share their experience of school involvement with teachers and administrators who might use these experiences to benefit parents or teachers in some way. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) found that analysis of parental involvement could be particularly beneficial to minority parents, whom research identified as at risk for limited school involvement.

This study analyzes parents' descriptions of their experiences of parental involvement at the high-school level. Fullan (1991) stated that it is in studies of this nature that understanding occurs:

The problem of meaning is central to making sense of educational change. In order to achieve greater meaning, one must come to understand both the small and the big picture. The small picture concerns the subjective meaning or lack of meaning for individuals at all levels of the educational system. Neglect of the phenomenology of change—that is, how people actually experience change as distinct from how it might have been intended—is at the heart of the spectacular lack of success of most social reform. (p. 4)

Background

The concept of parental involvement in education is not new. For decades paradigms have shifted with regard to involvement, and in the twenty-first century, active parents are considered to be a vital component of education. In the early years of public education in America, parents played a key role in their children's education both in the home and at school. During colonial times, lay citizens who were parents in the community controlled education. The job of the school then was to teach basic skills (Pullman, 1987), and parents assumed the responsibility of teaching activities related to discipline, work skills, ethics, and values (Berger, 1981). Each colony practiced its own religious beliefs, and the school's curriculum, which consisted of religion, reading, and writing, represented the religious belief of the community. Public education was offered in elementary schools and was controlled by parents; high school education was acquired through trade apprenticeships arranged by the child's parents rather than through a public education system (Hiatt-Michael, 1994).

As society evolved, public education in America and parental involvement in education changed. Many of these changes in the American educational system came about as a result of a growing population, growth of industrial centers, urbanization of the nation, and the rise in management techniques in business and industry (Hiatt-Michael, 1994). Mann (1957) found that schooling in America needed to change in order to meet the demands of an industrialized society. In addition, Mann (1957) supported the notion that education of children should be in the hands of the professional teacher and administrator.

The one-room school with one teacher evolved into what is referred to as the factory model of schooling. In this model, students were classified by grade with specialized curriculum for each grade. Curriculum decisions and management, initially controlled by parents, were now in the hands of professional educators. The result was that home life and schooling became two separate entities (Barge & Loges, 2003). This occurred because it was widely believed that parents did not have the time, knowledge, or skills necessary to educate their children to meet current societal challenges (Mann, 1957) or to prepare their children for the demands of emerging technology.

Parents became separated from the daily decision-making operations of the schools and felt powerless under this new, bureaucratic educational system. The educational system, controlled by the school, now included governance, daily administration, curriculum, and hiring of faculty. In short, the acceptance of teaching as a profession began to change the face of parental involvement in schools, and parents who tried to become active were viewed as intrusive (Cowan, Swearer, & Sheridan, 2004).

Writing about the divide between parents and the school, Jacobson (2002) stated that, “because parents lack the language or the educational background, some educators view parents as incapable of anything that would make a difference in their child's education” (p. 1). Yet schools expect parents to provide academic support to their children at home and to provide financial and emotional support to schools. Today the role of parental involvement in schools has evolved from one end of the education spectrum to the other—from parental control to school control--and finally to parents seeking a voice in the education of their children.

One of the themes in school-family literature is that parents and schools must build collaborative partnerships in order to improve the academic achievement of students (Epstein, 2006; Ferguson, 2005). One way to achieve this would be for educators to gain better understanding of parents' views and experiences by means of parental involvement. Acknowledging parents' points of views can improve the likelihood that school programs and practices can be created to address the wishes of all participants and expand the educational opportunities of children (Cotton & Wickelund, 2001).

Statement of the Problem

The majority of research on parental involvement in schools has concentrated on the primary and elementary levels, while little is known about parental involvement at the middle- and high-school level (Ferguson & Rodriguez, 2005; Simons, 2000). According to Feuerstein (2000), most of the existing research studies examined the relationship that exists between parental involvement and student achievement, and the relationship

between parent income and parent education. Several studies found that parental involvement contributed to student learning (Henderson & Berla, 1994). However, Baker (1997) noted that the studies were more oriented towards the perspectives of educators, or on what the schools were doing and needed to do, than viewed from the parents' perspectives.

Because of my recognition of the necessity for more evaluation of the school's need for improvement from the parents' perspective, the intent of this study was to examine parents' descriptions of their experience of involvement at the high-school level. In order to better understand parental involvement, especially in high school, when parental involvement declines, studies should focus on understanding parental perceptions of parental involvement and the changing nature of parental involvement during the high school years.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to contribute to scholarly literature and research in the field of parental involvement in education. By conducting this study, I will have added information and knowledge to the existing studies that focus on parents' descriptions of their experience of involvement in their child's high school. The results of the study may also contribute to a better understanding of the types and models of parental-involvement programs and practices that encourage parental involvement at the high-school level.

Research Question

To better interpret parental involvement at the high school level and to add to the existing literature in this field, this research study addressed the following question: How do parents describe their experience of involvement in their child's high school?

Significance of the Study

The intent of this study was to give voice to high-school parents. With data from in-depth interviews, this study documented the experiences of involvement of parents of tenth-grade students. This research study may be significant on multiple levels:

1. It provided parents the opportunity to participate in open dialogue in an interview setting about their experience of involvement in their child's high school.
2. By examining parents' experiences of involvement at the high-school level, this study may help assess whether the following goal of the U.S. Department of Education was reached: "By the year 2000, every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children" (National Education Goals, 1995, p. 1).
3. This study may reveal a need for future parental-involvement policy or contribute to a plan for schools desiring to involve more parents of multi-cultural backgrounds.

4. The research study's results may be employed to inform decision-makers and strengthen federal legislation, state initiatives, and local parental-involvement reform efforts.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions and explanations are provided to ensure consistency and mutual comprehension for the terms used throughout the study.

High school: Any public, private, charter, or other school whose primary responsibility is to provide an education for students who are enrolled in grades 9, 10, 11, and 12.

Parent: Any adult male, female, birth parent, or guardian who signs the official school document (e.g., school registration forms) as the person responsible to the school for the child.

Parental involvement: "The participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities" (NCLB, 2001, p. 1).

Perception: The recollection of personal experiences and the personal conclusions drawn from those experiences and an interpretation of what one takes in through their senses (Heffner, 2000).

Phenomenon: The central concept being examined by the phenomenologist and experienced by the participants (Creswell, 1998).

Phenomenological study: A study that describes the meaning of a concept or phenomenon in terms of the lived experiences of individuals (Creswell, 1998).

Qualitative research: Qualitative research is an inquiry approach to research to explore and understand a central phenomenon (Creswell, 1998).

Themes: The large ideas derived from research that provides the structure for the presentation and interpretation of the findings.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine parents' descriptions of their experience of involvement in their child's high school. The literature review includes an in-depth examination of various facets of parental involvement and the underlying principles for understanding the research question. This review of literature includes a discussion of (1) parental-involvement legislation; (2) parental-involvement research; (3) barriers to parental involvement; (4) cultural differences and parental involvement; (5) types and models of parental involvement; (6) practices and programs that encourage high-school parental involvement; and a (7) summary.

Parental Involvement Legislation

Coleman (1966) conducted a national survey that placed parental involvement in the forefront of U.S. public policy in education. The resulting data from this national study provided the evidence upon which federal legislation in education has been crafted. The most significant finding from this report was the benefits of parental involvement in education for both educators and the home. These findings also opened the doors to future legislation and educational research in parental involvement.

In 1965, Title 1 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) laid the groundwork for the connections between the home and the school. ESEA was designed to address social and economic inequities in education (Ovando & Collier, 1998). Additionally, Title 1 mandated that elementary and secondary schools use federal monies

to create parental-involvement programs in order to improve children's reading and math skills. The benefits accruing to schools and families because of this mandate gained the attention of educators, parents, congress, and the public as parents became more involved in their children's education.

Former President George W. Bush and several state governors created America 2000: An Education Strategy (1990) with the aim of improving public education.

Implementation of this Act created a nationwide surge targeted at increasing parental involvement in America's public school system (Decker, Decker, & Brown, 2006).

Under the leadership of former President William Clinton, America 2000: An Education Strategy was renamed Goals 2000: Educate America Act and was signed into law March 31, 1994 (Decker & Decker, 2001). This act required that by the year 2000 every school was to promote partnerships that would increase parental involvement in their child's education (National Education Goals Panel, 1995). It also mandated that every state develop policies aimed at assisting local schools in creating such partnerships. Schools are now required to engage parents in a partnership that will support the academic work of children and to include parents in decision-making in the school. In turn, parents are encouraged to support schools and hold them to high standards (National Education Goals Panel, 1995).

These and other parental-involvement legislation may be cited as successful in that the need for parents to be involved in their children's education has been proven to be an important component of academic success. Mannan and Blackwell (1992) agreed that the growing awareness of the necessity of parental involvement is important;

however, they also pointed out that most of the mandates are ad hoc in nature and not institutionalized to the extent that they are part of the goals and objectives of the school.

The No Child Left Behind legislation of 2004 defined parental involvement as “the participation of parents in regular two-way and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities” (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Title I, Part A defined the parental-involvement activities that must take place in a Title I school. In order for schools to qualify for Title 1 designation, they must have a qualifying number of students registered for free or reduced-cost lunch services. In this policy, schools are required to formulate written parental-involvement policies that are agreed upon by the parents and implemented at the school level. This policy requires schools to include all parents, including those with limited English proficiency (U.S. Department of Education, 1996).

Some organizations and individuals opposed to implementation of federal education policies argue against a policy that mandates programs for parental involvement. They reason that such a policy “overlooks the professional status of teachers, ignoring their special knowledge and preparation by suggesting that the parent can play teacher at home” (DeCarvalho, 2001, p. 19). Critics of federal education policies further justify their position by stating that parental involvement policies “seem to be grounded on ambiguous conceptions that schools can change families and at the same time depend on families for change and improvement; that families are deficient and at the same time have an important role in responding to the school’s agenda” (DeCarvalho,

2001, p. 19). They maintain that schools cannot evaluate parents as lacking in their ability and desire to help students and at the same time mandate that parents be actively involved in the educational process.

Mannan and Blackwell (1992) suggested that laws or proposed laws that relate to parents and children's education tend to be punitive in nature. Several states have adopted policies allowing them to cut welfare benefits of low-income parents whose children do not attend school regularly (Jennings, 1990). Arkansas, Maryland, Mississippi, and Texas have threatened to fine or jail parents who do not attend parent-teacher conferences. According to Berla (1990), these developments pointed to several problems. First, while the intent is to increase parental involvement, in effect such policies weaken the family structure and appear to be mandates for parents to get involved. Furthermore, mandates usually fail because enforcement is most often unrealistic or costly. Second, while the negative message is clear, there is no provision or concerted effort to support families who might need help or to encourage families who are doing a good job of parenting. Laws or mandates are seldom perceived as positive reinforcement (Mannan & Blackwell, 1992).

In order for national and state legislation to be created so that it will successfully stimulate parental involvement in the schools, it is first necessary for lawmakers and educators to understand the factors and dynamics that work and do not work when implementing parental involvement, and select the most promising methods for their jurisdictions. The purpose of the following section is to present and discuss findings in the literature on the subject of parental involvement in the schools and to serve as a

starting point for dialogue.

Parental Involvement Research

Early research studies on parental involvement revealed three important trends. First, there exists a dramatic decrease in the amount of parental involvement as children progress through school (Epstein & Connors, 1995; Nevin, 2008). Second, most parents and teachers support the concept of parental involvement; however, both groups routinely misperceive each other's commitment to parental involvement (Herrold & O'Donnell, 2008). Third, Nevin (2008) noted that parental involvement benefits students, parents, and teachers. In this section, I will review results of research related to these trends.

Parental involvement in school declines at the middle-school level and continues to decline throughout high school. According to Catasambis and Garland (1997) this trend was as true for Whites as it is for minority groups, even though the perception by some educators and researchers is that minorities are less involved in their children's education (LaBahn, 1995; Lopez, 2001).

Researchers found that the nature and intensity of parental involvement as it related to school-family partnerships changed through the years of a child's schooling (Epstein & Connors, 1995; Nevin, 2008). Epstein (2007) suggested that the nature of parental-involvement practices should be viewed as developmental. That is, parental-involvement programs and practices must change for children as they grow older. Programs and practices must also change for families as they move from one grade level to another, and for teachers in different grade levels (Herrold & O'Donnell, 2008).

The teenager's search for autonomy and independence during the adolescent stage of development has been widely documented (Coleman, 1980; Erickson, 1968). According to Erickson, each developmental stage was learned and heavily influenced by challenges and support an individual receives. Erickson stated that individuals go through eight stages, with each stage having an age range, distinct characteristics, and crises. Early adolescents, ages 10 to 14, were characterized by a crisis between production and inferiority, and those of ages 12 to 18 were characterized by the crisis between identity and role confusion. According to Erickson, in order for adolescents to develop successfully, each must resolve these crises by accomplishing meaningful and worthwhile tasks, feeling a sense of pride, and developing a sense of independence. Capelluti and Stokes (1991) suggested that while adolescents are interested in autonomy and independence, they continue to want and need guidance and approval from adults in their lives.

Parental involvement often decreases during the middle- and high-school years because parents believe that their child should be more independent (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989). The CCAD, in a synthesis of research findings, characterized the adolescent's move from dependence to interdependence as a difficult transition involving renegotiating relationships with parents and other adults. Parents may misinterpret their child's increased independent thinking and need for autonomy as a rejection of parental ties. Capelluti and Stokes (1991) suggested that adolescents hold a high regard for their parents and value their parents' advice and assistance.

The Student Life in High Schools Project (1998) showed that teachers of ninth-

grade students were less likely than those of eighth-grade students to communicate with parents about the participation needed by the parent in order to help the student achieve the goals for the class. Parents no longer felt the connection with the high school that they felt when their child was in elementary school and thus might feel less able to form similar bonds within the middle or the high school (Booth & Dunn, 1996).

The parental involvement concept may need to be viewed as a three-way partnership at the high-school level. As children mature, “parents may desire to play a more active role in their own education” (Epstein, 1987, p. 167). Epstein and Connors (1992) concluded, “Most often students feel ‘acted on’ rather than actors, or ‘done to’ rather than doers in their education” (p. 10). Researchers have noted in several findings that students desire parents to become “knowledgeable partners” (Simons, 2000, p. 15) and are most eager to assist with communication between home and school (Epstein & Salinas, 2004).

Epstein and Connors (1992) surveyed approximately 2,000 parents of elementary school and middle school students. Their findings revealed that schools at both levels that had programs and practices specifically designed to support and guide parental involvement had more success in their efforts for developing school-parent partnerships. Elementary schools were reported to have more opportunities for parental involvement than middle schools and high schools. Another study at the high-school level found that high school is less family-centered than elementary school (Dunst, 2002). Whereas in the lower grades parents were usually viewed as being essential to the effectiveness of the school, this was often untrue at the high-school level. There were fewer opportunities for

high-school parents to be involved and there tended to be less communication between parents and school (Dunst, 2002).

The National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988 examined parental changes in involvement between middle school and high school. This study sample consisted of 13,580 parents who were followed from 1988 to 1992 (Catasambis & Garland, 1997). The study used Epstein's (1992; 1995) six types of parental involvement: (1) basic obligations of families; (2) basic obligations of schools; (3) involvement at schools; (4) involvement in learning activities at home; (5) involvement in decision-making, governance, and advocacy; and (6) collaboration with community organizations to present the many different ways parents are involved. The study also identified differences between ethnic and racial minority groups. The purpose was not only to distinguish the different types of parental involvement but to also show how they overlap, and to present the complex relationship of parental involvement between participants (Catasambis & Garland, 1997).

Highlights of this research revealed information about home support, noting that African-American and Hispanic parents tended to show the highest level of rules and supervision about homework, grades, and course decisions. Communication, another measure of involvement with schools, showed the sharpest decrease among African-American and Latino parents. In addition, "African-Americans exhibited the highest levels of participation in parent organizations, while Whites showed the most mutual contacts with the schools, such as volunteering and other school activities, often

considered a more significant measure of parental involvement” (Catasambis & Garland, 1997, p. 4).

The study also provided positive viewpoints of parental involvement of minorities in their child’s education. Contrary to research literature that indicated involvement declined as students progressed through the middle school and high school, this research asserted that minority parents were looking to share their knowledge with schools if given the opportunity to do so (Catasambis & Garland, 1997). Finally, the study reported on the complexity of parental involvement. This complexity appeared to become clearer in the high-school years as this was a time when “students, contexts, and all participants become more diverse and complex” (Epstein, 2006, p. 223).

According to Pelco, Ries, Jacobson, and Melka (2000), the growing body of research in parental involvement supports the findings that positive connections between families and schools influence a variety of outcomes. Pelco et al. (2000) explained in their research that parental involvement is a multi-dimension construct that relates to a variety of outcomes and effects for parents, students, teachers, and school administrators. Patrikakou (2008) also found that parental involvement in education is like families themselves, multifaceted, multidimensional, and constantly changing. Further, generalizing across studies is difficult because researchers have used varying definitions and models of parental involvement in their studies. Research is also needed to determine how teachers developed, implemented, and maintained relationships built between parents and the school in previous years.

Barriers to Parental Involvement

In spite of the numerous research studies in support of parental involvement, schools and parents are confronted with multiple barriers to creating and sustaining effective parent participation (Anderson, 2000). “Parent involvement is influenced by ethnicity, income, home environment, and the type of involvement parents are willing to have” (Okpala, Okpala, & Smith, 2001, p. 117). “ Teachers complain that parents who are roadblocks to their children’s education do not help with homework or projects, do not supply their children with resources, and do not come to conferences or meetings” (Keyes, 2002, p. 183). Greenwood and Hickman (1991) grouped these barriers into three major areas: (1) attitudes and abilities of parents; (2) pressures and conflicts around work, and poor health; and (3) attitudes, knowledge, and skills of teachers and administrators.

Cotton and Wickelund (2001) and Kennedy (2004) stated that barriers to school-family partnerships were more likely to exist at the high-school level than at the elementary-school level and may be due in part to the organizational structure of high schools. High schools are generally larger, departmentalized, and teachers have a larger number of students than do teachers in elementary schools. Cotton and Wickelund (2001) argued that once teaching becomes departmentalized and a child has more than one teacher, developing and maintaining parent-teacher relations is difficult. The period of time children attend elementary school is five to six years, and parents have more time to foster and build relationships with the school, teachers, other school personnel, and parents than in middle school and high school, where attendance is limited to three to four years. Cotton and Wickelund (2001) noted that another barrier could occur because

organizational structures provide less time for parents to develop and maintain meaningful partnerships in high schools.

Barriers to parental involvement in the middle school and high school may also be attributed to demographics and the change in the physical makeup of the school. Elementary schools tend to be smaller than middle and high schools, and the elementary school is located close to the neighborhood where the family lives. In addition, middle schools and high schools are often larger and farther away than the elementary school, Booth and Dunn (1996) reported, and added, “Changes such as these can result in parents’ feelings of alienation from the school” (p. 11).

According to Hollifield (1994), adolescents presented barriers for parental involvement at the high school level in cases when: (1) Adolescents might develop a need for autonomy and individual responsibility, and prefer the parents stay in the background; (2) As parents became aware of this need for individuality, they might distance themselves from their children’s life, including school life, leaving the child vulnerable and without much-needed direction; and (3) Parents might feel that the adolescent did not want parental involvement in his or her education (Hollifield, 1994).

“Adolescents may want greater autonomy, but they still need to know that their parents support their educational endeavors,” said Booth and Dunn (1996, p. 9). Recognizing this dilemma, McGrew-Zoubi (1998) spoke of the “delicate balance” that exists between parent and children, which they described as a time when parents were negotiating relationships between themselves and their children. During this period, parents attempted to remain active in their children’s education while affording their

children the opportunity to experience more freedom and responsibilities. Wheeler's (1992) research cautioned that if adolescents are to become stable and productive adults, achieving the delicate balance between parental involvement in both home and school is especially critical.

A student's past academic history also affects parental involvement. For example, the parent may feel that the child who has always achieved academic success in school does not need help (Booth & Dunn, 1996). Parents are more likely to help a child who asks for help than a child who does not ask for help. If a child and a parent have conflicts, the parent is less likely to help that child than one with whom there are no conflicts (DeCarvalho, 2001). The results in a study conducted by Eccles and Harold (1994) showed that parents of high-achieving students initiated contact more frequently than those of poorly performing students. Eccles and Harold also noted that 50% to 70% of the teachers included in their survey did not communicate with parents beyond report cards and conferences. In other words, the only communication with parents was the communication set up for the teacher and mandated by the school. These researchers also noted that teachers of students in high-level classes, such as Advanced Placement classes, communicated more with parents than the teachers of lower-level classes (Eccles & Harold, 1994).

Pena (2000) found that barriers to parental involvement among low-income families were affected mainly by the lack of available resources, such as limited or no transportation, lack of formal educational experiences, and financial constraints. In addition, conferences were often scheduled during school hours, when they were

convenient for the teacher, rather than at times that were convenient for working parents (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2004; Koonce & Harper, 2005).

According to Swap (1993), school policies and practices acted as a barrier to low-income, minority, migrant, and homeless families' involvement in education. For example, communication with families tended to be form letters sent home to all families with minimal efforts for follow-up communication being made (Lott, 2001). This form of communication could be especially problematic for parents who faced language barriers that make it difficult for them to understand the communications sent home from the school (Finders & Lewis, 1994).

Antunez (2000) reported that these and other barriers often prevented parents from feeling confident in their own ability to collaborate with schools and assist in their children's academic achievement. The following is an excerpt from Antunez's summary of the major language and cultural barriers that can impede full parent-participation in the educational system, which echo the points made about low-socioeconomic families:

Language skills. The inability to understand the language of the school is a major deterrent to the parents who have not achieved full English proficiency. In these cases, interactions with the schools are difficult, and, therefore, practically nonexistent.

Home/school partnerships. In some cultures, such as many Hispanic cultures, teaming with the school is not a tradition. Education has been historically perceived as the responsibility of the schools, and parent intervention is viewed as interference with what trained professionals are supposed to do.

Knowledge of the school system. A great number of low-income parents view

schools as an incomprehensible and purposefully exclusionary system. Lack of trust is often the result of misunderstanding the perceived intentions of each party. Sending home communications in English only and scheduling meetings at times when parents cannot attend serve to reinforce parent apprehension. Schools often misperceive the lack of involvement that results from mistrust and apprehension as a lack of concern for the children's education.

Self-confidence. Many parents of English Language learners believe that their participation does not help schools perform their jobs as educational institutions; as a result, they separate themselves from the process. Parents who feel uncomfortable in the school setting are less likely to be involved than those who have developed a sense of equal partnership.

Past experiences. Many non-English speaking parents have had negative education experiences of their own, and these memories linger through adulthood. In some cases, these parents have fallen victim to racial and linguistic discrimination by the schools. Negative feelings toward home-school interaction are often reinforced when schools communicate with parents only to share bad news about their children.

Antunez (2000) argued that the loss of parents' home language could have negative consequences for parent-child relationships, and such parents serve as poor role models for children acquiring the native language. Antunez suggested to the parents she interviewed that the benefits associated with involvement in their children's educational experiences were worth the time and effort needed to establish parent-child partnerships.

Teacher beliefs about parental involvement can pose a serious barrier for parents.

Beliefs about parental involvement are shaped by teachers' and parents' past and present experiences. Without training and guidance, teachers fall into the trap of implementing teacher-dominated parental-involvement programs and practices. These traditional programs and practices put the teacher in control of decisions instead of fostering partnerships with parents (Comer, 2001). Researchers Comer (2001), and Souto-Manning and Swick (2006) argued that the traditional teacher-dominated parental involvement paradigm must change. One reason they cited for this need to change is that traditional teacher beliefs about parental involvement do not account for differences in today's parent and family structure.

Another teacher barrier to parental involvement is the preparation of teachers for involving parents and families. According to Jacobson (2005), new teachers said that in order to be effective, they must be able to work well with parents. New teachers cited communicating with and involving parents as the greatest challenge they faced. This was mainly due to lack of guidance from their administrators on parental involvement and lack of teacher preparation for parental involvement.

According to a study conducted by Schneider (2005), the changing nature of the family caused barriers to parental involvement. High-school students were more likely to reside in homes where biological parents were divorced, where a single parent headed the household, or where parents resided away from home because of their employment. Families might be homeless as a result of job loss, catastrophic illness, weather conditions, or the loss of a key member of the family. Migrant families and grandparents raising grandchildren due to the absence of the father or mother who might be

incarcerated had unique challenges in parental involvement. High-school students and their siblings might have parents completing military assignments away from home or be assigned to foster parents as a result of court appointment. Even though foster-care parents were accustomed to a partnership approach from different agencies that played a role in securing the welfare of a foster child, many experienced challenges in school parental-involvement approaches (Schneider, 2005). More than ever, the families studied needed the school to help eliminate barriers by offering a variety of ways for parents to be involved. They also needed the school to initiate the involvement and make them feel that their input was important (Barton, 2004; Epstein & Sheldon, 2002).

LaBahn (1995) claimed that diminishing levels of parental involvement in high school often stemmed from the lack of a school system's understanding about the nature of non-traditional families. The non-traditional family often struggles to deal with numerous factors that affect every member of the family. Issues such as shortage of time, change in financial standing, divorce, or death within the family structure might result in parents' feeling uncertain, confused, insecure, and embarrassed about involvement opportunities (LaBahn, 1995). And as noted earlier, parents who are illiterate, unable to speak English, or harbor memories of their failure in school often accept their current status as barriers to parental involvement.

Cultural Differences and Parental Involvement

The idea of a parent's culture influencing parental involvement was built upon Spradley's definition of culture. Spradley defined culture as an "acquired knowledge

people use to interpret and generate behavior” (cited in Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 38).

By examining the cultural views of involvement, one can evaluate how parental involvement is happening in a culture.

Research has shown that parents from lower socio-economic groups and from ethnic minority groups tend to be less involved in their child’s education (Lopez, 2001; Chavkin, 1993). In a large-scale study by Driessen (2002), nearly 9,000 parents of children at more than 600 Dutch schools answered a number of questions regarding their involvement in their child’s school. Four ethnic groups participated in the study: Dutch, Surinamese/Antillean, Turkish, and Moroccan. Results of the study showed that the Dutch and Surinamese/Antillean parents attended more parent meetings than the Turkish and Moroccan parents. With respect to contact with their children’s teachers, the differences among the ethnic groups were relatively small. Another finding among the groups identified the Turkish and Moroccan parents as less likely to discuss schooling than the Dutch and Surinamese/Antillean parents. A number of reasons were given for these differences. First, many of the Turkish and Moroccan parents had little or no education; and in some instances, schooling was viewed as something imposed by the government. Parents viewed these government mandates with distrust. In addition to the fact that the Turkish and Moroccan parents had little or no education, they also had limited mastery of the Dutch language (Driessen & Jungbluth, 1994). Thus, the parents’ lack of education and limited mastery of the Dutch language presented a serious problem for those who wanted to help their children.

Another finding discussed in Driessen's (2002) study was the cultural differences in child-rearing practices in the family and at school. Turkish and Moroccan parents attached great value to school-appropriate behavior; that is, students were to conform to school rules for behavior. However, Dutch parents were more orientated towards autonomy and self-realization (Pels, 2000). These principles of student autonomy and self-realization were also adopted by the Dutch education system. For many minority parents these differences between their family cultural norms and values, and the schools' pedagogies posed a serious problem (Ogbu, 1994).

Driessen's (2002) study concluded that instead of schools searching for creative ways to get parents of differing cultures involved in predetermined ways, schools should begin the process of identifying ways to capitalize on how parents were already involved in their children's educational lives. Another conclusion stated that schools must engage in a concerted effort to recognize and validate the home culture. By taking these positions, it was felt that schools would be in a position to build a better collaborative relationship with parents.

According to Chamberlain (2005), the socially accepted culture of the United States mirrors the European American values of the individuals who founded the major institutional organizations of this country. One of these institutions is the K-12 educational system. Although the values of the founders have been modified by certain values of the diverse cultural groups that comprise the U.S. population today, the socially accepted culture's way of seeing and doing has been maintained over many generations. Chamberlain (2005) suggested that our perceptions of the ways others think and act is

influenced by our cultural perspective, which depends, in part, on our recognition, understanding, and appreciation of cultural differences that exist among groups.

Chamberlain (2005) also stated that the ability of educators to recognize the vast diversity within cultural groups is important if we are to avoid the risk of stereotyping people.

Critical to the success of students and their families is the ability of teachers to be aware of existing stereotypes, biases, and cultural values in order to support the diversity that is in our schools and classrooms. What teachers perceive, believe, say, and do can disable or empower multicultural students and their families (Kea & Utley, 1998).

Therefore, to facilitate successful collaborative partnerships between families who are culturally diverse, educators must expand their concept of the traditional American family to one that includes the increasing numbers of culturally and linguistically diverse families and children in today's schools.

Adding to the notion of a parent's culture is a research brief by Williams' (2006) that concentrated on African American mothers' parental involvement in their adolescent daughters' high school. The research presented several findings about how African American mothers guided their daughters in school and in the community. The following is an excerpt from the findings:

Mothers voiced resistance to the hostile elements that would limit or deprive their daughters of their rightful access to social and cultural opportunities. In their homes, mothers reinforced strong personal values to their daughters, stressing the importance of being themselves and being proud of who they were as Black women and of resisting attempts to be "put down" or "put in their place." (p. 2)

Mothers expressed concern and anger that the school did not provide a safer environment for their daughters or better exposure to Black culture and history. The mothers believed that more exposure to the positive attributes of Black culture and history would end or reduce acts of violence against Black girls. (p. 4)

Little or no contact existed between mothers and school officials. With few exceptions, mothers said the school only called them when there was an issue; the school never followed up to see, for example, what strategies they used to produce such successful daughters. However, the mothers rarely called or visited the school on behalf of their daughters either individually or collectively, even when their daughters encountered problems that called for intervention by a parent. Mothers felt unwelcome or believed that their daughters could handle the situation. (p. 5)

These three excerpts from Williams' (2006) study showed that African American mothers maintained intense interest and direct involvement in multiple aspects of their daughters' educational lives but kept little contact with school officials. One should not assume that the mothers' rare contact with the school was disinterest. Instead, it appears that the mothers in this study preferred discussing school problems and other important issues directly with their daughters. Schools that focus on increasing and sustaining parent involvement at the high-school level across cultures should recognize the powerful influence of mothers by focusing attention and frequent communication links to parents

of girls. The relationship between gender and parent involvement has focused primarily on girls, as it was thought that girls are more susceptible to the influence of the family environment (Deslandes & Cloutier, 2002). Williams (2006) suggested that school staff be encouraged to provide opportunities for mothers to develop school and community networks that will empower them to resolve issues affecting their daughters. This type of setting will provide opportunities for parents to meet other parents while creating avenues for mothers to share lessons learned about the school, their daughters, other parents, and their daughters' peers.

Cultural values and school practices influence parental involvement. Gibson (2002) stated that culture might dictate what it means for parents to be involved. Gibson found that a cultural disconnect sometimes occurs between the school culture and the Hispanic home culture, with neither side valuing or understanding the other. Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, and Quiroz (2001) stated that Hispanic families valued social responsibilities, the well-being of the group, and mutually supporting relationships above individual satisfaction and choice. This position is in sharp contrast to the American school culture that often stresses competition within schools and individual achievement over cooperative behavior (Smith, Stern, & Shatrova, 2008).

Espinosa (1995) studied cultural characteristics among Hispanic parents that conflicted with American socialization patterns. For example, in the Hispanic culture, parents accept and strongly believe in the authority of the school and its teachers. In a number of Latin American countries, it is considered rude for a parent to intrude into the domain of the school. As a result, family participation in a child's education is not a

common practice in this culture. Additionally, parents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are frequently intimidated by school personnel and thus are reluctant to raise concerns or make demands. This is often due to parents' inability to communicate effectively in the English language.

Similar to Gibson's (2002) study, Olivos (2007) provided an account of the struggles of many bicultural parents as they defended and protected their culture and values, and the academic development of their children, as well as their future in an adverse educational system. In particular, Olivos focused on bicultural parents from the Hispanic culture explaining how they see, feel, and react to a school system that "alleges that the cause of their students' problems lies within the group itself" (p.45). Olivos used the term *bicultural* to mean "individual or social groups who live and function in two or more distinct socio-cultural environments: their primary culture, and that of the dominant mainstream culture of the society in which they live" (p. 14). Olivos acknowledged that while his definition of bicultural is relevant for people of color living in any society with an established dominant culture, the use of the term in this study referred to Latino and poor or working-class people (Olivos, 2007).

Following a four-year study, Delgado-Gaitan (1991) reported on the conditions necessary to elicit parental involvement participation from Spanish-speaking parents. In terms of parental involvement at school, results presented differences between conventional and non-conventional practices. Specific cultural knowledge was not required in order to involve parents in conventional practices, such as open house and parent-teacher conferences. Non-conventional practices, such as parents as co-teachers

and shared decision-making regarding curriculum, encouraged parents to participate in their children's education when communication was culturally responsive. This study emphasized the need for administrators and teachers to understand the cultural perspectives of parents they wished to involve at the school. Ramirez (2002) interviewed immigrant Hispanic parents in the United States and found that parents believed their role in their children's education was to author their own involvement, not to participate in the involvement sanctioned by the school. The parents also believed that school-sponsored involvement would undermine respect for the teachers.

Parents' cultural identity can directly influence their involvement with the school. Many Hispanic American parents believed that educating students was the responsibility of the school and the parents should not intervene in the teacher's professional duties (Carrasquillo & London, 1993). Another belief reported among Hispanic parents was that schools were seen as a bureaucracy controlled by non-Hispanics (Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995). Pena (2000) identified the following as influencing parents' level of involvement: culture, language, parent cliques, parent education, attitudes of the school staff, and family issues. Hispanic parents cited language differences as the most common factor influencing their decision not to become involved or to minimize their involvement (Pena, 2000).

Similar to the disconnect between parents' Hispanic culture and the American school culture, Park, Goodwin, and Lee (2001) found that Asian parents also experienced a cultural crossfire. Asian parents were often suspended between their heritage cultures and their adopted Western culture, and were at a loss as to how to bridge this cultural

divide. The education culture of American schools assumed direct parent involvement with teachers and the school, while many Asian cultures viewed parent involvement as one of absolute deference. That is, Asian parents deferred the educational care of their children to teachers. The expectations that parents become involved in the educational experiences of their children was found to be culturally foreign and provided no reference to their role in parenting (Park, Goodwin, & Lee, 2001).

Yao's (1988) work with Asian immigrant families found that schools must be more responsive to the cultural characteristics of parents. Asian parents are often perceived as being quiet, non-assertive, and reserved during discussions with teachers or school administrators. In addition, Asian parents are often reluctant to admit problems or to seek professional help outside the family. Asian parents' lack of knowledge about American culture and its school system often create anxiety and confusion (Yao, 1988).

Yao (1988) also found that parents sometimes feel intimidated by their child when the child adapts to the new culture better than they are able to do. This situation often leads to a reversal of roles between parents and children due to the parents' limited English proficiency. According to Yao, posture, gestures, and facial expressions convey messages to parents about how they are regarded by school personnel. Folded arms or tightly crossed legs seem unfriendly to Asian immigrant parents. A slouched posture may express an uncaring attitude. Direct eye contact, an important feature of Western communication, is considered impolite by some Asian parents, who may not look directly at the teacher during a conference (Yao, 1988). Supporting these findings, Lo's (2009) study involving 24 Asian immigrant families' perceptions of their role in parent

involvement found the school culture was not sensitive to the unique needs of most Asian parents and families. The participants in this study reported that inflexible schedules, linguistic difficulties, and unfamiliarity with U.S. teaching methods influenced parents' decisions to be more involved in home-based activities than in school-based activities.

Chao (1994) suggested that Asian parents' concept of involvement in their children's educational experience was not to act as managers of the child's schooling or as participants in school programs or activities. Asian American parents interpreted their parental role as providing indirect types of support that focus on building the academic skills needed for learning. Enrolling their students in supplementary academic courses, having the student involved in study groups, providing a study area, and structuring their after-school time enabled the children to be managers of their own education. Additional findings presented in Chao's (1994) study included mothers' belief that building self-reliance in their children would lead to an increase in academic skills.

The Tongan culture, according to Morton (2003), expresses itself in words, senses, and body language. In the educational arena, Tongan parents joined together to understand the prevailing education system—one that was political and underpinned by values and beliefs that were not Tongan but which Tongans had to understand in order to support their children's learning. Tongan parents worked together to unravel the politics of education, to deepen their personal understanding of social and cultural values, to question the context of education, and to understand how education shaped their lives and the lives of their children. Involvement in their children's high school was a new experience for the majority of Tongan parents. Their involvement was generally limited

to activities such as festivals, sport days, and fund-raising events. While these activities were important to the school, they were marginal to learning curriculum and influencing parental involvement in the educational experiences of their children (Morton, 2003)

Mackety and Linder-VanBerschoot's (2008) study identified several parental beliefs that influenced American Indian parents' involvement in the educational experiences of their children at all grade levels. First, American Indian parents believed their involvement encouraged their children to be academically successful. Second, American Indian parents believed their involvement helped their children feel more comfortable in the school. Third, when having open communication between the home and the school, American Indian parents felt they had a better understanding about what was going on at school. Fourth, American Indian parents believed their involvement helped them address any problems related to discipline, attendance issues, or academic concerns with the teachers. Finally, American Indian children wanted to see their parents at the school (Mackety & Linder-VanBerschoot, 2008).

Types and Models of Parental Involvement

The various types and models by which parental involvement has been introduced make studying and researching this topic very challenging. Until recently, the focus was placed on a few types and methods of parental involvement that did not sustain lasting interest among parents, students, educators, and society at large. Now more studies that have found ways to sustain interest among the stakeholders of parental involvement are

being reported. This section will review the literature on various types and models of parental involvement.

Chrispeels (1991) presented a model for describing how the school, home, and community should work together. This model suggested that parent involvement has a hierarchical structure with co-communication being the basis for other types of involvement. Her model included the following components:

(a) involving parents as partners in school governance, including shared decision making and advisory functions; (b) establishing effective two-way communication with all parents; (c) respecting the diversity and differing needs of families; (d) establishing strategies and programmatic structures at schools to enable parents to participate; (e) providing support and coordination for staff and parents to implement and sustain appropriate parent involvement from kindergarten through high school; and (f) using schools to connect students and families with community resources that provide educational enrichment and support. (pp. 369–369)

Anderson, Bickley, Keith, Trivette, and Singh (1995) identified four categories under which most major types of parental involvement have been classified. These categories were: (1) parent academic aspirations and expectations for their children; (2) participation in school activities and programs; (3) home activities and practices that support learning; and (4) communication with children about schools and schooling. In an earlier study, Berger (1991) reported five levels of parental involvement along a continuum from an active partner to a passive supporter: (1) parent as active partner and

educational leader at home and at school; (2) parent as decision maker; (3) parent as a school volunteer or paid employee; (4) parent as liaison between home and school (e.g., to support homework); and (5) parent as a supporter of educational goals.

Eccles and Harold (1996) presented five dimensions of involvement that parents initiated: (1) monitoring, in which parents responded to the teachers' request for helping their children with schoolwork; (2) volunteering in school activities; (3) involvement, which included parents' involvement in their children's daily activities both in school and at home; (4) parents contacting the school about their child's progress; and (5) parents contacting the school to find out how to provide extra help.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995; 1997), and Hoover Dempsey, Sandler, and Walker (2005) constructed a model of the parental involvement process which stated that parent decisions and choices about being involved were based on three specific psychological constructs: (1) the parents' personal construction of their parental role (Did parents believe they should be involved?); (2) parents' personal sense of efficacy for helping children succeed in school (Did parents believe that their involvement will make a difference?); and (3) parents' reaction to invitations from their children and the school. (Did parents believe that the school and the teacher wanted their involvement, or did parents believe that the child wanted or needed their involvement?).

Joyce Epstein (1992) of Johns Hopkins University identified a framework of six types of parental involvement. The framework was designed to help educators develop more comprehensive programs of school-family-community partnerships. Each type of involvement presented challenges that had to be met in order to involve all families.

When the framework was implemented, each type led to different results for parents, students, and schools. According to Epstein (1992) schools were encouraged to use the framework of the six types of involvement as a guide, but each school had to *choose* practices that would help achieve important goals and meet the needs of its students and families. The six types of parental involvement are discussed below.

1. ***Basic obligations of families.*** Supporting the nurturing and rearing of children is the most basic obligation of families. This type of involvement encourages families to establish a learner-friendly environment at home that will support the academic growth of their children at each grade level. Parent-support programs that assist families with health, nutrition, and other services, as well as home visits at transition points to pre-school, elementary, middle, and high school, have proven to be invaluable for parents (Epstein, 2001).

There are benefits to be realized by parents who participate in this type of involvement. Parents are apt to be more understanding of and have greater confidence about parenting their children at different stages of development and maturity as students proceed through school. Parents are more likely to be aware of the challenges of parenting and often find support from the school community and other parents (Epstein, 2001).

2. ***Basic obligations of schools.*** One of the most basic obligations of schools is communication. Communicating as a type of involvement is meant to foster effective communication from school to home and from home to school about school programs and activities as well as student progress. Practices such as conferences with parents,

arrangements for language translators, sending student work home for parents to review, and telephone or other forms of communication help to keep school and parents informed about the activities of the school (Epstein, 2001). Parents can benefit from this type of involvement through better understanding of the school's policies, more effective monitoring of student progress, responding appropriately to student problems, better interactions with school personnel, and ease of communication with the teacher and the school (Procidano & Fisher, 1992).

3. ***Involvement at school.*** Volunteering, as a type of parental involvement, is the recruiting and organizing of parents' help and support. One of the more popular practices associated with volunteering are school and classroom volunteer programs that help teachers, students, administrators, and parents. Additional parent volunteer activities include participation in parent rooms or parent centers, homework centers, annual events, sports events, and other activities to aid the safety and operation of school programs. Recruiting parents for volunteering could be accomplished with annual postcard surveys and telephone contacts (Epstein, Coates, Salinas, Sanders, & Simon, 1997).

Parents who volunteered in the school usually became more understanding of the teacher's job, school policies, and school practices. In the process, parents might develop more self-confidence in working within the school and working with their children; and many parents have reported a desire to improve their own education. Also, parents may come to the realization that they are welcomed at the school and may develop specific skills in volunteer work (Berger, 2000).

4. ***Involvement in learning activities at home.*** Learning at home is the type of

involvement that provides information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning.

Some examples include:

- Information skills packets sent home to assist parents in helping children.
- Information on homework policies, and how to monitor and discuss schoolwork at home.
- Information on how to assist students to improve skills on various class and school assessments.
- Regular schedule of homework that requires children to discuss and interact with parents on what they are learning in class.
- Calendars with suggested home and community activities for parents and children (e.g. summer learning packets or activities).
- Parents' suggestions for helping children reach goals each year and plan for college or work (Epstein, 2001).

Learning at home has been linked to students gaining skills, abilities, improved test scores, and developing positive attitudes towards schoolwork. Parents learn how to support, encourage and help students at home, and become more aware of the child as a learner. Epstein (2001) acknowledged that this type of involvement required every teacher to understand the connections between class lessons, student learners, and family as influential partners for children's learning.

5. ***Involvement in decision-making, governance, and advocacy.*** Decision-making used as a type of parental involvement includes the participation of parents and

families in school decisions and governance, and in the development of parent leaders and representatives. Practices involved in decision-making include becoming active in the schools' Parent Teacher Association or Parent Teacher Organization, advisory councils, committees for parent leadership and participation, and the inclusion of parents on school boards. An effective networking system that links parents with representatives of the school board and the state educational system are other practices involving decision-making (Henderson & Berla, 1995).

When parents are involved in decision-making, they generally feel a sense of ownership of the school and awareness that they had a voice in school decisions. Decision-making settings also afford parents with opportunities to share experiences, make connections with other families, and become more informed of school, regional, and national policies regarding education (Berger, 2000). Epstein (2001) found that getting parents involved in decision-making might prove to be challenging since many parents did not want to serve on committees or participate in leadership roles. However, most parents and families wanted their voices to be represented in school decisions. Because this could be an area of great difficulty for all educators, Epstein suggested that school personnel exercise caution and proceed with deliberate effort when formulating decision-making strategies.

6. ***Collaboration with community organizations.*** Collaborating with the community led to identifying and integrating resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development. This type of involvement included providing information for students and families on

community health, culture, recreation, social support, and other programs or services.

With school-community collaboration, parents have the opportunity to develop knowledge and make use of local resources to increase their skills and talents or to obtain needed services. School-community collaboration also gives parents the opportunity to interact with other families in community activities and to develop an awareness of the school's role in the community and the community's contribution to the school.

According to Swap (1993), "Models of parental involvement may be formal or informal, explicit or implicit, recognized or unrecognized, but they provide a consistent pattern of assumptions, goals, attitudes, behaviors, and strategies that help us to understand parent-educator relationships in the school" (p. 27). Recognizing that there were a variety of models, all with strengths and challenges, Swap suggested yet another model for schools to debate and carefully examine before choosing a model for their school. Swap said that examination of this model would help to avoid the unsystematic programming in parental involvement that exists in many schools (Swap, 1993).

Swap (1993) discussed four ways schools either resist or encourage family-school partnerships: (1) the school-to-home model, (2) the protective model, (3) the curriculum enrichment model, and (4) the partnership model of family-school relations. The following charts present a summary of each model's goal, assumptions, advantages, and disadvantages (Swap, 1993).

Chart 1: *Swap's Models of Parental Involvement--School-to-Home Transmission Model*

Goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To enlist parents in supporting the objectives of the school
Assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student achievement is improved when expectations and values between home and school are linked • Schools will incorporate family and community values and practices that contribute to school success • Parents will support the importance of school, emphasize school expectations, and ensure home conditions that support school success
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased children's school success • Increased communication between parent and school about the social and academic skills students need for success and about the parents' role in the development of those skills • Parents welcome information; especially parents who have not had access to information and seek such access for their children
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools' unwillingness to regard parents as equal partners with important strengths • Not all parents will have sufficient time and energy for parental involvement activities, especially if they are also dealing with housing, health, or employment issues or problems • Schools may not be capable of identifying clear boundaries between the roles of school and home • The risk of demeaning the value and importance of the family's culture in the effort to transmit the values and goals of the school • Differences in class or educational background may make teachers and parents feel uncomfortable or threatened; turf concerns may have to be addressed and negotiated

Note: Adapted from Swap's (1993) Model of Parental Involvement.

In the school-to-home transmission model (Swap, 1993), school personnel are aware of the fact that parents are not always as successful in preparing their children to

learn in school, as the school would want. Educators accepted this limitation and often initiated training to help parents. Training parents is the core component in this model. However, when parents do not participate, educators view this lack of participation as parents' lack of interest in their child's' education.

Chart 2: *Swap's Models of Parental Involvement--The Protective Model*

Goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To reduce potential conflicts between parents and educators by identifying and separating parents' and educators' roles
Assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents will delegate responsibility for educating their children to the school Parents will hold the school accountable for results Educators will accept this responsibility
Advantage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May be effective in protecting the school against parental intrusion
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May increase conflicts between home and school because there is no organizational structure for preventive problem-solving Does not seek home-school collaboration for improving school achievement Valuable resources from the home and community are not encouraged and may be rejected by the school community

Note: Adapted from Swap's (1993) Model of Parental Involvement.

The protective model of parental involvement in school seeks to protect the school from parental intrusion. This model increases conflicts between home and school by providing no opportunity for parent communication or problem-solving. This model also eliminates the opportunity for collaboration between home and school, and rejects vital resources for school enrichment and support from families and the community.

Chart 3: *Swap's Models of Parental Involvement—Curriculum Enrichment Model*

Goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To expand and extend the school's curriculum by including the knowledge, beliefs, values, experiences, cultural norms, and customs of each family
Assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning between home and school is important and parent, school, and teacher relationships are built on mutual respect • When the values and culture of families are not included in the school curriculum, the result is the perpetuation of destructive, inaccurate, and hurtful beliefs and attitudes about immigrants and minorities • Parents and educators should work together to enrich curriculum objectives and content • Both parents and teachers are seen as experts and resources in the process of discovery
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parental involvement is integrated into children's learning • The expert knowledge and skills of parents add to school resources and provide opportunities for parents and other adults to learn from each other • The contributions of immigrant and other minorities who have not traditionally participated in schools are especially welcomed
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents and educators may not have adequate time, resources, support for involvement • The number of different cultures represented may make curricular adaptation complex. • Schools must decide which culture should be taught, or if the curriculum should reflect and value the diversity of all the children • The school's mission and goals for educating children of diverse backgrounds may not be acceptable or understood by all parents • Addressing and negotiating the differences in socioeconomic and educational status may be uncomfortable for both parents and teachers

Note: Adapted from Swap's (1993) Model of parental involvement.

The curriculum enrichment model was designed to expand and enrich the school curriculum by including contributions from families and the community. This model works on the premise that parents are important and that they have expert knowledge about their children. Additionally, schools adopting this model assume that interactions between the school and parents will enhance the educational objectives of the school. The rationale supporting this approach is that the school curriculum will more accurately reflect the views, values, history, and learning styles of families and their children. Another benefit is that schools who adopt this model will be able to draw on parents to share their expertise by virtue of their education and careers (Swap, 1993).

Chart 4: *Swap's Models of Parental Involvement—Partnership Model*

Goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For parents and educators to work together to accomplish a common mission: success for all children
Assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The schools may need to create and implement new policies, practices, structures, roles, and attitudes in order to realize this mission • Collaboration among parents, community representatives, and educators is expected. The task is enormous and no one group acting alone can accomplish it
Advantage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working in partnership, the schools' culture will be changed to represent the diversity of the population. This conversion requires mutual support, and joint problem-solving
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most difficult model to implement • Educators and parents will no longer operate in isolation. Both will need ongoing training in how to interact and work collaboratively with each other • Requires a leader who values parental involvement and district policies that support parental involvement

Note: Adapted from Swap's (1993) Model of Parental Involvement

The partnership model is recommended for schools with declining student performance, diverse population, and the absence of agreement among parents and educators about the definition of success. Swap encouraged the adoption of this model as well as the home-school model because both models focus on the values of the families and educators, and the needs of the children. Swap also emphasized the need for schools to reach out to parents of different ethnic, racial, language, and socioeconomic backgrounds (Swap, 1993).

Practices and Programs that Encourage High School Parental Involvement

Several studies concentrated on practices at the high-school level, other studies involved programs, while additional studies combined research on both practices and programs. Although many schools implement practices designed to encourage parental involvement, many parents often feel intimidated by the institutional structure of school and schooling (Decker & Decker, 2001). Thus, parents must be able to trust the system before practices of involvement can be successful.

Research by Agronick, Clark, O'Donnell, and Steuve (2009) concentrated on both parental involvement practices and programs at the high-school level. The study was conducted for the Institute of Education Sciences. It reviewed the literature on parental involvement from 1997–2008. Participants in the study included parents of students in grades 6-12. The purpose was to identify strategies for involving parents of adolescents in their child's education. The practices found are consistent with the spirit and regulations of NCLB and Title 1 requirements for parental involvement. The following

section summarizes the authors' findings for parental involvement practices and programs. They include: (1) general information, (2) information exchange on individual student performance and progress, (3) special events, (4) school volunteer opportunities, and (5) parent education. Each is explained below.

1. *General information* exchange focuses on practices to improve parent-school communication and the timely flow of information. Schools employ multiple structures for getting information out to parents—newsletters, school Web sites, automatic phone systems, television, and press releases. Examples of information exchange at the high-school level include: high-school transition night for incoming freshmen, beginning-of-the-year open houses where parents are invited to follow their children's schedule for an evening, and the use of an automated phone system on which families receive phone calls about school updates, emergencies, and attendance.

2. *Information exchange on individual student performance and progress* is achieved through parent-teacher meetings and other communications, parent-child and parent-school learning compacts, and parent-student homework assignments. School Web sites give high-school parents an access code that allows them to monitor their child's grades, homework, and absences.

3. *Special events* include efforts by the school to involve parents in decision-making activities, such as development of a school-wide improvement action plan and parental involvement policies. Examples at the high-school level include events that educate parents on Advanced Placement programs, International Night celebrating

diversity within the school community, and an annual talent night. The school provides buses to and from the event so no one need be left out.

4. *School volunteer opportunities* offer parents numerous ways to volunteer: tutoring at-risk students, engaging in school-improvement efforts, participating in parent-teacher organizations, and serving on school councils and boards. High-school parents are encouraged to volunteer to do community-service projects with their children, run concession stands at high-school games, or join a parent network

5. *Parent education* encompasses school-sponsored information sessions on topics such as adolescent development, college preparation, and technology. Topics that are determined with parental input address the needs of families. Such topics may include testing, teen mental-health issues, drug use, bullying, and harassment (Agronick et al., 2009).

Five programs met the Agronick et al. (2009) definition of a program. Namely, the program must have parental involvement as its primary goal; have at least one or more practices linked to this goal; include a parent organization; and have personnel or volunteers assigned to the program. The authors obtained information on each of the programs from participant interviews and from public records.

1. The Parent Institute Designed Parental Involvement Education Programs for Quality Education (PIQE). Each program consists of nine-week training opportunities that provide parents of students in grades K-12 with information on how schools work and how parents can support students through postsecondary education. The course is taught by trained facilitators and is presented in the parents' primary language.

Evaluation of the program's effectiveness reported that children of parents attending and graduating from the PIQE program achieved a high school graduation rate of 93%. The evaluation report also noted positive effects for a range of parent outcomes, knowledge of self-efficacy, and active participation in home-learning activities.

2. Building Successful Partnerships Programs are programs sponsored by the National Parent-Teachers Association (PTA). This program trains PTA members with children in grades K-12 to conduct workshops for parents and families on parental involvement and on the organization's standards for parental involvement. No evaluation of this program was found.

3. Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS) are programs sponsored by the Center on School, Family, and Community Partnership. This program involves parents in students' homework assignments on a weekly or biweekly basis. Parents' participation is based on personal experience, not on specific expertise on a content area. Each of the student assignments is designed with a section for parent-teacher communication. The program serves both English- and non-English-speaking parents.

4. The Mega Skills Program is a product of the Home and School Institute. The goal is to reinforce student study skills and work habits. Teachers are trained to conduct workshops and mini-training-sessions for parents and also to equip parents and families with home-learning activities tailored to different age and ability groups. The evaluation results reported increases in scores on standardized tests, increased parent attendance at open houses, and parent leadership in parent-teacher organizations at the middle and high school level.

5. Math and Parent Partnerships (MAPPS) are two-hour stand-alone workshops that teach parents and children in grades K-12 about a specific topic covered in school math classes. The program also offers a leadership development class designed to train parents to become session leaders. According to the project's Web site, middle- and high-school students try harder on math problems after their parents have been involved in the program.

6. Schools Reaching Out is a community-based program that is part of The Institute for Responsive Education. In a report on this program, Davis (1991) found that:

The potential of a parental involvement program will be enhanced if it is treated as an integrated strategy with three distinct features: a means for attracting family members to the school (the parent center); a means of reaching families at home (the home visitors); and a clearly supported, teacher-controlled way of engaging parents in improving curriculum and instruction through the creation of new kinds of connections with parents and other community resources.” (p. 380)

Supporting Davis's position, Swap (1990) reported that findings from the Schools Reaching Out program suggested that the academic achievement of low-income students can be raised if teachers believe in success for all children and if parents are involved in helping their children achieve academic success.

Summary

The current literature describes how parental involvement at all school levels is conceptualized, studied, and implemented. It is important not only to uncover the reasons

parents become involved and remain involved but also to examine how parents describe their experience of involvement and how these experiences shape their ongoing behavior and choices. Although incomplete, previous research suggests that parents' and teachers' beliefs may be an important link in understanding and promoting sustainable parental involvement. Current parental involvement research often neglects parents' descriptions of their experiences and fails to include the full range of perceptions and practices of diverse parents across diverse populations. Cultural differences that are not recognized by the school, such as socioeconomics, child-rearing practices, and values within different ethnic groups, may pose disconnects between the school and the home. Future research must address the limitations of traditional methods that eliminate parents' voices and neglect the richness of parental involvement through parents' own narratives.

Overall the literature on parental involvement is uniformly positive, and the concerns regarding parental involvement appear to be the same internationally. While most research agrees that parental involvement is essential, few studies have provided opportunities for parents to share their experience of involvement within the school setting. Research on parental involvement at the high-school level is limited. Available studies examine parental involvement and its influence on the benefits for student achievement and school programs. Several studies reported benefits to parents that include more confidence in the school, increased self-confidence, and increased likelihood that the parents would continue their own education (LaBahn, 1995).

Parents and teachers, wherever they live, have similar aspirations for the children they rear and teach. Researchers agree that students, parents, educators, schools, and the

community benefit from effective parental involvement programs and practices, and that parental involvement is related to student achievement. Other research findings state that both parents and educators recognize the need for involvement, but parents are often unsure of what their roles should be. Parents have different needs and interests, and are willing to be involved if they perceive they are treated as equal partners. Even with the best of intentions, parents have a myriad of issues that hinder involvement, and these must be carefully considered when implementing parental involvement programs and practices.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative research study was to investigate the phenomena associated with parents' descriptions of their experience of involvement in their child's high school.

Through reading about qualitative research methodologies and qualitative research methods courses, I discovered that phenomenology is a way to understand individuals' shared experiences. Phenomenological methodology owes its origin to phenomenology, the philosophy that dates back to the work of Husserl (Wilson, 2002). Husserl (1913) stated that phenomenology is the study of how people describe things and experience them through their senses. One of the most basic assumptions of phenomenology is that one can only know something to be true by deliberately or intentionally thinking about the perceptions and meanings of the issue being studied (Patton, 1990). Phenomenology is the interpretive study of human experience (von Eckartsberg, 1998).

As defined by Creswell (2007), "Phenomenology is a research strategy of inquiry in which the researcher identifies the essence of human experiences about a phenomenon as described by participants" (p.13). According to Daniels (2005), the phenomenological design approach is about understanding the phenomenon through the eyes and experiences of participants and does not test a hypotheses or a theoretical model. Moustakas (1994) stated that phenomenology commits itself to descriptions of experiences, not explanations or analyses. Supporting this position, von Eckartsberg

(1998) suggested that the aim of phenomenology is to examine and clarify human situations and experiences “as they spontaneously occur in the course of daily life” (p. 3).

Researcher Background

My perspective and beliefs about how people make meaning of their experiences influenced the selection of the design for this research study. I believe that everyone makes meaning of their lives, events, and experiences for themselves. No two individuals are exactly alike, and no two individuals have exactly the same experiences. Therefore, no two individuals interpret, visualize, perceive, comprehend, or critique their experiences in the same way. However, different people are capable of describing experiences and events in ways that have commonalities with others’ experiences. For that reason I will now describe my background and experiences.

My beliefs, personal involvement, and professional background in parent involvement influenced my interest in this research study. I believe that parental involvement should be an ongoing collaborative, comprehensive, purposeful, and constant process designed to ensure parents’ connection to their children as well as the school’s culture and purpose. Involvement types, programs, and practices, to the extent possible, should meet existing needs of and demands on the family and the school.

I strongly believe that parental involvement is a combination of active participation and commitment on the part of the parent to the school and to the student. Parental commitment includes such things as encouraging the child, being supportive, reassuring, and understanding. Parental activity and participation mean doing something

that is observable both inside and outside the home, such as helping with homework; discussing school activities, policies, and practices; and visiting the library. I also believe that parental involvement is dictated by a parent's opinions about his or her specific parental functions and responsibilities to the child.

My personal involvement in education stems from interacting with schools and teachers as my two children progressed through 12 years of public education. My professional involvement includes my nine-year tenure as a middle-school teacher of mathematics, two years as the school district's Parent Involvement Facilitator for a Title 1 Program, and 11 years as the Director of the school district's Title 1 Program. More recently, as family liaison to a university college of education, I presented on a variety of parental involvement topics and issues to parents and pre-service teachers. At the local level, I conducted parental involvement workshops and seminars at scheduled elementary, middle, and high-school professional-development days. Finally, I bring to this research many years of study in parental involvement issues at every grade level.

Because the purpose of this study was to examine and describe parents' descriptions of their experiences of involvement in their child's high school, I deemed a qualitative research method to be suitable for the investigation. This method allowed me to present a detailed view of the research topic and share the findings while describing the meaning of the experience from the participants' point of view (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Creswell, 1998; Morse & Richards, 2002).

Theoretical Perspective

When conducting this phenomenological study, I relied on the meaning of the experiences from the participants rather than on theory. A truth-seeking perspective was taken instead of a perspective grounded in a specific social-science theory (Creswell, 1998). Creswell (1998) stated that human experience makes sense to those who live it, and the researcher must maneuver through a neutral understanding influenced by participants' subjective experiences. The essences of the participants' experience were honored, as this experience is central to the tradition of phenomenology.

Theoretical Framework

The body of research in the field of parental involvement that has been developed over the last four decades has not been well connected to theory. One reason for this is the lack of clear definitions and standardized measures for evaluating parental involvement outcomes. In addition, there have been few attempts to pull parental involvement research together into theoretical models (National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools, 2001).

In this review, I found no theoretical models employed when examining parents' description of their experience of involvement at the high-school level. The models that have been developed focus more on the concept of parental involvement or they integrate family and community connections with schools. Kohl, Lengua, and McMahon (2000) examined the strengths and weaknesses of several parental-involvement models in the literature: Chrispeel's (1991) model describing how school, home, and community should

work together; Swap's (1993) models of parental involvement; Eccles and Harold's (1996) five dimensions of parent-initiated involvement; Epstein's (1995) six types of school-family-community partnerships; and Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) model of the parental involvement process. The above studies were addressed in the literature review.

According to Kohl et al. (2000), Epstein's model is the only one that has gone through extensive review by the research community. Epstein's model emphasized that children are best supported when families and schools have shared goals and work collaboratively and in partnership with one another. Kohl et al. (2000) pointed out that the focus of Epstein's model was on teacher and school-initiated behaviors rather than parent-initiated involvement. The other models have not received as much attention and scrutiny as Epstein's model and have not been widely tested. As a result,

When researchers have studied parental involvement, most have done so without links to a theoretical framework or model because the findings are difficult to compare and interpret. In addition, the findings do not inform theory and do not lend themselves to building upon each other. (National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools, 2001, p. 3)

Bracketing

In order to understand a given phenomenon, one attempts to suspend one's biases by using the process of bracketing. The aim of bracketing is to lay aside what one thinks he or she already knows about the lived experience under investigation. In other words,

the researcher brackets his or her views on that experience in order to view the experience freshly (van Manen, 2002). Bracketing is accomplished when the researcher sets aside his or her experiences, as much as possible, and undertakes a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon under examination (Moustakas, 1994). The entire analytical process examines and describes the lived experience from the ones who produced the experience and not from another person's interpretations. The interpretations define the commonalities of the lived experience of the phenomenon. My own thinking and my experiences of the phenomenon were not subject to any form of analysis (Patton, 1990).

Site and Participant Selection

The site selected was centrally located and convenient for the researcher. The administration of the school was receptive and very interested in the study. The staff provided opportunities for me to recruit parent participants by attending parent meetings and workshops. In addition, provisions for interview locations were made available. The school was a low-income urban high school with an ethnically diverse population located in a western state of the United States. The most current school enrollment figure is 1,168 students in grades 9, 10, 11, and 12. The student demographics are: 760 (65.1%) Hispanic students; 250 (21.4%) White students; 68 (5.8%) Asian students; 40 (3.4%) African American students; 25 (2.1%) Multi-Race students; and 16 (1.4%) American Indian and Alaskan Native students.

Ethnically diverse students make up 78.6% of the student body, and White students comprise 21.4%. An indication of the low-income status of the site is the fact

that 61% of the student population receives free and reduced lunch. The 161 students identified as Limited English Proficient are 13.8% of the student body.

The site employs a fulltime bilingual Parent Involvement Facilitator, whose responsibilities include providing opportunities for parents to become involved in school activities with a goal of raising student academic achievement. Some of the activities that the Parent Facilitator coordinates include: Parent University classes, Back-to-School Family Open House Night, Night of All Nations, Parent Visit Day, Parent Technology Night, Weekly Parent Education Nights, Lip Sync, Advanced Placement Night, Incoming Freshman Open-House Night, High School Proficiency Education (HSPE) Night, and Operation Graduation Night. In addition to the above duties, she assists parents in communicating between school and home and coordinates a monthly parent newsletter in both English and Spanish.

In 2008 the study site was part of a district-wide parental involvement survey. Parents responded to 12 Likert type items regarding parental involvement at the school. The lowest level of agreement occurred on the item; “My child’s school wants to hear my ideas about how to make the school better.” The highest level of agreement was found on the item; “School employees are polite to me when I call the school.”

Additional findings from the survey showed that the top three ways parents reported they received information about the school were: phone calls from the school (27%), from their child’s folder (18%), and from district communication with their child about the school (16%). Twenty-four percent of the parents reported that all of their child’s teachers post information on Infinite Campus. Infinite Campus is a Learning

Community Management System (LCMS) that many schools use for school and class organization. It provides district, school, and classroom-level Web site support for administrators, parents, teachers, and students from kindergarten through twelfth grade. The Infinite Campus program is designed to improve communication among parents, students, teachers, and administrators. Infinite Campus provides a single point of access to key information students and parents need: homework, grades, attendance, progress reports, activity schedules, athletic scores, lunch menus, school news, and school resources.

The final site selected was actually the second choice for the study. Another site originally considered was excluded due to a change in administration, process delays, and time constraints. Also, the original study site was not as convenient for me.

The participant sampling for this phenomenological research study was purposeful. According to Patton (2002), purposeful sampling is done to increase the usefulness of information obtained from small samples. Patton (1990) stated that, “The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich data for in-depth study” (p. 169). I selected individuals who could generate data that shed light on the issue central to the purpose of this research and who could provide insights needed to obtain the desired richness of qualitative data, as recommended by Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2009). In order to acquire an adequate number of participants for the study, I used snowball sampling. Snowballing is a method of expanding the sample by asking participants to recommend others for interviewing (Creswell, 2008).

The number of participants needed for a phenomenological study varies significantly and depends on the nature of the phenomenon being studied. This is because the aim of phenomenological research is to explore the quality of the data, not the quantity (Patton, 1990). Boyd (2001) regarded from two to ten participants as sufficient to reach saturation. Based on these recommendations, I selected a sample size of between 8 and 10 parents. This number accounted for no more 10% of the tenth-grade parents who had students enrolled at the site as ninth graders.

Parents of tenth-grade students were selected to be the population for this study since their children have had a year of high-school experience and the parents will have had time to establish a relationship with the school. With this sample, the school and parents would have two additional years to implement any ideas or information gleaned from the research before the child graduates. Also, having had only one year of high-school experience, the parents and students are relatively new to the school, making it easier to implement changes because they were not overly familiar with old practices and might be more amenable to change.

Parents were recruited for participation during parent-night activities or by telephone. A prepared script soliciting their cooperation (see Appendix A and B) was read to potential participants. The script was written and read in both English and Spanish, as appropriate. A flyer written in both English and Spanish (see Appendix C and D) was then distributed to parents who indicated an interest in participating in the study. The Information Sheet also written in both English and Spanish (see Appendix E and F) was provided to potential participants during recruitment and again prior to the interview

session. Parents were asked to provide their name, contact number, and language preference on the flyer and to return it to the researcher.

Potential participants were contacted by telephone within one week following initial recruitment. Questions pertinent to the study and their participation were addressed both times. A copy of the research-study approval letter from the site administrator was available for participants to read (see Appendix G and H).

Data Collection

The purpose of data collection in qualitative research is to provide evidence for the experience being investigated (Polkinghorne, 2005). The evidence in this study was in the form of descriptions people gave to their experience. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2003), qualitative research data may include interviewing, document collection, audio or video recordings, and other official records. This study employed interviewing as the main source for data collection. During each interview session, notes were taken.

Interviews

This phenomenological research study used interviews and researcher notes taken during the interview sessions as the sources of data. The interview sessions were semi-structured with open-ended questions (see Appendix I and J). Hancock (2001) provided the following explanation and justification for using semi-structured interviews:

Semi structured interviews (sometimes referred to as focused interviews) involve a series of open-ended questions based on the topic areas the

researcher wants to cover. The open-ended nature of the question defines the topic under investigation and provides opportunities for both interviewer and interviewee to discuss some topics in more detail. If the interviewee has difficulty answering a question or provides only a brief response, the interviewer can use cues or prompts to encourage the interviewee to consider the question further. In a semi structured interview the interviewer also has the freedom to probe the interviewee to elaborate on the original response or to follow a line of inquiry introduced by the interviewee. (p. 9)

The site selected for this study has a large number of Spanish-speaking parents. In order to include these potential participants, all forms of communication, oral and written, were translated into the Spanish language. Of the four Spanish-speaking parents, three were capable of participating in the interview in English. During the interview of the one Spanish-speaking participant who could not complete the interview in English, the translator conducted the interview in Spanish (see Appendix J). Prior to this interview I met with the translator and discussed the semi-structured open-ended procedure. I was present with the translator and the Spanish-speaking interviewee but did not participate in the questioning process. The entire interview was tape-recorded with verbal permission from the participant. The translator later transcribed the interview tape from Spanish to English verbatim without personal interpretation. From the translator's transcribed English version, I relied on meanings as they emerged subjectively from the interview participant. This procedure mirrors the process outlined by Temple (1997) and Temple and Young (2004) in the use of translators.

I conducted the remaining eight interviews in English. Each interview was recorded, with permission from the interviewees. The duration of each interview was between 30 and 40 minutes and followed an established interview process. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym in order to protect the interviewee's privacy. The interviews were recorded on a separate cassette tape, and each cassette was labeled with the assigned pseudonym. As soon as possible after each interview, I listened to the recording and made additional notes. I then transcribed the interview session and noted key words, phrases, and statements in order to ensure the accuracy of participants' responses and allow the voices of research participants to speak. The interview format and questions are a modified version of Kvale's (1996) types of interview questions. See Appendix J for the open-ended semi-structured interview questions for this research study.

Notes

Miles and Huberman (1984) emphasized that the researcher's notes are a valuable tool for recording what the researcher hears, sees, experiences, and thinks in the course of collecting and reflecting on the process. This is because during the interview process, researchers are absorbed in the data-collection and may fail to reflect on what is happening. It is important for the researcher to maintain a balance between descriptive notes and reflective notes, such as hunches, impressions, and feelings (Miles & Huberman, 1984)

According to Patton (2002), note-taking can serve at least four purposes: (1) notes taken during the interview help the interviewer formulate new questions as the interview progresses and may be appropriate for checking comments made early in the interview; (2) reviewing field notes before transcripts are done can stimulate early insights that may be relevant to pursue in subsequent interviews; (3) Note-taking about what is said will facilitate later analysis, including locating important quotations from the tape itself; and (4) notes can serve as a backup in the event the recorder malfunctions or a tape is erased during transcription.

Data Analysis

As the study was guided by a phenomenological methodology, I abstracted themes from descriptions made by participants in order to apply the data analysis technique appropriate to this methodology. The method of data analysis for this study was interpretational, using data from interviews and researcher notes of these interviews. Interpretational analysis refers to the examination of the data for themes that are descriptive and may be used to explain the phenomenon studied. According to Giorgi and Giorgi (2003), in phenomenology, there are no perfect descriptions, only adequate or inadequate ones. Adequate descriptions are capable of yielding distinctive themes of the phenomenon and inadequate ones are generally vague and cannot be used for data. The method is also descriptive in the sense that the end result of the analytical process is a description of the experiences provided by the participants (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003).

The organization and analysis of the interview data will be a combination of Kvale's (1996) and Creswell's (2007) processes for analyzing qualitative data. As such, I analyzed the data collected during the study by: (1) reading and studying the transcribed interviews to get a general sense of all ideas presented, (2) re-reading and labeling the transcripts to identify pertinent statements and phrases, (3) extracting significant statements and phrases from each transcript and recording them on 5" x 8" index cards, (4) organizing these statements and phrases into themes, and (5) using a color-coded system to label specific themes on 5" x 8" index cards.

The entire analysis process included extracting shared themes while retaining the essence of the lived experience from those who produced the experience. The interpretations defined the commonalities of the lived experience across individuals. Neither my own experiences of the phenomenon nor any theoretical descriptions of the phenomenon were analyzed (Patton, 1990).

The process of identifying themes was simplified by the use of colored coding of each theme. The themes that were repeated most often were easily identified through this process. By placing each color-coded theme on a separate 5" x 8" index card, it was easy to select the dominant themes without repeating the process of rereading and sorting. The entire analysis process included extracting shared themes while retaining the essence of the lived experience from those who produced the experience. The interpretations defined the commonalities of the lived experience across individuals. Neither my own experiences of the phenomenon nor any theoretical description of the phenomenon were analyzed (Patton, 1990).

After transcribing the tapes of all nine participants, rereading my notes for common threads, and organizing responses on 5" x 8" index cards, I was able to identify four themes that had been repeated in different ways by different parents. All nine parents discussed technology and parental involvement. Seven parents talked about the economy and parent work schedules, potential for parent growth, and parental involvement outside the school. Therefore, these four themes emerged as dominant themes in the research. Other potential themes discussed by some parents that I considered using but did not, included: other forms of communication (four parents); own parents' involvement (three parents); role construction (three parents); volunteering in the school (three parents); and decision-making and advocacy (one parent). These themes were not adopted because fewer than half of the nine parents mentioned them during the interview.

Limitations

There are three limitations inherent in this phenomenological research study. First are the limited boundaries of using only one school site. While it is not unusual to use one site, or even one participant in phenomenological research, such a limitation influences the applicability of the findings (Patton, 1990). The site for this study was one urban high school attended primarily by low-income minority students.

Second, parents who chose to voluntarily participate in the study may have had different views regarding their involvement in their child's high school from those who opted not to participate. This could potentially result in a bias. In future research, this problem could be addressed by encouraging parents to present their descriptions of their

experience of involvement during parent meetings, parent-teacher conferences, home visits, and during informal conversations with teachers and principals.

Finally, views of the site administrators, teachers, and students were not included in this study. Although their voices were not within the scope of this study, I acknowledge their important contributions to parental involvement programs and practices. Based on these limitations, the study may not be generalizable to other study populations.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is an important concept in qualitative research and is an issue that should be considered during the research design process as well as during data collection (Glesne, 1999). According to Guba and Lincoln (1994) and Glesne (2006), trustworthiness is concerned with validity and reliability. Trustworthiness can be established through spending sufficient time at the research site and by focusing in detail on the elements that are essential to the study (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This is of particular importance in phenomenological studies.

Validity Issues

Validity refers to the notion that an idea is grounded and supported, and thus one can have confidence in it (Polkinghorne, 1989). For a phenomenological study, validity concerns the question of whether the general description provides an accurate portrait of the features and connections that appear in the data that is collected (Polkinghorne, 1989). In other words, did the researcher analyze and transform the data in a way that

reflects the participants' experiences of the phenomenon being investigated?

Validity also depends on whether the researcher has influenced the participants' descriptions, whether the transcription is accurate, and if the researcher considered whether there are conclusions other than what the researcher has reached (Polkinghorne, 1989). It is important for the researcher to accept the participants' descriptions as they are recorded, and this is in itself a factor affecting validity. In this study, participants' descriptions of the phenomenon were transcribed verbatim.

Finally, the tests of validity in phenomenological studies are based on the aim of phenomenological description to guide the reader to his or her own experience of the phenomenon. If the reader is able to relate to the descriptions through his or her own experience of the phenomenon, then the study is said to be valid (Seamon, 2002).

Reliability

Reliability in phenomenological studies is not based on a predefined scale of measurement (Seamon, 2002). Reliability can be achieved through inter-subjective corroboration. That is, as discussed by van Manen (2002), can other people who are interested in this phenomenon find in their own experiences what the phenomenologist found in the study? The main point to be remembered with this research approach is not so much whether another position with respect to the data could be adopted, but whether a reader adopting the same viewpoints as articulated by the researcher can see what the researcher saw (Seamon, 2002).

Ethical Considerations

According to Morse and Richards (2002) the ethicality of any research should be examined as the process of inquiry unfolds. Confidentiality was a primary ethical concern, and no detrimental procedures were employed for the sake of data collection. In keeping with this concern, I removed the original names from the transcripts, used pseudonyms in the final report, and stored all the research data in a safe place. To ensure that no identities were revealed, I contacted potential participants directly by phone and met them at a pre-arranged location of their choosing. The participants were provided with informed consents and recruitment letters that explained their rights of confidentiality and their privilege of withdrawal. The study and design was rigorously scrutinized and approved by the school district's Institutional Review Board and the University of Nevada, Reno's Institutional Review Board.

Summary

Chapter 3 addressed the qualitative phenomenological research design for this research study, which focused on parents' descriptions of their experience of involvement in their child's high school. Chapter 3 described in detail the site selection, participant selection, data collection and the use of bracketing, limitations, data analysis, validation, and human subject protection. It also described my background and experiences in parental involvement issues. Participants were selected for the study using a purposeful sampling method. The final stage of data analysis involved identifying themes in the data,

culminating in the development of a richly woven story that describes the experiences of parents and their involvement at the high school level.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to examine parents' descriptions of their experience of involvement in their child's high school. This chapter focuses on participants' responses to interview questions that served as the tool to obtain data for this phenomenological study. The findings produced insight into experiences of the participants and generated themes that better explain the phenomenon of parental involvement in their child's high school. This chapter is divided into two sections: (1) profiles of each participant and a summary of his or her interview and (2) the four themes that emerged from the data analysis.

This phenomenological qualitative study was small by design. Boyd (2001) stated that data-rich information can be acquired from a small number of participants. The sample consisted of nine parents of high-school students and was composed of eight female parents and one male parent. These participants ranged in age from 31 to 51 and represented a variety of ethnic groups.

Profile of Participants and Summary of Their Interview

A brief profile of each study participant is presented along with a summary of his or her interview with the purpose of personalizing them to the reader and to allow for additional understanding of their lived experiences. The parents who participated in the study were similar in that they were all parents of tenth-grade students who were attending the school. The story of their involvement presented many experiences that were similar and several experiences that were different. Chart 5 identifies the gender;

age; ethnicity; primary language; highest degree achieved; and the number, age, and gender of children residing in the home during the study.

Chart 5: Participant Profiles

Pseudonyms	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Primary Language	Highest Degree Achieved	Number, Age, and Gender of Children in the Home
Claudia	Female	33	Hispanic	Spanish	High School Diploma	3 Children 16 – Female 15 – Male 10 – Male
Audrey	Female	51	African American	English	Two Years of College	1 Child 15 – Female
Linda	Female	32	Caucasian	English	High School Diploma	3 Children 16 – Female 14 – Male 12 – Male
Rosa	Female	31	Hispanic	Spanish		2 Children 16 – Female 11- Male
Melissa	Female	48	Caucasian	English	High School Diploma	2 Children 16 – Male 10 – Male
Keith	Male	35	Caucasian	English	High School Diploma	2 Children 16 – Female 12 – Male
Barbara	Female	47	Caucasian	English	High School Diploma	2 Children 16 – Female 14 – Male
Mariah	Female	36	Hispanic	Spanish	One Year of College	2 Children 16– Female 14 – Male
Beth	Female	40	Hispanic	English	High School Diploma	3 Children 17 – Female 16 – Female 12 – Female

The profiles of each participant added to my understanding of their lived experiences of involvement in their child's high school. During the interview process several participants shared school experiences and feelings that they had not thought about in years. Not all of the participants shared the same types of information. Several participants talked about their own parents' involvement, while others talked only about their involvement in their child's high school.

Audrey

Audrey was African American, 51 years old, married, and the biological mother of four girls. Her children ranged in age from 16 to 29 years old. Only one child, the 16-year-old, was currently living at home. Audrey came from a small family (three girls), with a large extended family located throughout the United States. Her parents were from the southern United States; however, she was raised in the northwest. Audrey was employed full-time and had completed two years of college. Her experiences in school involvement made her want to return to school and complete her college training. She had worked in various school and hospital settings.

Audrey acknowledged that her family valued education. She stated that her parents believed that dropping out of school was not an option; and they supported her and her two sisters throughout elementary, middle, and high school. She described herself as "being someone who always loved school."

Audrey prided herself as being knowledgeable about the school system and what her child needed for academic success. She especially liked the Infinite Campus program

that provided information on her child's academic progress and contact with the teachers. Audrey saw her involvement as part of her responsibility as a parent. She stated that helping with homework, volunteering at the school whenever she could, and communicating with teachers and counselors were important for her daughter's academic success.

Involvement at the school opened Audrey's eyes to many new possibilities for improving academically as well as socially. During her volunteer work, Audrey developed friendships with other parents, and together they provided suggestions for school improvement to the school administrator. Not all of their suggestions were implemented; however, the school was always willing to listen to the parents.

Barbara

Barbara was Caucasian, 47 years old, married, and the mother of six children: a 14-year-old son, 16-year-old daughter, and four others aged 22, 23, 24, and 26. Barbara only provided the gender of the two children presently living at home. She proudly stated that all of her children have been successful in school. The tenth-grader carried a 4.12 grade point average. Barbara was a high-school graduate but had no college experience. When education and its value were discussed with the interviewer, she did not mention college attendance as a must for her children.

She worked full-time, and her work schedule prevented her from being actively involved in her child's school. Communication with the school was mostly through Infinite Campus and an occasional telephone call. Barbara stated that since her child was

an A student with excellent attendance and no discipline problems, she did not see the need for any involvement.

Barbara thought the school encouraged parental involvement, but they were not doing much to make sure it happened. When asked what school parental-involvement practices had helped her, she stated, “NONE!!!” According to her, “There is a big difference between encouraging and practice. Encouraging is wishing the parents could come, and practicing is making sure the school employs effective communication so that parents will want to come to the school.”

Beth

Beth was 40 years old, a divorced Hispanic mother, and was raising her three girls, ages 12, 16, and 17. Beth owned her own business and considered herself financially stable. She stated that as the owner of a business, she was still at work when the girls came home from school. She said she maintained communication with her three girls through phone calls, even when she was working at the shop. Beth was proud to say that the girls helped with household chores, which gave her ample time to attend to family- and business-related errands.

When she was in the ninth grade, Beth accompanied her older sister to the United States and established permanent residence in this area. Based on her interview it was unclear whether she graduated from high school or what type of business she owned. Instead of continuing her education, Beth chose to work and later opened her own

business. To her, education was very important; and she tried to emphasize the importance of studying and graduating from college to her girls.

Beth found time to volunteer at the school as well as attend various school activities. She stated that education in the United States was different from education in her native Mexico. She was learning things that she didn't know and had never heard of before, such as using the Internet to keep track of the children's progress. Beth liked the high school and was especially thankful for the parental-involvement activities at the school. Recently she decided to enroll in college, get her bachelor's degree, and pursue a teaching credential in high-school education.

Beth and her older sister maintained a close relationship and often relied on each other for emotional support. The two families planned and participated in family activities throughout the year. Neither sister had any desire to return to Mexico to live.

Claudia

Claudia was a 33-year-old single Hispanic mother with three children, a 10-year-old son, a 15-year-old son, and a 16-year-old daughter. Claudia grew up with both her mother and father in Mexico, but she was now very happy with her life in the United States. Her husband was working and living in Mexico, and she felt that soon the entire family would be leaving for Mexico. This prospect did not make her happy because, she stated, life in Mexico was not always good for the children.

She defined parental involvement as being there for your children and doing the very best that you could to give them everything they needed. She said that she was lucky

to have a job that let her leave if there was an emergency with the children, but she acknowledged that she did not have the privilege of leaving work and going to everything.

Claudia had mixed feelings about the high school that her son attended. The school had its good and bad characteristics, she said. She reported feeling welcome only at times. At the beginning of the school year, she was called to the school because of a discipline problem with her son. She handled the situation but felt that the teachers did not believe what she had to say about her child. On another occasion, she felt the teachers thought that she did not know what she was talking about. However, she believed her presence at the school encouraged her son to do better in class.

Although she experienced these problems, she still believed in the importance of education and parental involvement. Claudia felt that the school encouraged parental involvement; however, she would have liked to see more opportunities for working parents. She attended parent meetings because she wanted to know how her son was doing and who was teaching him. She felt that these meetings were okay when she could get past the teachers' perception of what they think you know and do not know.

Claudia would have liked the school to communicate more with parents and not just call when there was a problem. The parent-teacher conference was the one practice that she felt good about. She used the school's Infinite Campus technology to keep track of how her children were doing in school. To Claudia, this practice was cold and impersonal; she preferred face-to-face interactions with the school personnel. During the

interview she recommended three other parents for participation in the study, two of whom joined the study.

Keith

Keith was 35 years old, a Caucasian single parent of two children: a 12-year-old son and a 16-year-old daughter. His wife and the mother of the children died when the children were very young.

Keith completed high school and served in the military. Following the death of his wife, he assumed the role of both mother and father for his children. Whenever he encountered an issue relating to child-rearing or when he needed someone to talk with, he preferred to call his mother, whom he described as a stable force in his life.

He and a friend started a roofing business, which, according to Keith, had its ups and downs. When the economy was not good, every penny earned above expenses for the home and business was reinvested in keeping the company afloat. Keith noted that he did not have time to attend parent meetings and other school activities. However, when a problem came up involving his children, he dropped everything and went to the school.

Keith described his educational experience as enjoyable. He acknowledged that his parents placed a high value on education and always supported him in all of his school activities. He stated that education for his children had been good and described the schools as being positive, friendly, and welcoming.

When his daughter entered ninth grade, she began to have serious academic and behavior problems. Keith believed that she felt she did not fit in as she looked around at

the racially-diverse school setting. Following countless meetings with the Dean, the school nurse, and the counselor, his daughter was doing much better in school. With help from the school personnel, she had put her fears aside, developed some friendships, and was doing well in both academics and behavior.

Keith felt that dealing successfully with his daughter's behavior at school and the constant meetings with school personnel had helped him as well as his daughter. Prior to the behavior problem that surfaced in the ninth grade, Keith explained that communication between father and daughter had been strained. Keith stated that after these meetings, "my daughter and I can talk about what's going on in her life, about school, and especially about personal things. The Dean taught me how to talk to my daughter and helped me develop a working father-daughter relationship with her. I think the school personnel is great."

Linda

Linda is a 32-year-old divorced Caucasian mother of three children, a 12-year-old son, a 14-year-old son, and a 16-year-old daughter. Two of her children attended high school and were in the ninth and tenth grades. The third child was attending middle school. She was employed as a food and nutrition worker at a local middle school.

Linda attended grade school and high school in what she described as a good school district. Following high school, she desired to continue her education by earning a bachelor's degree. However, following a brief marriage that ended in a divorce, Linda gave up on her dreams and visions for herself. She said that she faced limitations now

because of the choices she made such as marrying and having children at a very young age. Two of the present limitations were a lack of financial resources and her work schedule. She did not have the option of taking time off when her children were involved in an activity at the school.

She did participate in parent-teacher conferences. When asked about her experiences with parent-teacher conferences, Linda felt the teachers were kind, pleasant, and willing to answer all of her questions. She stated that on a few occasions, however, the teachers did seem to be rushed and rather short when responding to her inquiries.

Linda stated that her mother had a profound influence on her as a mother, and she wanted to give her children the same love and attention her mother gave her. She defined parental involvement as communicating, sharing, planning, and being there for her children. She envisioned parental involvement as very important and stated that it was her duty as a parent to provide her children with the values and guidance they needed to grow academically and socially. Linda found that her involvement in school made her want to pursue her education. Her children were good students, and she believed that was the result of her being involved and knowing what was going on in their lives at home and at school.

Mariah

Mariah was a 36-year-old Hispanic mother of two children, a 14-year-old son and a 16-year-old daughter. Born in Mexico, Mariah was the only member of her family residing in the United States. She had been in the United States for the last twelve years.

Her husband still resided in Mexico. Mariah and the children visited with her husband once a year, usually during the Christmas holiday. Mariah stated that financial problems were the main reason for her making the move to the United States. During the interview, which took place in her home, the girls took on household responsibilities while I interviewed Mariah.

While in Mexico, Mariah was enrolled in college classes with the intention of becoming a doctor; however, the cost of attending college prevented her from completing her education. Mariah volunteered her time interpreting for other Spanish-speaking parents, both at the school and in the community. And to make ends meet, she offered English classes in her home to help Spanish-speaking parents understand the bureaucracy of educating a Hispanic child in the United States. Her goal was to one day return to school and complete her college education.

Being financially insecure, Mariah stated that she was willing to do whatever it took to maintain a residence within the school zone, such as enrolling her children in the school's free and reduced lunch program as well as Operation School Bell. Operation School Bell is a community service organization that provides new clothing, shoes, and personal grooming products to children from families with extreme need. She was grateful for the educational opportunities that exist in this country and encouraged her children to stay active in school and in school-sponsored activities.

Melissa

Melissa was a 48-year-old single Caucasian mother of two boys, ages 10 and 16. She described her work as random; that is, when she was needed on the job she got a call to report for work. Melissa did not describe the nature of her employment. She did indicate that the work hours fluctuated as well as the days when she worked. To her, this situation made it very hard for her to participate in any of the school activities. Melissa described her educational experience as good. However, she felt that if her mother had been involved during the time she was in school, she would have been a better student.

When asked about communication with the school, Melissa stated that she would like to communicate with the school. However, she thought the school did not have a good or effective method of communication with parents. She stated that the school did not call her. Instead, the school sent home flyers with her son, which she often never saw. She felt that a better and more effective form of communication would be telephone calls to the parents. Infinite Campus served as one method she used to keep up with her son's grades and school attendance; however, she rarely used this technology because she did not know how to operate a computer very well and did not have one in her home.

On one occasion Melissa was called to the school because of her son's academic grades. This visit resulted in her son improving his academic performance. As far as Melissa knew, there had been no incidences of behavior problems or attendance issues. Her involvement with the school was very limited because, as she stated, her son did not want her hanging around the school. She would have liked to volunteer at the school and have better communication with the school personnel.

Rosa

Rosa was a 31-year-old Hispanic mother of two children, an 11-year-old son and a 16-year-old daughter. Because Rosa did not speak English, the interview was conducted in Spanish and later transcribed into English. Throughout the interview Rosa appeared to be a bit nervous; Her comments indicated that she had a lot of concern for her children.

Rosa stated that she was very proud of her daughter and was quick to tell us that her daughter took four honors classes, and was on the school's volleyball team and swim team. Rosa stated, "I do not participate in any of the parental involvement activities presented at the school". She said this was because she does not speak the language. She stated that involvement in her daughter's extracurricular activities was a form of parental involvement, and she experienced great joy watching her daughter perform. She indicated that being involved in her daughter's activities gave her the chance to keep the lines of communication open between parent and child.

Emergent Themes

As noted in Chapter 3, I conducted semi-structured interviews with nine participants. Notes were taken during the interview sessions to capture what the researcher heard, saw, experienced, and thought in the course of collecting and reflecting on the process (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Four major themes emerged from the parents' stories as each described their experiences of involvement in their child's high school: (1) technology and parental involvement; (2) economy and parent work schedules; (3) potential for parent growth; and (4) parental involvement outside the school. These

themes emerged from the participants' rich description of their involvement with regard to various aspects of participation.

Technology and Parental Involvement

Student Record Management

This school district uses the student records management software called Infinite Campus (formerly Edline) as one method of increasing parental involvement. Infinite Campus is a Web-based system, a single database that houses all records for the district. Families can access their children's attendance records, grades, class assignments, and more through the confidential Campus Portal. The entire system is Web-based, so educators, parents, and students have access to information from anywhere at any time. Several parents in the study were concerned that this technology might be taking over and replacing interpersonal relationships.

Technology Concerns of Parents

Melissa, a single parent of two children, expressed her apprehensiveness about relying on technology as a major form of communication:

Infinite Campus has served as one method of communication between the school and me. I rarely use the computer because I don't know how to operate it and there is no computer in my home. If schools want more parental involvement, then they should just call the parents or open the school's computer lab to the parents. This whole thing with computers is frustrating for me. I would like to have more calls from the school.

Similarly, Rosa, a single parent, did not use Infinite Campus regularly because everything is in English. She has not contacted the school district to inquire about the Spanish version of the program. The following quote was given by Rosa in Spanish and translated from Spanish to English:

I use the Infinite Campus sometimes. It helps me keep up with my daughter's education and grades. The problem that I have with it is that everything is written in English and I only speak Spanish. My daughter translates everything for me. I do try to talk to the teachers if I have any questions, but my daughter is usually always good. The school is good; they call me whenever they are going to have something at school like events, meetings, and other things like that. But when I don't understand the telephone message I call the school back to ask them about what they are calling me about or if they can translate. I also tell my daughter to translate, but I don't always have her close by to tell me exactly what they want or what they said. So, whether it is the computer, email, or telephone call, I think that I am unable to communicate with the school.

Claudia also stated concerns regarding the use of Infinite Campus:

I would like for the school to use a variety of communication strategies with parents and not rely so much on the Internet. The one practice that is good and that I like is the parent-teacher conference. I use Infinite Campus to keep track of how my children are doing in school. For me this practice is cold and impersonal. I prefer face-to-face interactions with the school personnel.

Technology as Useful Tools

Several parents considered Infinite Campus to be an effective means of keeping parents involved and preferred it to other forms of communication. Mariah, a mother of two high-school students, felt that:

The Infinite Campus Web site is good and is very helpful. This is a great tool for interacting with parents even though it is not face-to-face. It keeps me abreast of my children's grades and it lets me know when they are missing assignments. One thing about Infinite Campus is that it gives me the opportunity to immediately correct a situation and not wait till it gets out of hand.

Similarly, Linda, a mother of two high-school students, stated:

Most of the communication I have with the school is through emails and Infinite Campus. I can go online and see what my children are doing in school. I can access their grades, attendance, and conduct. For me this is a good form of communication. It is very convenient for me. I work many long hours and the school's Infinite Campus Web site helps me keep my children on track. It lets me know their assignments, when work isn't turned in, and important events at school. I don't make many phone calls to the school, except for when I have a question. I phone the school and talk with the teacher. The school is very much up to date on technology and they use it to keep parents informed.

Audrey was also a regular user of Infinite Campus and stated:

I use Infinite Campus a lot. In fact, I just logged off the Web site. It is not as

personal as talking to a teacher, but you can still get as much information as you need. I like to see where the teachers think my child is as opposed to where she thinks she is. Sometimes those two things are totally different. When I get information from Infinite Campus that may not be complimentary, I digest the information first and then I talk to my daughter. This gives me a chance to get both sides of the story. If I see a problem then I can communicate with the teacher and if necessary set up a conference with the teacher and with my daughter.

Communication Between Schools and Families

Communication between schools and families is essential for building relationships that foster parental involvement. Communication technology as a tool to improve parental involvement can help parents and teachers communicate with each other regarding the successes or struggles that their child is having at school (Decker & Decker, 2003). Infinite Campus, a relatively new trend in education, has the potential to improve parental involvement, as witnessed by the comments made by some of the participants in this study. Several participants in this study viewed technology as a way for parents to actively participate in their child's education without being visible in the school.

Technology as Barriers to Communication

Technology sometimes becomes a barrier to communication when parents and teachers try to develop partnerships between the school and the home, (Penuel, Kim, Michalchik, Lewis, Means, & Murphy, 2002). This was a concern expressed by several participants in this study. Parents felt that while technologies such as email, voice mail,

and Web-based systems may help reduce communication barriers and provide more parental involvement, an over-reliance on technology as a tool for parental involvement may not solve the communication problem. On the one hand, technology does provide solutions to communication. On the other hand, technology is not cheap, not all families can afford to be connected to the Internet, and not all parents have the skills to use the Internet or the desire to be connected to it. Teachers and parents need to be aware of the fact that technology is not a panacea for parental involvement and that paper-based, verbal, and face-to-face means of communication still have a place in the overall scheme of communication with parents (Decker & Decker, 2003).

The society that we live in today moves at an unbelievable pace and often changes before we have time to catch up. For this reason educators need to find efficient ways to communicate and respond to the needs of parents and their children. Parents have less time to communicate with the schools and their children, but the need for effective communication continues to increase. Technology gives both educators and parents the tools to help meet the demands of this fast pace. However, there will always be a certain portion of the population who will have limited or no access to the technological advances of our schools, and many parents will lack the skills necessary to use computers. As seen by the comments of participants included above, the feelings of parents in this study ranged from positive to negative regarding the use of technology as a communication tool to increase parental involvement.

Many schools are turning to technology as a communication tool, with the idea that improved communication is the key to successful parental involvement in schools.

According to some parents the use of technology as a communication tool should not be viewed as a panacea for increased parental involvement. Technology provides parents the tools for involvement without being visible in the school. Several parents in the study were either resistant to or uncomfortable with this form of communication, did not possess the skills necessary to use computers, or did not have access to computers. Most parents preferred phone calls followed by face-to-face meetings to discuss their child's school life. All parents indicated that technology is a very powerful tool that can provide a variety of solutions to a variety of parental involvement issues. That is its strength.

Economy and Parent Work Schedules

Most parents described their concerns about the economy and its effect on their work schedule, which has resulted in a readjustment of parental involvement in their child's high school. Mariah, formerly from Mexico, was fluent in both English and Spanish and had two high-school children. She worked from home, as she had not been able to find employment in this country. Mariah stated that:

I do whatever I can to support my family. I have enrolled my children in the free and reduced lunch program as well as Operation School Bell. To make ends meet, I offer English classes in my home to parents who do not speak the language, and I also try to help the parents understand the bureaucracy of educating a Hispanic child in the United States.

Choosing Between Work and School

Other parents discussed having to make choices between parental involvement

activities and supporting their families. Linda, a divorced mother of two high-school students, and Keith, a single parent of one high-school child, shared their stories of the impact of the present economy and their work schedules on their ability to be fully involved in their children's education. Linda stated:

I do not have the option of taking off when my children are involved in an activity at the school. I can really only attend in parent-teacher conferences and not be subject to a reduction in my pay. I wish I could do more, but I just can't. Right now the economy is so bad, I have to do everything possible to keep the job that I have. I would love to have some extra money and time to get a better education and then get a better job.

And Keith commented:

My friend and I own a roofing company and we work long hours trying to stay afloat and supporting our family. We have invested every penny we have into this roofing company and both families live from week to week. When you talk about poverty, we have been there, living in motels and even homeless for a period of time. Taking off may have been an inconvenience sometimes, but the way my schedule is I can pretty much go whenever I need to. There are things that I cannot miss and that have caused an occasional conflict between job requirements and the school. So taking off sometimes was not an easy thing to do because we have to be present on every job. We do not have the luxury of employing extra people to help with the job.

Keith also stated that for a period of time, his daughter was always in trouble with other students:

When the school would call, especially if there was trouble, I would drop everything and go. I want my daughter to get on the right track. I did not feel obligated because the school called me and said you have to come down here. That was not my concern. My concern was to find out what was going on with my daughter and getting that straightened out. So far the company has not gone under, but unless the economy improves, my partner and I may have to diversify. I am afraid that will result in less time for me to be involved in my children's education.

Melissa, Barbara, and Claudia expressed similar concerns about their work schedules as a deterrent to active participation at the high school. The three parents stated that they felt lucky to have a job in this economy. Claudia stated that her supervisor would allow her to leave if there were an emergency; but she did not have the privilege of leaving and going to everything.

I have to pick and choose. That can be hard sometimes. I don't always know what activity will be most beneficial for my child or what activity will be most beneficial for the school.

Balancing Employment, Family, and School Involvement

The current economic downturn has been a definite deterrent to more active participation by the parents interviewed for this study. The balancing act of maintaining

employment, supporting the family, and involvement in the school is not easy. In addition, the issue of single parents raising their children added even more pressures on their available time. All parents in the study demonstrated a strong desire to support their children while at the same time struggling to make ends meet.

Across America, the effects of the current economic crisis are permeating our schools and classrooms. Parents, students, and teachers are experiencing increasing levels of anxiety, stress, and discontent as the realities of the financial crisis impact their lives. Many parents are presently engaged in a tug-of-war between their family's financial needs and their commitment to their children's education. Unfortunately, in the present economic downturn, financial needs often win the day. Parents frequently comment that they are reprimanded for missing work to attend to their children's needs. These needs include participation in school-involvement activities that support student learning. The painful reality is that parents are forced to prepare for the day when they will have to choose between going to work and attending a parent-teacher meeting. This becomes especially critical when parental availability to be involved is often determined by work schedules, job benefits, job autonomy, and working conditions. Single-parent families are most at risk for facing this dilemma.

Potential for Parent Growth

Improving Interpersonal Skills

Parents expressed their ideas on how they would like to improve communication with their children, continue their own education, become change agents, and increase

financial stability. Keith feels he has improved in interpersonal communication skills as a result of parental involvement:

I learned a great deal through involvement at the school, and what I learned helped me to better understand my daughter and treat her like a young adult. I am able to better communicate with my daughter as a result of techniques learned during meetings with school personnel. The fact that issues were ironed out at the school during these meetings made it possible that we now communicate outside of the school setting. One of the best lessons I learned as a result of my involvement was how to communicate with other people. Maybe this was not the original intent of being involved, but that is what happened. I feel that I am communicating with my partner, my clients, and my children more effectively. I am getting real good at listening to what is being said.

Inspiration to Achieve Educational Goals

During several of the interview sessions, some parents appeared to have always been aware that they have the drive to continue their education. Others seemed to evolve into the need for personal growth as a result of their involvement in their child's high school. Still others seemed to experience a need or desire to grow as they gradually became immersed in parental involvement at the school.

Mariah, Beth, and Linda wanted to return to school and complete their college education in order to help themselves and their children. According to Mariah:

Today the kids are learning so many things in school that are really new to me.

As soon as the opportunity presents itself, I am going back to school so that I can

at least learn some of this new stuff. I know that acquiring some new knowledge will help me and help my children.

Beth told the interviewer:

I like the education system in the United States. It is very different from education in my country [Mexico]. During my volunteering at the school I am learning things that I didn't know and had never heard before, such as how to work the Internet to get all kinds of information. I have decided to enroll in college, get a degree in education, and teach in the local high school. Right now I don't know what subject I will major in. What I do know is that my being involved in my child's school has given me the desire to better myself by getting an education. This will mean a career change for me, but I am looking forward to something new.

And Linda commented: "I want to go back to school because when I help my child with some of the homework, I am lost."

As a result of parental involvement, some of the parents became change agents, as the following excerpt from Audrey's interview indicates:

During some of my volunteer work I became friends with several other parents and together we provided some school improvement suggestions to the administrator. All of our suggestions were not implemented; however, what we learned is that the school administrators were willing to listen to the parents.

According to the parents in this study, parental involvement not only helped the child but also helped parents individually. Parent-child communication was improved, and parents were inspired to improve educationally. Volunteerism encouraged school participation and contact with other parents, and was viewed as empowering to parents. Although time constraints hampered parental involvement and limited educational opportunities, many parents indicated future desires to complete high school and college. Parents saw higher education as a means to improve not only their lives but also the financial stability of the family.

Parental Involvement Outside the School

Seven of the nine parents interviewed for this study were involved in some way with their children's education. The involvement of these parents captured a wide range of activities, some of which may not be recognized by teachers as legitimate participation. Involvement activities outside the school included the following:

Verbal Support and Encouragement

The seven parents who were involved in their child's education both at home and in the community encouraged their children to do well and reiterated the importance of receiving a good education. Parents who verbally supported their children felt that they, too, benefited by internalizing their messages of support and encouragement. Rosa responded in this way:

Every day I tell my daughter how proud I am of her and her grades. She also makes me proud of the way she involves herself in the school's swim team and

the volleyball team. I tell her that she will always be a good student because she believes in her ability to excel. This is what I teach her. She always listens to me and that makes me feel very good.

Audrey was also very positive in support of her daughter. She stated:

My daughter wants to enter the medical field, the military, or maybe national security. I always tell her that she can do whatever she sets her mind to do. I also tell her that to reach her goal she must stay in school, keep up the good grades, and be willing to obey school and teacher rules. My parents always encouraged my two sisters and I to continue our education. Their limited education made it difficult to acquire high paying jobs, and I watched how they struggled to keep us in school. That is why I encourage my daughter to do her best in school.

Audrey also said that giving verbal encouragement was important because this signaled to her daughter that she and her husband were serious about education.

Experience with Homework

Seven parents described their experience with encouraging their children to do their homework. These experiences ranged from minimal help, to scheduling a certain time for homework completion, to encouraging the child not to give up. Linda, a divorced mother of two children in high school, talked about how she provided homework help for her children. Linda commented:

When my children come home from school, I always ask them if they have any homework. I always help my children with homework when they ask me,

otherwise I just make sure that they study every night and have their work ready to turn in the next day. I must admit that I do not monitor everything they do in school. I really think that when a child reaches tenth grade they should assume some of the responsibility for getting a good education. Even though I don't help my children every day, I make sure they don't fall through the cracks by asking them about their homework and how school is going.

Similarly, Mariah considered helping her children with homework to be an important responsibility, which had many side benefits:

I am very much involved in helping my children with their homework. They know that I expect them to tell me about their homework assignments. When I help them with their assignments, I show them how to do the work and then leave them alone so that they can work on their own. Helping my children makes me feel like I am helping myself. One day I want to return to school and complete my college education. Helping my children keeps me up to date of studying and learning new things. I think that this time with my children keeps us close; we can shut out all the things that are going on and just be together.

One parent, Rosa, said she was concerned about not being able to help her daughter with homework because she did not speak English. Rosa described how she would like to help her daughter and how her limitations prevented her from helping with homework:

I know that helping with homework is important, so I try to always be around the house when my daughter is doing her schoolwork. I think that sometimes she needs me to help her, but since I don't read English she has to translate everything for me and that takes away from the time she could be doing her schoolwork. She is a very good student and always brings home good grades. Some of her classes are at the honors level and that is above my academic level.

Involvement in Outside Activities that can Impact School and Families

Parents described outside activities as any activity with their child outside of the classroom. These included involvement at school-sponsored sports events, community Homeless Feeding Program, Girl Scouts, the Boys' and Girls' Club, and the Big Brothers Big Sisters Organization. The parents felt that involvement in these activities enhanced their children's education and helped both parent and child give back to the community. For example, Audrey talked about her and her husband's involvement in a community program for homeless families:

Our church is involved in a community Homeless Feeding Program. We as a family participate in this activity. This activity teaches our daughter the value of giving back to the community. Whenever she is required to write a paper, we encourage her to write about her experience of feeding and interacting with families that are not privileged to have a home to return to at the end of each day.

Beth, a divorced parent with three girls, stated that her involvement in outside activities was limited. She and her older sister planned family activities that involved both families. During these events she stressed the importance of education, getting along

with other people, obeying school rules, and family values that were transferable to every aspect of life.

Keith talked at length about father-daughter communication outside of school. He strongly believed that open communication with his child about issues not related to school was an activity every parent should engage in. Keith, a single parent rearing two children, had experienced a period of time with his daughter where communication at any level was non-existent. He said:

My daughter was getting into a lot of fights, always tardy, and stayed in detention. Nothing seemed to work. I was constantly being summoned to the school for conferences with the Dean, school counselor, and school nurse. My daughter would fake being sick so she could go home. She hated school, she hated me for being at the school, she hated the Dean for disciplining her, and she hated having to sit in on the conferences. I don't know when it was or exactly what was said during these sessions that made the change, but my daughter and I began to talk about things other than school. During some of these talks we got to know each other's likes, dislikes, goals for the future, and her feelings about having to assume more of the role in keeping the house together. She felt that she was missing out on some of the fun of being a teenager. I really feel that being able to communicate with my child about her life outside of school activities is involvement to the highest degree.

Parental involvement outside the school centers in part on parents' motivations and abilities for involvement. Some parents were able to help with homework while others monitored and encouraged their children to complete all assignments. Non-school activities provided parents and their high-school child opportunities for improved parent-child communication, strengthening family values, and giving back to the community. Parents indicated that attending and participating in community events and volunteering at school events brought their families together. Additionally, parents experienced a feeling of personal pride when they could help their children do well in school.

Summary

Chapter 4 presented a detailed account of the findings of the study. Four themes were identified during the data-analysis phase of the study. These themes: technology and parental involvement, economy and parent work schedules, potential for parent growth, and parental involvement outside the school emerged from the parents' descriptions of their experiences of involvement in their child's high school.

Descriptions as well as direct quotations were used to paint a picture of the participants' experiences of involvement in their child's high school. Each participant described his or her experience of involvement differently. Several reflected on their own unique background, their own parents' involvement as they were growing up in a particular culture or setting, and as parents faced with tough decisions regarding finance and work. It became evident that parent descriptions of their experiences of involvement are complex, multi-layered, and reflect the individuality of each participant.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND SUMMARY

Introduction

Minimal research studies were found that addressed parents' descriptions of their experience of involvement in their child's high school. Much of the research that has been done tended to focus on the obstacles faced rather than descriptions of parental-involvement experiences. To help develop and extend the knowledge base, this study documented and analyzed the experiences of nine high-school parents. The study was designed to be open-ended in order to present parents' descriptions of their experience of involvement in their child's high school. Four major themes emerged from this process.

It was my hope that from this phenomenological study, a clearer understanding of parents' descriptions of their experience of involvement could be told. It is my goal that with this knowledge, educators and educational institutions will design and implement programs and practices relevant to the families they serve. Another goal of this study was to provide a place and setting for the voices of high-school parents to be heard. The research question that guided this study was: How do parents describe their experiences of involvement in their child's high school?

Discussion of Findings

The answer to this research question lies within the four themes identified from the data collected. The themes are: (1) technology and parent involvement, (2) economy and parent work schedules, (3) potential for parent growth, and (4) parental involvement outside the school. These themes are discussed in the following section along with my

interpretation of participant responses. Implications for schools, principals, and teachers are also included for each theme.

Technology and Parent Involvement

For many families the realities of life today are very different from previous generations, and technology has played a major role. Technology is one of the most fascinating, fast-paced, and modern aspects of life today. The use of technology is everywhere. Regardless of where technology is used, it appears to have the attention-gathering effects people have come to enjoy: they respond to it, and they expect it. For the most active users, technology seems to have few limitations and an almost magical strength (Blanchard, 1997). Most school policies that deal with the use of technology focus on sharing information with parents about their child's academics and behavior (Kessler-Skylar & Baker, 2000). New and more advanced technologies have increased opportunities to forge home-to-school connections and partnerships. These programs are designed to enhance communication between school and home and are aimed at providing parents with up-to-date information on school events and their child's progress in school (Penuel, Kim, Michalchik, Lewis, Means, & Murphy, 2002).

Data from the participant interviews were used to develop the theme that addresses parent descriptions of their experience of the use of technology to enhance and increase parental involvement. Several trends of how the parents use technology were revealed through the responses shared during the interviews.

First, parents in this study, regardless of their gender, age, marital status, and ethnicity, indicated that the school's Infinite Campus system and emails were the most frequently used and convenient way for them to communicate with the school. However, parents overwhelmingly preferred telephone calls followed by face-to-face meetings to discuss their child's school life. Parents felt that face-to-face communication between parents and teachers was very important for developing partnerships between the home and the school. Hernandez (2004) stated that open-house activities and parent-teacher conferences are perfect opportunities for parents, teachers, and other school personnel to meet, interact, and collaborate.

Second, most of the parents' responses were positive about their ability to access homework assignments and other school information online. Those who utilized Infinite Campus technology found it convenient for accessing information regarding missed assignments and, therefore, enabling them to avoid making extra calls to the school. Other parents noted reasons for not using the school's Infinite Campus program: they did not have the training to use it, did not know how to access the school's information, spoke languages other than English, or simply did not take the time to use the system.

Third, some participants were unable to afford a computer. Not owning a computer in the home kept them from accessing information from the school and also from communicating with the school via the technology. Parent interviews provided insight into a number of other issues related to their experience with technology as a tool for improving parental involvement.

1. Parents agreed that technology as a means of communicating was achieving the goals of the school. One example of the schools' goal was to increase parental involvement via the use of Infinite Campus technology.
2. Teachers utilized technology as a form of communication to keep parents abreast of their child's academic and behavioral progress.
3. Access to their child's school information gave parents an opportunity to help their child stay on track and to improve when necessary.
4. Parents expressed a need for multiple forms of communication between the home and the school (e.g., face-to-face, email, Internet, conferences, etc.).
5. As one parent (Audrey) stated, "The availability of technology in the home is not predictive of the amount of communication between homes and schools. The amount and quality of communication is dependent on parent, teacher, and school's willingness to work together."

The changing times and further progress in technology will continue to affect our way of life and our schools. Like any other advancement, there will be a certain portion of the population that will have limited or no access to these new technologies. As evidenced by the positive and negative comments of participants, teachers at the school were making use of the available technology to communicate with parents. However, the results of this study indicate that parents are not ready to fully embrace technology as the communication tool for enhancing their involvement experiences. While technology may appear to be the answer to the problems of family-school partnerships, it is only a

partial answer. Parent responses would indicate that technology is only a tool. It is a powerful tool with a variety of solutions to a variety of problems. That is its strength.

Implications for Technology and Parental Involvement

1. Principals need to make sure Infinite Campus is available in a variety of languages and publicize this to parents in a way that they are sure to get the message and be able to understand the message.
2. Principals should be vigilant in reminding teachers of the importance of keeping Infinite Campus information current.
3. Since technology seems to be taking the place of face-to-face meetings, principals need to consider whether or not this is appropriate and strive to increase the use of other more personal forms of communication in certain instances.
4. Some high-school parents are not proficient in the use of technology. Schools should offer opportunities for these parents to develop technology skills.
5. Schools may obtain computers through community partnerships and rent or loan the computers to parents with no computer in the home.
6. Teachers should use a variety of communication tools with parents and not rely solely on technology.

Economy and Parent Work Schedules

A second theme that emerged from this study was the effect the economy and parent work schedules had on parental involvement. As one thinks about building bridges to support parent-teacher partnerships, it is critical to keep these two issues in mind. In

addition to what research described as the traditional two-parent family, we now have two-parent working families, grandparents, single-parent families, adoptive families, and blended families, to cite just a few of the current family structures. Family roles and responsibilities have also become more flexible and fluid. Schools may no longer have access to an adult to speak consistently for the family. Sometimes it is one parent. Other times it is a different parent from a blended family. And at still other times, it may be a sister, brother, grandparent, or aunt, making effective communication a real challenge (Decker & Decker, 2003; Epstein, 2007; Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

Even when both parents and educators agree as to the importance of parental involvement, scheduling conflicts often arise when planning participation. Conflicting work schedules and competing demands on parents' time have been cited as a barrier to parent involvement in the schools. Additionally, the number of hours parents work, the amount of job autonomy and job demands, and relationships with supervisors may affect their level of involvement (Eccles & Harold, 1994).

Problems with inflexible work schedules were cited by seven of the nine parents interviewed in this study. Work schedules limited their ability to come to school during the day for parent-teacher conferences, workshops, and other activities presented by the school. The economic downturn since the late 1990's has limited the ability of some parents to either retrain or find better-paying jobs. In addition, some supervisors would not permit employees to leave for school activities except for emergencies. One parent stated that working outside the home meant focusing her remaining time on her child and her academic support rather than focusing on the school and its programs. Many parents

are engaged in a tug-of-war between their family's financial livelihood and their children's education. Sadly, in this economic downturn, financial needs often win the day.

Additional parent responses about the impact their work schedules and the economy make on their participation in high-school activities are listed below.

1. Parents have to miss work to register their child for school or their families for food stamps and other public services.
2. Parents have to miss work for unexpected family illness.

Unfortunately, too many parents who are working during school hours are disciplined for missing work to attend to their child's needs. As a parent, I understand the impact parental involvement can have on a child and the parent. All parents should prepare for the day when they will have to make tough decisions about their children — but choosing between going to work and attending a parent-teacher conference should not be one of them.

Implications for Economy and Work Schedule Implications

1. School open-house meetings presented in multiple languages could be videotaped and made available for parents to borrow from the school library or put on the Internet. Other presentations and discussions from various sources relevant to parents and parental involvement could be created and shared in the same way.
2. Principals need to strive to develop parental involvement activities that are seen as relevant by parents and not just as “busywork.”

3. Principals, when scheduling school-wide activities, should vary activity start times to accommodate parent work schedules.
4. When planning parent conferences, teachers should also consider parent work schedules and time constraints.
5. Principals should make sure that adequate transportation services are provided to students so that parents would no longer need to leave work to pick up their children.

Potential for Parent Growth

Parents are the central element in home-school partnerships, and they should be encouraged to grow, improve, and develop their potential for leadership in this area. Additionally, parent support, education, and leadership-building work together to help parents develop the skills to do just that. By fostering parents in the role of teacher and leader, families benefit from improved self-worth by the parents, who then become a better advocate for their child's needs, while schools benefit from being more responsive and accountable to the families they serve.

Because of their involvement in school, parents grow and develop personal skills in meaningful ways. For example, they gain knowledge and skills from school experiences to help shape the direction of their families, schools, and communities. Additionally, the potential for parent growth is successfully achieved when parents and educators build effective partnerships based upon mutual respect and shared responsibility.

Parent education and support activities are good first steps in fostering parental growth. They provide parents with the tools they need to become more confident parents and to bond with other parents. This confidence and connection to other families can then be supported and encouraged to move parents toward meaningful growth and involvement in school and community programs. Giving parents opportunities to become a part of the team developing the programs and activities, rather than simply the persons benefiting from the services provided, are additional ways for parents to develop and grow.

Another potential way for high-school parents to grow is by becoming involved in school activities, such as volunteering. For example, Audrey believed that involvement is a process, and during this process her involvement became more broadly defined as she gained experience as a volunteer. She adopted an activist role when she and other parents were effective in exacting some minor changes in the school. Audrey described involvement as a learning experience.

School involvement benefits parents in a number of ways. They gain a variety of ideas about how to help their child. They become more self-assured about themselves as parents and acquire a deeper sense of satisfaction with respect to their child's education. They discover that they are the most important factor in determining their children's success at school. They have a better understanding of the current educational program as well as how the school works. These factors can only result in a renewed confidence in their child's education.

Parents grow and benefit from an increased closeness with their child and a more profound sense of their own significance in their child's lives. They understand their children better as learners and themselves as parents. Finally, studies show that when parents participate more in their child's education, they often take steps to advance their own education by enrolling in continuing education courses. The parent as teacher becomes the parent as learner. Parent and child alike are students; the family unites through education (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

Ann (1993) suggested the idea of establishing learning environments that develop and enhance the relationships between parents and their children. Sessions in such learning environments would teach parents how to help their children succeed in school and at the same time help parents acquire new knowledge. Pairing parents and their child as a learning unit also opens the door to intergenerational learning. Parents would be learning and sharing their experiences in education and at the same time acquiring basic skills, job training, and communication strategies. Although these types of programs may seem time-consuming, the benefits will most likely outweigh the initial cost.

Implications for Potential for Parent Growth

1. Schools should encourage parent growth by offering after-school and evening classes covering topics such as GED, technology, and information to parents about how to enroll in higher education.
2. Schools should offer counseling or classes on parent-child communication issues.

3. Schools should offer a variety of programs on issues related to adolescent development. An example of these learning opportunities may include topics related to teenage suicide, drugs, sexuality, and helping teens handle peer pressure.
4. Another strategy schools can employ is parent-support groups. Schools should offer seminars for parents addressing issues such as divorce, single-parenting, job search, and money management.

Parental Involvement Outside the School

At least five parents in the study listed moral education and assisting with homework as a parental responsibility outside the school. These parents expected teachers to teach the academics and saw their role as teaching their child everything else. Parents defined moral education as teaching values and good behavior. They further described their role as being a positive example and teaching their children to be responsible, to respect self and others, instill manners and good conduct, aid in academic growth, and promote family unity.

Parents' descriptions of the lessons they were teaching their children at home went far beyond the moral aspect of their children's education. Inclusive in their home training was the social, physical, and mental development of the child. They built social character by teaching their child to behave and to be a good citizen. Parents also play a major role in helping their child work through personal issues such as bullying and peer pressure.

Physical health was addressed in the home as well. Six of the nine parents who took part in this research tried to keep their children engaged in regular physical activity to stay fit and minimize their child's level of stress. These included both school and out-of-school activities. To address their child's mental health, parents encouraged and built up their child's self-esteem through motivation. Additionally, the parents stated that they paid attention to their children, listened to them, and talked to them about how valuable they were as a person and how much they valued each child.

During the analysis, it was clear that the majority of the parents described their experiences of involvement outside the school as an extension of their family life and of the roles they assumed as adults. Extending their involvement outside the school offered the parents an opportunity to live a more integrated life. Involvement experiences were viewed as a way to fulfill a social responsibility by connecting the family to the larger community, thus giving the parents opportunities to more fully integrate their lives. For Mariah, connection to the community was achieved as she and her children volunteered their time to interpret for other Spanish-speaking parents. Mariah offered English classes in her home and also assisted other Spanish language parents in understanding the procedures of educating a Hispanic child in the United States. Another parent, Audrey, and her daughter participated in a community homeless-feeding program.

One parent stated that parental involvement outside of the school was important because he was able to engage in parent-child discussions and interactions about school and non-school issues. Due to his work schedule and long working hours, his

involvement with his daughter was limited; however, he made certain that his daughter knew that whenever she needed him he would drop everything and be there for her.

Implications for Parental Involvement Outside the School

1. Schools should encourage outside activities that reinforce parent-child communication and family unity.
2. Schools should provide learning opportunities designed to help parents better communicate with their children.
3. Schools should interface with churches and other organizations like boys/girls clubs to provide additional support for parents that might then improve their parental involvement in the school.
4. Schools should reinforce parent and child involvement in such activities as the community homeless-feeding project and the school community food drive. These activities focus on both academic and non-academic involvement.
5. Principals should encourage partnerships between the school and the community (e.g., neighborhood business partnering with individual schools).
6. Teachers should provide high-school parents with strategies for completing homework tasks and involving families in outside activities. Involvement in outside activities such as sports reinforces cooperation, teamwork, and family unity.

Implications

It is well established that parental-involvement programs benefit schools, students, parents, and communities. For programs to be more effective and sustained, schools must strongly consider designing programs and implementing practices that take into account parent descriptions of their experiences.

Results of this study suggest that: (1) there are several explanations for limited parental participation in specific parental activities, (2) limited participation may be the result of specific circumstances or may be personal, and (3) explanations for limited participation differ depending on the characteristics of the parents.

Parents further attributed their involvement decisions to both internal and external reasons. Internal reasons included being tired, personal issues such as language fluency, being uncomfortable at school, not knowing how to help, lack of skills, and a poor relationship with their child. External reasons included: multiple responsibilities, work schedules, the economy, the child did not keep them informed, the school scheduled meetings at times that were inconvenient, a poor relationship with the staff, and other parents not helping. Some of these reasons may have been true for some parents; others may have been misunderstandings and inaccurate conclusions based on limited or no information from the school.

These internal and external views often lead to strained relationships, conflicts between the home and the school, and low parental participation in the school. Critical to the success of participation is parents' positive experiences. It is important for all stakeholders to be aware of and understand how parents' internal and external reasons

influence their experiences and determine their level of involvement. Both internal and external reasons affect the development of home-school partnerships.

Home-school partnerships are not easily formed or maintained. However, research has shown that partnerships can be facilitated through sustained communication (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Technologies such as email, school Web sites, and student-information systems have the potential to expand communication and thus bridge the communication gap between parents and high-school personnel. Advances in communication technologies can also enable parents to stay involved in their child's high-school education and still encourage the development of independence during the high-school years.

Findings from this study support the need and importance of comprehensive communication efforts to reach as many parents as possible. The results further indicate that many parents still rely on traditional forms of communication such as telephone calls, newsletters, and face-to-face meetings. These methods of communication would imply that not all parents are taking full advantage of the convenience and quickness of communicating through newer forms of technology like email, Web sites, and school-student information systems. Schools and parent-involvement practitioners should explore these internal and external issues, and determine how they affect the development of home-school partnerships.

According to Decker and Decker (2003), technology provides promising avenues for disseminating information to parents. Schools have a major role in accomplishing this task. Most schools invest time and money in training teachers in the use of technology;

however, the results of this study indicate that schools may not be realizing the promising returns for their investment. This may imply that schools need to invest time and money into training both teachers and parents in the use of technology. When these actions are taken, better communication between the home and the school is more than likely to occur, and parental involvement is likely to increase.

Finally, one of the most obvious implications of this research is that we cannot continue to approach parental involvement as one-size-fits-all and that schools should design parental-involvement programs based on parent descriptions of their experiences. Parent workshops and more school-sponsored activities will not automatically result in major improvements in parental involvement at a school.

Recommendations for Future Research

Given the limited research on parental involvement at the high-school level, mixed methods, quantitative, and qualitative studies with a larger population than the population in this study should be carried out to further delineate effective ways to partner with parents. Recommendations for future research may include:

1. A qualitative study to determine advantages and disadvantages of using technology as a communication tool from the viewpoint of high-school parents should be explored.
2. A qualitative study to determine parental attitudes toward the use of technology as a means of communication with their child's high school.

3. Considering the relative newness of technology for disseminating student information, such as Infinite Campus, additional quantitative and qualitative studies should be carried out to determine the usefulness of such programs and the feelings of parents toward such programs.
4. A mixed method study with a larger population of high-school parents should be conducted to identify possible correlations between parental involvement in high school and parental desires to further their own education.
5. A quantitative study with a larger population of high-school parents to determine the effects of the economy and work schedules on parental involvement.
6. Further studies should be conducted to determine if there is a relationship between the volunteer involvements of parents outside the school and their participation in parental-involvement activities at the school.
7. Given the limited research on parental involvement at the high-school level, quantitative and qualitative studies with a larger population than the population in this study should be carried out to further delineate effective ways to partner with parents.
8. A mixed-method study that describes how ethnicity, gender, marital status, income, age, employment, and education influence parent descriptions of involvement in their child's high school should be conducted.

Summary

This qualitative phenomenological research study consisted of interviewing a total of nine high school parents of tenth-grade students. Kvale's (1996) interviewing process was used for data collection. Data collection consisted of open-ended semi-structured interview questions. The analysis of data was based on a combination of Kvale's (1996) and Creswell's (2007) processes for analyzing qualitative data. Findings from the study produced four themes: (1) technology and parent involvement; (2) economy and parent work schedules; (3) potential for parent growth; and (4) parental involvement outside the classroom.

The study presented several implications for improving parental involvement. Internal and external influences can be reasons for parents to become involved or not involved. Designing programs and implementing practices that take into account parent descriptions of their experiences can improve parent participation. The use of technology as a communication tool may enhance home-school relations but should not be viewed as a panacea for increased parental involvement.

Finally, one of the most obvious implications of this research is that we cannot continue to approach parental involvement as one-size-fits-all. Schools attempting to increase parental involvement would be wise to use a variety of communication and involvement techniques. Parents' personal insights may help to fill the void in current research in parental involvement and may also help improve home-school partnerships. Additionally, efforts of school administrators to address the concerns expressed by

parents regarding the four themes identified in this study may serve to improve parental involvement at the high-school level in the future.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Script for Parent Contact (English)

Date _____

My name is Nancy Hall and my associate is Didana Martinez. We are conducting research at the University of Nevada, Reno. First I would like to know if you speak English, or if you would prefer that we talk with you in Spanish.

Sparks High school has been selected to participate in a research study on parental involvement at the high school level. The purpose of this research study is to explore your description of your experience of involvement in your child's high school. As the parent of a tenth grade student who attended this school in the ninth grade, you are being invited to participate in this study.

Your participation is voluntary and your son or daughter will not be penalized if you choose not to participate. If you are willing to participate, a day and time will be set up to conduct an interview, which will last approximately 30 to 45 minutes. To confirm your willingness to participate, please write your name, contact number, and preferred language on the recruitment flyer. The information you provide will be confidential. Your responses will be combined with those of others in order to develop a complete study.

There will be no cost to you nor will you be compensated for participating in this research study. If you have any questions about the research study we are conducting, please feel free to contact Nancy Hall by telephone at 775-746-2173 or email at nhall217@gmail.com, or Didana Martinez by email at didana.martinez@yahoo.com. Thank you for your cooperation.

Appendix B: Script for Parent Contact (Spanish)

Fecha _____

Hola _____

Mi nombre es Didana Martinez y mi asociada Nancy Hall. Estamos haciendo una investigación para la Universidad de Nevada, Reno. Primero quisiera saber si usted habla inglés o prefiere el español.

Sparks secundaria ha sido seleccionado para participar en un estudio de investigación sobre la participación de los padres en la escuela secundaria. Como el padre de un estudiante de grado décimo que asistió a esta escuela en el noveno grado, están siendo invitados a participar en este estudio. El propósito de este estudio es para explorar su descripción de experiencias en la escuela secundaria de su hijo/a.

Su participación es voluntaria y su hijo/a no será castigado/a si decide no participar. Si está dispuesto a participar, un día y una hora se establecerá para conducir una entrevista que durará aproximadamente 30 a 40 minutos. Si está dispuesto a participar, por favor escriba su nombre, número de contacto y el idioma preferido en la hoja de aviso. La información que usted proporcione será confidencial. Sus respuestas se combinarán con las de los demás para desarrollar un estudio completo.

No habrá ningún costo para usted ni será castigado por participar en este estudio de investigación. Si tiene alguna pregunta sobre el estudio de investigación que está llevando a cabo, no dude en contactar a Nancy Hall por teléfono al 775-746-2173 o por correo electrónico a nhall217@gmail.com, o a Didana Martinez por correo electrónico a didana.martinez@yahoo.com. Gracias por su cooperación.

Appendix C: Parent Recruitment Flyer (English)**PARENTS OF TENTH GRADE STUDENTS WHO ALSO
WERE FRESHMEN AT SPARKS HIGH SCHOOL**

We are interested in learning about your parental involvement experience as a parent of a Sparks High School student. If you are interested in participating in an interview (approximately 30 to 45 minutes), please write your name and contact number below.

NAME: _____

CONTACT INFORMATION: _____

(Telephone Number or Email Address)

PREFERRED LANGUAGE: ENGLISH _____ SPANISH _____

Appendix D: Parent recruitment Flyer (Spanish)

**PADRES DE ALUMNOS DE DÉCIMO GRADO QUIENES
FUERON TAMBIÉN EN EL GRADO NOVENO EN
SPARKES HIGH SCHOOL**

Estamos interesados en conocer la experiencia de participación de los padres como los padres de un estudiante de secundaria de Sparks High School. Si están interesados en participar en una entrevista (aproximadamente 30 a 40 minutos), por favor, escriba su nombre y número de teléfono a continuación.

NOMBRE: _____

INFORMACIÓN DE CONTACTO: _____

(Número de teléfono o dirección de correo electrónico)

IDIOMA PREFERIDO: INGLÉS ____ ESPAÑOL ____

Appendix E: Information Sheet (English)

Version Date: 1/26/12

UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, RENO**SOCIAL BEHAVIORAL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
INFORMATION SHEET**

TITLE OF STUDY: Parental Involvement in High School: Parents' Perspectives
A Phenomenological Study

INVESTIGATOR (S): Dr. Robert Quinn
775-682-7526
College of Education
Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning
Mail Stop 280
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Nancy Hall
775-746-2173
nhall217@gmail.com

PURPOSE

You are being asked to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to examine parents' descriptions of their experience of involvement in their child's high school. This study also serves to contribute to existing research on parental involvement from the perspective of the parent rather than educational authorities.

PARTICIPANTS

You are being asked to participate because you are a parent of a 10th grade student enrolled at Sparks High school. Additionally, your tenth grade student was enrolled in this school as a ninth grader. Eight to ten parents will participate in this study.

PROCEDURES

If you agree to participate in this research study, a day and time will be set up to conduct an interview, which will last approximately 30 to 45 minutes. During the interview, questions will be asked about your parental involvement experiences at the high school. The interview questions will serve as a starting place for dialogue. You will have the opportunity to provide additional information during the interview session. The interview will be audio taped for accuracy.

DISCOMFORTS, INCONVENIENCES, AND/OR RISKS

The risks to you as a participant in the study are minimal. No sensitive questions will be asked and you may choose to not answer any questions that may be uncomfortable for you. The interview will be conducted in English or Spanish.

BENEFITS

No benefits are promised, but it has been found that when parents are able to reflect upon important issues such as parental involvement in their child's education, it can be helpful for some parents. Additionally, most research about parental involvement in education is from the perspectives of schools; this research study allows you, the parent to share your experience of involvement in your child's high school. This research will help educators understand the unique perspectives of parents.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your identity will be protected to the extent allowed by law. You will not be personally identified in any reports or publications that may result from this research study. During the initial contact of this appointment, you will be assigned a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality of your interview and to minimize potential risks. The pseudonym will also be used in any reporting of the results of this research.

The Department of Human Services (HHS), other federal agencies as necessary, the University of Nevada, Reno Social Behavioral Institutional Review Board, Nancy Hall (student investigator, and Dr. Robert Quinn (principal investigator) have access to and may inspect the study records.

COSTS/COMPENSATION

There will be no cost to you nor will you be compensated for participating in this research study.

RIGHT TO REFUSE OR WITHDRAW

You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time with no penalty to you or to your child.

QUESTIONS

If you have any questions about the research, please ask now. If you have questions later about this research study you may contact Nancy Hall at nhall217@gmail.com, or 775-746-2173 or Didana Martinez by email at didana.martinez@yahoo.com. You may also contact Dr. R. Quinn at quinn@unr.edu or by telephone 775-682-7526. If you have any questions about rights as a participant in this study, you may contact the Office of Human Research Protection at the University of Nevada, Reno by telephone at 775-327-2368 or by email at ohrp@unr.edu.

You may ask about your rights as a research subject or you may report (anonymously if you so choose) any comments, concerns, or complaints to the University of Nevada, Reno Social Behavioral Institutional Review Board, by telephone (775) 327-2368, or by addressing a letter to the Chair of the Board, c/o UNR Office of Human Research Protection, 205 Ross Hall / 331, University of Nevada Reno, Reno, Nevada, 89557.

Appendix F: Information Sheet (Spanish)

Version Date: 1/26/12

UNIVERSIDAD DE NEVADA, RENO SOCIAL REVISIÓN INSTITUCIONAL DE COMPORTAMIENTO

HOJA DE INFORMACION

Título de estudio: Participación de los padres en la escuela secundaria: perspectivas de padres

Investigador: Dr. Robert Quinn
775-682-7526
College of Education
Mail Stop 280
quinn@unr.edu

Nancy Hall
775-746-2173
nhall217@gmail.com

PROPÓSITO

Se le pide que participe en este estudio. El propósito de este estudio es para explorar su descripción de experiencias en la escuela secundaria de su hijo/a. Este estudio también sirve para contribuir a la investigación existente sobre la experiencia de la participación y perspectiva de los padres en la escuela secundaria en lugar de las autoridades educativas.

PARTICIPANTES

Se le pide que participe porque tiene un hijo matriculado en el décimo grado en la escuela secundaria para este estudio. En adicional, el estudiante de grado décimo fue inscrito en esta escuela como un estudiante de noveno grado. De ocho a diez padres de los estudiantes podrán participar en este estudio.

PROCEDIMIENTOS

Si usted está de acuerdo (o da su consentimiento) para participar en este estudio de investigación, se le pedirá participar en una entrevista que durará aproximadamente 30 a 40 minutos. Se realizarán entrevistas con participantes que están de acuerdo con esta forma de recopilación de datos y se llevará a cabo en la escuela secundaria durante la época que va a ser conveniente para todos los participantes. Preguntas de la entrevista abierta se utilizará durante la entrevista. Las preguntas de la entrevista servirá como punto de partida para el diálogo. Tendrá la oportunidad de proporcionar información adicional durante el período de sesiones de la entrevista.

La entrevista va ser transcrita textualmente y tendrá una oportunidad para revisarla transcripción escrita. Durante esta revisión puede agregar nueva información, solicitar información existente suprimirse o revisar sus comentarios. Esta entrevista será grabada.

MOLESTIAS, INCONVENIENTES Y RIESGOS

No hay riesgos conocidos o incomodidades previstos para cualquiera de los participantes. Usted tendrá la opción de contestar las preguntas que quiera. La entrevista será conducida en inglés o en español.

BENEFICIOS

No puede haber ningún beneficio directo a usted como participante en este estudio de investigación. Los resultados de este estudio pueden proporcionar a la escuela con conocimientos valiosos para iniciar e implementar la participación de los padres en la escuela secundaria. Prácticas de crianza, comunicación entre padre e hijo, y participación de los padres en la educación de sus hijos y la escuela puede ser mejorada. Los resultados del estudio de investigación pueden servir para reforzar la legislación federal, iniciativas del estado y esfuerzos de reforma de educación local.

CONFIDENCIALIDAD

No serás personalmente identificado en los informes o publicaciones que puedan resultar de este estudio de investigación. Sus datos de contacto se almacenarán por separado de las transcripciones de la entrevista. Los registros de estudio serán alados de forma segura en la Oficina del investigador estudiante y se destruirán un año después de la finalización del estudio.

El departamento de servicios humanos (HHS), y otras agencias federales según sea necesario, la Universidad de Nevada, Reno Social comportamiento institucional Junta de revisión, Nancy Hall (estudiante de investigo), y Dr. Robert Quinn (investigador principal) pueden inspeccionar los registros del estudio de investigación.

COSTOS/COMPENSACIÓN

No habrá ningún costo para usted ni será compensado por participar en este estudio de investigación.

EL DERECHO A NEGARSE O RETIRARSE

Usted puede negarse a participar o retirarse del estudio en cualquier momento con ninguna consecuencia.

PREGUNTAS

Si tiene preguntas acerca de este estudio o decide reportar una lesión relacionada con la investigación, póngase en contacto con Nancy Hall en cualquier momento en nhall217@gmail.com, o 775-746-2173 o a Didana Martinez por correo electrónico a didana.martinez@yahoo.com. También puede comunicarse con el Dr. R. Quinn en quinn@unr.edu o por teléfono 775-682-7526.

Se preguntará acerca de sus derechos como un sujeto de investigación o usted puede informar (anónimamente si lo elige) comentarios, inquietudes o quejas a la Universidad de Nevada, Reno Social comportamiento institucional Junta de revisión, por teléfono (775) 327-2368, o una carta a la Presidencia de la Junta, c/o UNR Oficina de humana

investigación protección, 205 Hall Ross / 331Reno Universidad de Nevada, Reno,
Nevada, 89557.

Appendix G: Letter from the Site Administrator (English)

Dr. Heath Morrison
Superintendent

Sparks High School

820 Fifteenth Street
Sparks, NV 89431

775-353-5550

Fax 775-353-5514

Patti Allyn
Assistant Principal

Mary Coffman
Assistant Principal

Amy Marable
Assistant Principal

Wanda Shakeenab
Principal

November 18, 2011

Dr. Robert J. Quinn, Professor
College of Education/Mailstop 280
University of Nevada, Reno
Reno, NV 89557

Dear Professor Quinn:

Per your e-mail of November 18, 2011, this letter is to confirm Nancy Hall, doctoral student in the College of Education at UNR, to come to Sparks High School to collect data for her dissertation on parent perceptions of parental involvement at the high school level.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,



Wanda Shakeenab
Sparks High School Principal

Appendix H: Letter from the Site Administrator (Spanish)

11/18/2011

Estimado profesor Quinn,

por su correo electrónico el 18 de noviembre de 200, esta carta es para confirmar Nancy Hall, la estudiante de doctorado en la Universidad de educación de la UNR, a venir a la escuela secundaria para recopilar datos para su tesis doctoral sobre las percepciones de padres de paternal la participación en la escuela secundaria.

Si tiene alguna pregunta, no dude en contactarme.

Sinceramente,

Wanda Shakeenab Sparks

Director de escuela secundaria Wanda Shakeenab Sparks

Appendix I: Semi-Structured Interview (English)

Date _____

A. General Demographics

Parent ID _____ Gender ___ Age (in years) ___ Race/Ethnicity: _____

Relationship to the student _____

B. Introduction:

Hello (Name of parent). My name is Nancy Hall. I appreciate your taking the time for this interview. As indicated on the telephone I am interested in learning how you describe your experience of involvement in your child's high school. I'd like to start by talking with you about your current involvement in your child's high school. It is important to me to try to understand your thinking about this issue from your own unique perspective. I want to tell your story of involvement in your child's high school.

You understand that this interview will be tape recorded only to help me review the information later and to make sure that I accurately document your responses. Before we begin this interview, I would like to know if you have any questions about this study or the interview procedure you want me to answer.

Your name, or any reference to you, will not be made at any time. It is my responsibility as the investigator to ensure the confidentiality of your answers. I will not talk to anyone about your answers to the interview questions or anything else you may say during this interview.

C. Examples of Interview Questions

a. *Introducing questions:*

Can you tell me about your involvement in your child's high school?

Do you remember an occasion when...?" This question will elicit an explanation of what the parent has already stated.

What happened in the situation mentioned?

b. *Follow-up questions:*

Direct questioning of what has just been said, nodding, repeating significant words

c. *Probing questions:*

Could you say something more about that?

Can you give a more detailed description of what happened?

Do you have further examples of this?

d. *Specifying questions:*

What did you think then?"

e. *Silence:*

By allowing pauses the interviewees have ample time to associate and reflect and break the silence themselves.

f. *Interpreting questions:*

Explain what you mean by that....?

Is it correct that you feel that...?

Does the expression.... Cover what you have just expressed?

g. Is there anything else you would like to add or share about your involvement that you feel is important for me to know?

Thank you for taking the time to discuss your views.

Appendix J: Semi-Structured Interview (Spanish)

Fecha _____

A. generales Demografía

ID de padre _____ Sexo _____ Edad (en años) _____ Raza/Origen Étnico: _____

Relación con el estudiante _____

B. Introducción:

Hola (nombre del padre). Mi nombre es Didana Martinez. Aprecio su tiempo en tomarse esta entrevista. Como se indica en el teléfono, estoy interesada en aprender cómo describe su experiencia en la escuela secundaria de su hijo/a. Gustaría comenzar por hablar con usted acerca de su participación actual en la escuela secundaria de su hijo. Para mi es importante intentar a comprender su pensamiento sobre este tema desde su propia perspectiva. Quiero contar su historia de participación en la escuela secundaria de su hijo.

Usted entiende que esta entrevista será la cinta grabada sólo para ayudarme a revisar la información más adelante y para asegurarme de que los documentos enseñan las mismas respuestas. Antes de comenzar esta entrevista, me gustaría saber si tienen alguna pregunta sobre este estudio o el procedimiento de entrevista que quisiera respuestas.

Su nombre, o cualquier referencia a usted, no se hará en cualquier momento. Es mi responsabilidad como el investigador para asegurar la confidencialidad de sus respuestas. No voy a hablar con nadie sobre sus respuestas a las preguntas de la entrevista o cualquier otra cosa que usted diga durante esta entrevista.

C. ejemplos de preguntas de la entrevista

- a. *Introducción de preguntas:*
 - ¿Puede decirme acerca de su participación en la escuela secundaria de su hijo?
 - ¿Te acuerdas de una ocasión cuando...? “Esta cuestión será obtener una explicación de lo que ya ha declarado la patente.
 - ¿Lo que ocurrió en la situación mencionada?
- b. *Preguntas de seguimiento:*
 - Directo cuestionamiento de lo que se ha dicho, con la cabeza, repitiendo palabras importantes
- c. *Preguntas de analisis:*
 - ¿Podría decirnos algo más sobre eso?
 - ¿Puede dar una descripción más detallada de lo que ocurrió?
 - ¿Tienes más ejemplos de esto?
- d. *Especificación de preguntas:*
 - ¿Qué te pareció entonces?"
- e. *Silencio:*
 - Permitiéndole realizar pausas los entrevistados tienen tiempo de sobra para asociar y reflexionar y romper el silencio en sí mismos.
- f. *Preguntas de interpretación:*
 - ¿Explicar lo que significa...?
 - ¿Es correcto que crea eso...?
 - La expresión.... ¿Cubrir lo que usted acaba de expresar?
- g. ¿Hay alguna otra cosa que le gustaría agregar o compartir acerca de su participación que crea que es importante para que sepa?

Gracias por tomarse el tiempo para discutir sus puntos de vista

Appendix K: Institutional Review Board Approval Letter



University of Nevada, Reno

Office of Human Research Protection
205 Ross Hall / 331, Reno, Nevada 89557
775.327.2368 / 775.327.2369 fax
www.unr.edu/ohrp

Certification of Approval for New Protocol: Social Behavioral Social Behavioral Institutional Review Board

Date: February 10, 2012
To: Robert J Quinn, EdD Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
Copy: Nancy Hall

UNR Protocol Number: S12-073
Protocol Title: Parental Involvement at the High School Level: Parents' Perspectives. A
Phenomenological Study
Type of Review: Expedited 7 Minimal risk
Approval Period: February 10, 2012 to February 9, 2013

This approval is for:

S12-073 app packet.pdf (Protocol application packet), Revised 2 10 2012 (Protocol application)

Approved number of subjects: 10

The above-referenced protocol was reviewed and approved by one of UNR's Institutional Review Boards in accordance with the requirements of the Code of Federal Regulations on the Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46 and 21 CFR 50 and 56).

PI Responsibilities

- Maintain an accurate and complete protocol file.
- Submit continuing projects for review and approval prior to the expiration date.
- Submit proposed changes for review and approval prior to initiation, except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to subjects. Such exceptions must be reported to the IRB at once.
- Report any unanticipated problems which may increase risks to human subjects or unanticipated adverse events to the IRB within 5 days.
- Submit a closure request 10 days after project completion to the IRB.

Reference the protocol number on all related correspondence with the IRB. If you have any questions, please contact Nancy Moody at 775.327.2368.

For Veteran's Administration research only

VA Research: No
Flag VA Medical Record: No

Appendix L: Washoe County School District Approval Letter**Research Request Approval****February 13, 2012****Name of Proposed Study: Parental Involvement at the High School Level:
Parents' Perspectives****Affiliation: UNR**
Principal Investigators: Nancy Hall

Please be advised that approval to conduct the requested research has been granted by the Department of Accountability, with these five conditions:

1. Participation by any student, any teacher, any administrator, or any school is voluntary.
2. Student, teacher, administrator, school, and district anonymity shall be assured in the research project. The identity of students, teachers, administrators, schools and the district shall not be revealed in any report of the study, except by prior written permission of this office.
3. The results of the study shall not be used for any purpose other than that specified in the research application, except by prior written permission of this office.
4. A copy of the report of the study shall be filed with this office and with the principal of any school that has participated in the study.
5. The study must conform to the federal *Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)*, all federal regulations dealing with *Protection of Human Subjects* and the *Washoe County School District Board Policies pertaining to student information*.

Approval to conduct this study within the Washoe County School District expires:

February 12, 2013