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Nicole Antoine

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Dr. Ashraf Esmail, Committee Member, Education Faculty
Dr. Michael Sanders, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer

Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University
2012

Abstract

Parental involvement is associated with students' educational achievement. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to investigate a lack of parental involvement and, particularly, teachers and parents' perceptions of barriers to parental involvement in an alternative high school. The research questions involved understanding teachers' perceptions of barriers to parental involvement in schools, parents' perceptions of barriers to their involvement in schools, how teachers view parental involvement in schools as it relates to student behavior, and how parents view their involvement in schools as it relates to student behavior. Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory was used as the conceptual framework for the study. Criterion sampling was used to select 5 teachers and 5 parents who were interviewed regarding their perceptions of barriers to parental involvement in an alternative school and how those barriers affected students' behavior. Data were collected using open-ended interviews that were transcribed, sorted, coded, and analyzed using the *NVivo 9* software, which revealed 12 themes. Results indicated that participants' perceptions of barriers to their involvement affected not only student behavior but also teacher-parent communication, home-school connections, and school-community outreach initiatives. Implications for positive social change include recognition of some of the issues parents have that can inform the development of new strategies to involve parents. Such recognition could lead to increased parental involvement practices in alternative schools, such as weekly parent-teacher conferences, parental involvement contracts, and school-community outreach programs that foster and address the issues that hinder active parental involvement.

Teachers and Parents' Perceptions of Barriers to Parental Involvement in an Alternative

High School

by

Nicole Erica Lewis-Antoine

MA, McNeese State University, 2001

BA, McNeese State University, 1998

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Dedication

I dedicate my accomplishment to my family. My mom, Faye Lewis, is and has always been my greatest inspiration and the reason why I set goals in my life. I love you, Mama, because you are my living example of what it means to work hard, to have self-respect, and to live a spiritually peaceful life. To my sisters, Niki and Alicia Lewis, you are my best friends and the other halves of who I am. I can always count on you both for an encouraging word, a much needed laugh during the rough times, and unconditional love and support. To my niece and nephew, Gabby and Eathan, I love you both and I am proud of the young adults that you are becoming. To my husband, Malcolm Antoine, thank you for taking this journey with me. Even though we struggled and sacrificed throughout this process, you never quit and you motivated me to finish what we started. You are my best friend, confidante, and love of my life. To my dad, Joseph Lewis, who spoke this achievement into my life when I was child. "Bird is gonna be a doctor one day!" I love you and will never forget your influence and love in my life. Rest in peace, Daddy. I love you all more than words can express.

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Section 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

The rate of misbehavior among high school students remains a growing issue in schools and raises debate among educational researchers (Georgiou, 2008). Research to reduce delinquent behavior could begin by exploring barriers to parental involvement, parents' perceptions of their involvement in schools, and factors that weaken parental discipline (Georgiou, 2008). Research studies that examined the effects that parental involvement might have on students' behavior could help reduce misbehavior among students in high schools (Green, Walker, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2007). The level of parental involvement in schools could shape students' levels of academic and behavioral achievements in schools. According to the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (2004), in 2000, nationally 90% of fourth-grade students attended schools where more than half of the parents participated in parent-teacher conferences, which resulted in greater parent-teacher dialogue and increased student achievement. However, the study found that the percentage dropped to 57% for eighth-grade students. School settings can sometimes be a stressful place for some children; thus, families could engage in schools to help children resist the pressures of a school environment (Williams & Kelly, 2005). Research that examined the effects of parental involvement on students' behavior in alternative school settings could offer researchers further explanation regarding the relationship between barriers to parental involvement and students' behavioral outcomes.

The goal of this study was to examine teachers and parents' perspectives of barriers to parental involvement in high schools and the effects barriers have on student

behavior. Driessen, Smit, and Sleegers (2005) argued parental involvement in schools could improve students' learning and behavior. They suggested that parental involvement, although low in some schools, might be the catalyst for improving students' learning (Driessen et al., 2005). Active parental involvement in schools could help reduce misconduct and thus yield fewer suspensions and expulsions, lower dropout rates, and improve academic and behavioral outcomes (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003). According to the Center for Comprehensive School and Reform and Improvement (2005), teachers perceive parents' lack of involvement as intentional, but parents might not know how to become involved in their children's schools. Therefore, further research on how teachers and parents perceive parental involvement and barriers to involvement could provide a clearer grasp of how to decrease or eliminate barriers to parental involvement.

Some of the barriers that might hinder parental involvement in schools include language, poor parent-teacher relationships, parents' negative perception of school environment, teachers' negative perception of parental disengagement, parents' work commitments, and transportation issues (Comer, 2005). These and other barriers might not only cause gaps between teachers and parents' relationships, but also contribute to student misbehavior or emotional problems (Duschesne & Ratelle, 2010). If parents take an early interest in their children's educational achievement, then parents might be able to see a continued improvement in their children's academic and behavioral growth. Eliminating parental barriers could help address some of the causes contributing to students dropping out of school. These needs include fracture of community organization, poor socioeconomic and housing conditions, economic hardship, and neighborhood violence caused by gang activities (Somers, Owens, & Pilawsky, 2009). If further

research studies are able to address and eliminate parental barriers, then researchers might be able to provide initiatives that could lead to lower student misbehavior.

This study addressed the problem of low or nonexistent parental involvement in a private alternative southwest Texas high school (i.e., XYZ High School) and the barriers that contribute to weakened involvement in the school. It addressed the need for parental involvement at XYZ High School to reduce students' behavioral issues. The Center for Comprehensive School and Reform Improvement (CSRI; 2005) suggested the need to further examine barriers to parental involvement, which might hinder students' positive behavior in schools. Educators at a high school in Virginia saw an increase in parent orientation for freshmen students from 50 to 1000 with the implementation of a communication system called ParentLink (CSRI, 2005). This system allowed teachers to leave messages for parents that kept them informed of students' progress. Furthermore, ABC Elementary in Washington initiated the Family Center where parents could hold meetings and discuss their children's progress in a safe neighborhood environment (CSRI, 2005). According to Somers et al. (2009), school leaders could include a number of measures to reduce factors that lead to student dropout. One of these measures includes stronger parental involvement programs and polices in schools, which might improve parent-teacher relationships. Although Somers et al. (2009) found several measures that could decrease student dropout rates and improve student behavior in the classroom, further research might be needed to examine why barriers that impede strong parent-teacher relationships exist within schools.

Problem Statement

Low levels of parental involvement in alternative schools could affect students' educational achievement (Brown & Becket, 2007). In a study by Gross and Martens Pochop (2007), almost 23% of new administrators surveyed from charter and alternative school settings perceive low parental involvement as a major issue in their schools. Furthermore, Hsu, Zhang, Kwok, Li, and Ju (2011) examined the role of Taiwanese mothers and fathers' involvement in middle school students' educational achievement, and they found parents' low involvement in schools affected students' academic achievement. At the private alternative high school, known by the pseudonym XYZ High School for the purpose of this study, data from the computer-based parent contact log showed that students with high numbers of teachers making corrective calls to parents regarding students' behavior (two or more per week) had parents who exhibited the least amount of parental involvement (e.g., teacher-parent conferences, e-mail correspondence, attendance at school function, etc). For example, fewer than 60% of parents attended initial parent-teacher conferences at school. Teachers or learning community leaders needed to call parents multiple times to arrange a specific date and time to meet with their children's teacher(s) regarding misbehavior in class or at school (XYZ High School, 2010). Furthermore, parents returned email correspondence regarding their children's behavior 50% of the time, and 30% of parents whose children exhibited continuous misbehavior in class or at school attended school functions such as Open House or school-community expos (XYZ High School, 2010).

By identifying parental involvement barriers, school leaders may be able to initiate effective parental involvement programs in their schools to help fight against

declining students' academic and behavioral achievement (Epstein et al., 2002). However, even with educators and district leaders' efforts to reduce barriers and to create parental involvement programs, the problem of weakened or nonexistent parental involvement in schools may reduce parents and teachers' motivation to work together to develop solutions to combat the poor student motivation, truancy, misbehaviors student substance abuse, delinquency, low achievement, and even criminal behavior (SEDL, 2010). Consequently, this study could assist schools in southwest Texas by investigating factors that lead to poor or nonexistent parental involvement, which might help to eliminate barriers that weaken parental involvement and improve student behavior in local southwest Texas alternative schools.

The lack of parental involvement affects students' academic and behavioral achievement because students whose parents are involved in their education are more likely to succeed in school than students who do not have actively involved parents in their education (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Studies have shown factors that contribute to the problem of weakened parental involvement include parents' mistrust of school environment, weakened communication between parents and teachers, work and home demands, lack of transportation, and languages barriers (Comer, 2005; Epstein et al., 2002). The rise of misbehavior among students at a private alternative southwest Texas high school could affect students' graduation completion, families, communities, and surrounding schools in the districts because vast majorities of students who attend this alternative school come from one of the largest school districts in Texas. According to Sheppard (2009), positive parental involvement could affect students' academic achievement levels. Students who do not have positive parental involvement in their

schools might find challenges, such as improved attendance and behavior, difficult to overcome.

Sheppard (2009) found that even with training programs in schools geared towards increasing parental involvement, 45% to 65% of parents of antisocial students did not complete the trainings. Therefore, at-risk students may be at an even greater risk, than those students who have involved parents, of school suspensions and drop out. Advanced studies that explore the association between at-risk student behaviors and parental involvement could provide further insight into measures that could strengthen parental involvement by eliminating barriers that impede involvement. This study might contribute to other research in this area by identifying barriers to parental involvement based on the perceptions of parents and teachers from a southwest Texas private alternative high school. This study examined parental involvement barriers in order to reduce consistent and severe student behavior issues at XYZ High School.

Nature of the Study

A phenomenological research design was used in this study to examine teachers and parents' perceptions of barriers to parental involvement at a private alternative southwest Texas high school (i.e., XYZ High School) and the effects parental involvement barriers have on students' behavior at that school. After expressing interest in a research study advertisement, some teachers and parents from XYZ High School were asked to participate in a formal, face-to-face, 60-90 minute interview to share their perceptions of parental involvement barriers and the effects they have on student behavior. Teachers and parents were asked about best practices to limit barriers to parental involvement in the schools. They were also asked to share their perceptions of

parental involvement barriers and how they affect their students' behavior. Data were analyzed using Creswell's (2003) six steps for analyzing qualitative data. Data were coded and revealed 12 themes. The participants' interviews were analyzed using member-checking; rich, detailed description; and bias clarification. Results revealed participants' perceptions of barriers to parental involvement influenced student behavior, teacher-parent relationships, home-school connections, and community-school outreach initiatives.

Research Questions

1. What are teachers' perceptions of barriers to parental involvement in school?

2. What are parents' perceptions of barriers to their involvement in school?

3. How do teachers view parental involvement in school with respect to student behavior?

4. How do parents view their involvement in school with respect to student behavior?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to investigate teachers and parents' perceptions of barriers to parental involvement to decrease negative perceptions and increase active parental involvement at a private alternative southwest Texas high school (i.e., XYZ High School). For the purpose of this study, the barriers to parental involvement were defined as any physical, cultural, social, emotional, or psychological

issues that hinder parental participation in school functions or activities (Craham-Clay, 2005).

Conceptual Framework

This study considered Bronfenbrenner's (1979) concept of the importance of the family as a contribution in children's academic and behavioral achievement. Bronfenbrenner (1979) understood that the family and community connection was a necessary component to foster parent-child and home-school relationships. When barriers hinder parents' interaction with children's education (e.g., work, economics, and home cultures as defined in the exo- and macrosystems), children's school achievement might become affected. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) concept of a set of systems that describes the natural setting needed to nurture children from birth into adulthood analyzes a child's growth through five structures known as the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and the chronosystem.

The microsystem includes family, school, neighborhood, or childcare environment. At this level, the child is affected by his or her parents' beliefs and behaviors, just as the parents are affected by their children's beliefs and behaviors. The mesosystem emphasizes the connection between the parent-teacher relationships, which supports academic and behavioral progress of children both in school and at home. In this system, everything within a child's inner and outer world connects to nurture a child's overall development. The mesosystem is the catalyst that promotes working relationships that develop and sustain a child's development, physically, psychologically, emotionally, academically, and socially.

The exosystem does not directly involve the child. Instead, this system's structure affects the child's development within his or her microsystem. At this level, parents' work schedule, transportation issues, socioeconomic status, language barriers, and parents' perceptions of school environment all may positively or negatively affect the child's development. The macrosystem deals with the culture, values, or laws within a family. This system may affect a child's development depending on the values or customs of the parents. For instance, if parents believe that they are solely responsible for their children's educational growth, then they may not seek outside resources to help them with their children's educational development. The chronosystem focuses on the length of time it takes for the child to grow physically, emotionally, and psychologically. This system has both external and internal elements that may affect the child's development. For instance, the death of a parent is external, and the physiological changes that occur with age are internal. Just as the exosystem provides an example of how barriers in parents' lives can impede parental involvement in schools, the other systems address how children are affected socially or academically when parents positively or negatively influence their children's world.

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) model for social change as it relates to school and family involvement that nurtures student achievement can be used to reduce or eliminate parental involvement barriers in schools. He suggested causes and recommendations for parental involvement barriers. Moreover, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) concept was to help schools and parents close gaps that impede parental involvement. One focus of his theory was helping parents to learn how to nurture and to parent their children better. Specifically, a recent study found that perceived parental involvement, or lack thereof,

can positively or negatively affect students' behavior, self-esteem, attitude, and frequency of family and school involvement activities (Cripps & Zyromski, 2009). Bronfenbrenner's (1979) model may not only be a blueprint for understanding parental involvement barriers, but it may also provide steps for building the parent-child relationship to foster positive student behavior.

Operational Definitions

At-risk students: Students at risk for possible dropout because of truancy at school, failure in core subjects such as English and math, grade retention, and consistent misbehaviors that result in disciplinary actions (e.g., suspension, detention, or expulsion; Kennelly & Monrad, 2007).

Barriers to parental involvement: Any physical, cultural, social, emotional, or psychological issues that hinder parents' involvement in school events, programs, or meetings (Craham-Clay, 2005)

Chronosystem: Development of a child as it relates to time (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Ecosystem: One or more environments that do not include a child as an actively engaged subject; however, events that occur in the environments influence the child's development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Macrosystem: Represents the cultural values, customs, or laws that affect the way in which a child views the world and his place in it (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Mesosystem: Settings in which students learn to participate and to thrive such as home, neighborhood, and school (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Microsystem: A child's activity, role, or interpersonal patterns experienced in a certain setting with specific physical and material qualities (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Parental participation: A parent attending a minimum of one school function or activity, such as school's town hall meeting or parent-teacher association meeting, each month during a school term (Houston ISD Parental Involvement Guidelines, 2009).

Assumptions and Limitations

Assumptions for this study were that teachers and parents answered interview questions honestly and that responses indicated participants' actual perceptions of and current experiences with barriers that impeded parental involvement. Other assumptions were that parents shared similar parental involvement barriers and that teachers shared open view points on parental involvement barriers and their negative effect on students' behavior in the classroom.

A weakness of this study might have been that it provided participants' responses from a single school at a single moment in time; therefore, results may not be used to forecast future results of the same issue. In addition, some teachers and parents were unwilling to participate. Therefore, efforts to gain access to a more diverse sample, such as parents who spoke English as a second language or who have been consistently inactive, were thwarted. Furthermore, the phenomenological design, as with any design, has some weaknesses attributed to its use. A qualitative design can produce a high volume of data, which could make interpretation and analysis time consuming. Most of the subcategories presented in the findings had frequency counts (i.e., thematic patterns) lower than 50%. These frequency counts demonstrated a variety of opinions typical of a qualitative study that did not easily fit into neat categories. Another weakness might have

been the restriction of collecting data from participants at a certain time of day, which might have resulted in rushed responses or distracted demeanor of some participants.

Scope and Delimitations

Teacher and parent responses regarding barriers to parental involvement were examined in this study. Therefore, objective indicators of behavior, number of office infractions, referrals, suspensions, expulsions, and drop out were not examined. Teachers from one school in southwest Texas may have delimited the study.

Significance of Study

Research in the area of parental involvement in schools could be important in revamping school leaders' achievement goals for students' behavior. Furthermore, future research of barriers to parental involvement in schools and their effects on students' behaviors in alternative educational settings could assist school administrators and teachers with their efforts to increase students' academic goals and decrease students' incidents of referrals and infractions. Because parents could affect children's behavior and cognitive development, research that investigates reasons why parents feel unmotivated to actively engage in schools might help to improve teacher-parent relationships, which could also increase students' behavioral progress (Georgiou, 2008). This study might benefit school leaders, teachers, administrative staff, students, families, educational state/district leaders, and communities. Based on the findings, school and district leaders might have the opportunity to begin a dialogue that can bridge gaps between families and schools, allowing parents to increase their level of school involvement and take on leadership roles in schools. The findings could present a balanced share of accountability among school districts, communities, students and

parents. The findings could suggest the need for well-developed behavioral goal plans for students that parents must help to develop. The findings might become a means for evolved Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA) and could define parents' roles in schools across the country, which might ensure increased and continuous parental participation in all schools (Mombourquette, 2007).

Summary

Section 1 included the foundation for research into the area of identifying barriers to parental involvement and their effect on students' achievement, especially behavioral achievement. Several studies provided a basis for understanding the association between barriers to parental involvement and their effects on students' educational outcomes (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005; Green, Walker, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2007; Williams & Kelly, 2007). This section also provided Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory of systems as a framework for examining parental involvement as it relates to student achievement.

Section 2 of this study focuses on the association between teachers and parents' perceptions of barriers to parental involvement and students' academic and behavioral achievement. The literature review section provides study findings associated with the effects of parental involvement on students' academic and behavioral achievement. Research approach and method are explored in section 3, and the data analysis is presented in section 4. Section 5 includes a summation of this study along with concluding remarks and recommendations for future research study.

Section 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The relationship between active parental participation in schools and students' academic and behavioral achievement is examined in this literature review. This review includes the barriers that might impede active parental involvement in schools, and it includes the challenges of implementing effective parental participation in schools. Furthermore, it contains the issues that students face in schools when parents are not actively involved in schools. This review consists of literature from databases such as ERIC, Academic Journals, and Educational Reports. The sources used to develop the literature review might help to determine if there is an association between teachers and parents' perceptions of barriers to parental involvement in schools and students' academic and behavioral achievement in an alternative school setting. Keywords used to search databases included *parental involvement, teacher perceptions, parent perceptions, barriers to parental involvement, barriers and parental involvement, student behavior, academic achievement, parent participation, student behavior, at-risk students and perceptions, alternative school and parents, school climate* and *student behavior.*

Parental Involvement and its Effect on Students' Academic and Behavioral Achievement

Studies have shown that parental involvement in schools might be associated with increases in students' grades, attendance, classroom readiness, and behavioral achievement, beginning at an early age and continuing throughout high school (Cox, 2005; Mombourquette, 2007; Elias, Patrikakou, & Weissberg, 2007). Parental participation can be an important role in a student's reading and behavioral achievement

(Green, Walker, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2007). Green et al. (2007) found that parental involvement activities for students from first through sixth grade were beneficial to helping parents understand their children's academic and behavioral needs. The study found that parental involvement decreased as children grew older, which might have accounted for students' lower academic and behavioral achievement as they entered middle and high school. In a recent study, researchers showed that Portuguese students from case study schools were underperforming by the end of their elementary years (Demie & Lewis, 2010). However, findings from the study showed that, with active participation of parents in the schools to help motivate student learning and address behavioral issues, students were able to show increases in their academic performance, including reading and math (Demie & Lewis, 2010). Parents' participation in school activities may support students' efforts to maintain positive school behavior and may nurture their academic abilities in core subjects such as reading.

According Lo's (2008) study, inactive parent participation was largely due to language barriers between home and school. Parents reported dissatisfaction with the school's translating services. Lo suggested parent participation in school meetings that pertained to student services could allow a parent to help the school provide the best academic or social services needed for the overall academic and social success of a student. The study suggested that parents provide important feedback and information in individualized education program (IEP) meetings that help school administrators and teachers to determine the best resources needed for IEP students. However, without proper translating services, parents' participation in IEP meetings could continue to decline, making it difficult for schools to provide adequate services for students, which

could, in turn, hinder students' educational social development Lo (2008). Therefore, further research that addresses barriers that hinder parental involvement and their effects on students' academic and social development could provide a means for exploring measures that might help to reduce barriers and improve parental involvement in alternative school settings.

School leaders are faced with increased student suspensions, expulsions, drop out rates, and declining academic achievement in core subject areas. Somers et al. (2009) found that 50% of the ninth through twelfth-grade students from a Midwest high school graduated compared to the statewide 76% graduation rate. The challenges that face the school leaders and the low graduation rate at this Midwest high school include a lack of parent-teacher relationships, low family-school connections, and decreased school-community involvement that foster active parental involvement to support student achievement. According to MetLife (2005), 20% of new teachers and one-fourth of principals view their relationships with parents as stressful and unwelcomed. This gap in parent-school communication might contribute to the growing drop out rate among high school students. Johnson and Duffett (2003) found 65% of teachers believed their students would perform better and become more motivated if their parents were actively engaged in their education, and 72% of teachers believed that students who did not have actively involved parents in their school experienced decreased academic and behavioral achievement. They suggested that schools and districts are trying to combat these issues by understanding and eliminating the barriers that hinder parental involvement (Johnson & Duffett, 2003).

Parental participation in school activities and functions could have positive effects on students' educational achievement. Researchers have found that parents who participate in their children's school functions, activities, school meetings, and parent-teacher conferences in traditional schools have a greater relationship with their children's teachers than parents who do not participate in their children's school functions, activities, and meetings (DePlanty, Coulter-Kern, & Duchane, 2007; Domina, 2005). Furthermore, Driessen et al. (2005) revealed students' behavior improved when their parents were actively involved in their traditional schools. In a related study by Dougherty (2006), findings from the ethnographic study of approximately 500 students conducted at a Connecticut elementary school showed that school programs that include parental involvement plans have greater success of parental involvement, student achievement, and parent-teacher relationships than schools programs that do not include parental involvement plans. Although Dougherty (2006) focused on ways to improve or to implement parental involvement programs in schools, additional studies could address factors that impede active parental participation in parental involvement programs in alternative school environments.

The role of parents in schools may positively or negatively affect student achievement. Houtenville and Conway (2008) found that parents' efforts to involve themselves in their children's education did improve student achievement. The study also found those school leaders who invested time and resources into increasing parental involvement saw improvement in students' academic work and shared educational decision-making between parents and schools. In another study on the effects of parental participation on student's academic and behavioral achievement, Sirvani (2007)

examined 52 high school freshmen in a diverse population to determine the effects of

parental involvement on students' performance in four Algebra I classes. Participants

were divided into two groups. Group I, the experimental group, consisted of two Algebra

I classes in which students' parents received monitoring reports that contained students'

grades on tests and homework twice a week. Group II, the control group, consisted of two

Algebra I classes in which students' parents received no monitoring reports regarding

students' performance in math class. Findings from the study showed that students in the

experimental group achieved higher tests scores than those students in the control group.

Reasons for the experimental group's high scores could be attributed to the possibility

that these students' parents checked the students' work twice each week; because parents

received their children's grades twice each week, student motivation to complete

assignments and to study for tests increased. Parental involvement in schools could have

lasting effects on students' academic development. Future studies could examine how

involved parents might become catalysts for students' increased academic performance in

the alternative school's classroom.

     Similar findings by Berkowitz and Bier (2005), Georgiou (2008), and Hoover-

Dempsey and Sandler (2007) revealed parental involvement that begins from early

childhood and continues throughout high school has a positive effect on students'

academic and behavioral achievement. Berkowitz et al. (2005) found that actively

involved parents were more aware of what was going on in their children's schools than

inactive parents were. In addition, findings from Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2007)

showed that students of parents who participated in school activities and functions were

more confident and better prepared in class than students who did not have actively

engaged parents. Therefore, further research that addresses the effects of parental involvement on students' academic and behavioral achievement might be necessary to increase parental involvement and students' educational and social achievement in alternative schools.

Schools could welcome parents as partners in the fight against declining student achievement (Tolan, Gorman-Smith, & Henry, 2004). For example, Tolan et al. (2004) found that schools that made an effort to foster parent-school relationships through program initiatives and community outreach attained greater parental support than schools that did not make an effort to reach out to parents. In a similar study, researchers found that an urban middle school was able to define parental involvement and increase parent participation through participatory action research (PAR). While in its ninth month of PAR, researchers reported an increase in students' core subject achievement, school awareness, increased teacher communication, and improved home-school dialogue (Snell, Miguel, & East, 2009). In addition, similar findings in another study indicate that parental involvement affects students' achievement more than school procedures (Sheppard, 2009). Sheppard's (2009) study found that families who participated in a parenting program that taught parents how to engage in their children's education saw an improvement in children's reading and social behavior. Although these studies presented findings that show student achievement benefits from schools' efforts to implement parental involvement initiatives, the studies did not show any findings of the long-term effects of the initiatives on students' academic and behavioral achievement, especially in alternative education programs. However, the findings might indicate the need for further research into developing programs and other parental involvement initiatives that

increase parent-school partnerships and positive student outcomes, both academically and behaviorally.

Studies have consistently shown that active parental involvement in schools may positively affect students' academic and behavioral achievement (Cordry & Wilson, 2004; Williams & Kelly, 2005). Cordry and Wilson (2004) found parents' active involvement in schools is needed if educators wish to promote a partnership between teachers and parents. Their study also found that children of school-involved parents experienced academic gains in the classroom. Findings further revealed that parents who are involved in their children's schools are confident during parent-teacher meetings. In addition, Williams and Kelly (2005) suggested that the relationship between parents and adolescents early in life could be important in developing strong academic and healthy social growth. Their study found that parents who are engaged in their children's schools starting from primary grade level experienced a higher level of participation in schools as their children grew into adolescence than children of parents who are not actively engaged in the schools. The study also found that students of early-engaged parents maintain consistent academic and behavioral achievement. Although Cordy and Wilson (2004) and Williams and Kelly (2005) did not test a direct causal relationship between parental involvement and positive student outcomes, results from their studies revealed that active parental involvement may be linked to increased academic and behavioral student achievement. Research efforts that investigate parents as partners to combat decreased academic and behavioral achievement among children could not only increase student performance but it might also bridge the communication gap between the home-school relationships.

Parental Involvement in the Home and its Effect on Students' Academic Achievement

Studies have demonstrated the effects that parental involvement in the home has on their children's academic performance (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Tam & Chan, 2009). In a cross-sectional study of 1309 pairs of first through sixth-grade students and their parents in Hong Kong, researchers examined the effects of parental involvement in homework on students' academic achievement. Researchers used data from homework diaries and parent questionnaires to determine results. Findings from the study showed that homework diaries used to help parents with tracking their level of involvement in helping their children with homework do help parents to view their involvement as important to their children's educational outcomes (Tam & Chan, 2009). Additionally, when parents saw their children's academic performance increase, parents became motivated to help their children with homework, even after working long work hours. Although the cross-sectional design and focus on primary school-age children may limit the interpretations of findings, results do suggest that school leaders' efforts to assist parents with various types of parental involvement, even in the home, could produce positive gains in students' academic performance.

Anderson and Minke (2007) conducted a study of parents whose children attended three primary schools in a southwest inner-city school district. Their study found that parental involvement in the home was higher than parental involvement in the schools. The study also found that ethnic minority parents' contributions to schools are often overlooked because their involvement usually takes place away from schools. In addition, findings showed that parents reported that resources, or lack thereof, did not

affect their level of involvement, especially at home. Lastly, findings showed that teachers who make efforts to invite parents to school functions and make positive calls to parents develop positive relationships with parents, which result in increased achievement of children whose parents are engaged in their schools and in the home. Therefore, the study showed that parental involvement at home might be just as important to student achievement as parental involvement at school. Further research studies that focus on incorporating home and school-based parental involvement assessments that explore the effects of homework help from parents on students' academic performance are needed. Such studies could guide future research into understanding how parental involvement in the home affects students' educational achievement.

The Effect of Parental Involvement on Academic and Behavioral Achievement of Students of Color

The educational gap that exists among ethnic minority students continues to increase each year (Blue & Cook, 2004). This gap could lead to long-term educational disparities between Caucasian and non-Caucasian students (Blue & Cook, 2004). Several factors are associated with increases in high school dropout rates, especially among African American and Hispanic students. One such factor that might be associated with increases in high school student dropout is a lack of family involvement in students' educational careers (Blue & Cook, 2004). Research studies have indicated that parental involvement might be associated with the academic and behavioral performance of students of color (The Texas Education Agency [TEA], 2003b). TEA (2003b) reported a disproportionate number of ethnic minority students drop out of school by the time they reach high school. This report showed that among economically disadvantaged students,

African American and Hispanic high school students had the highest dropout rate

statewide in 2002 when compared to their Caucasian, Native American and Asian

counterparts.

The report revealed that African American students' dropout rate was 6.6%, and

Hispanic students' dropout rate was 7.7%; however, Caucasian students' dropout rate

was 2.7%; Native American students' dropout rate was 3.5%, and Asian students'

dropout rate was 2.6% (TEA, 2003b). Findings from the report indicated that one

association of high dropout rates among ethnic minorities might be attributed to a lack of

parental involvement as children reach adolescent age. This lack of involvement might be

due to low socioeconomic problems and cultural differences within ethnic minority

families. Further studies found that dropout indicators such as academic failure,

disengagement, low attendance, and misbehavior at school are largely associated with

poor parental support, which, in turn, might lead students to leave school at increasingly

early ages (Allensworth & Easton, 2005; Finn, 2006; Jerald, 2007). Allensworth and

Easton (2005), Finn (2006), and Jerald (2007) found that increased academic and

behavioral student achievement is linked to consistent active parental involvement in

students' educational goals. School and community leaders' efforts to increase parental

involvement programs for ethnic families in schools could reduce dropout indicators

among ethnic at-risk students. Further research into the area of parental involvement and

its impact on ethnic students' academic and behavioral achievement could begin to close

the academic and social disparities between Caucasian and non-Caucasian students,

thereby reducing dropout rates and at-risk behaviors among students of color.

Studies that focus on the effects of parental involvement on non-Caucasian student achievement could provide insight into the levels of disparity that might exist in the academic achievement of Caucasian and non-Caucasian students (National Assessment of Educational Progress [NAEP], 2009). According to the NAEP (2009), reading achievement levels of fourth grade Caucasian and Asian students were 25 points higher than their African American and Hispanic counterparts were. Furthermore, the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) (2010) reported a decline in parental involvement among African American and Hispanic families when compared to their Caucasian counterparts. This lack of parental involvement among families from El Salvador and Central America, for instance, could have, in part, accounted for a 34.4% student dropout rate, which was three times higher than their native-born counterparts were. Therefore, attention to parental involvement among students of color could be a key component to reducing high percentages of dropout rates among students of color.

Emanique and Davis' (2009) study used the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten Class (ECLS-K) Public Use Data to determine if parents' active school involvement is associated with positive gains in African American boys' school readiness starting from an early age. Their study found that affluent African American parents who participated in their children's schools starting from kindergarten continued their involvement throughout high school; however, parents from low socioeconomic backgrounds did not actively engage themselves in their children's schools. Their study also shows an association between levels of parent involvement and gains in reading, math, and classroom behavior among kindergarten students. The benefit of the researchers' approach was that it allowed them to utilize a reliable, existing set of data to

help with their data analysis. Yet, the disadvantage of the data, as stated by the researchers, was that the ECLS-K did not provide data that allowed them to examine the purpose for specially scheduled parent-teacher conferences, which could help researchers understand the connection between behavior and student outcomes.

Furthermore, Emanique and Davis showed that there might be an association between parent-teacher conference attendance and African American boys' performances on reading, math, and general knowledge skills tests. The study also indicated a growing body of research that shows a relationship between fathers' involvement and African American males' academic and socio-emotional achievement. A weakness of this study was that it was confined to one school; still, the findings may represent a larger population of students of color who might be positively or negatively affected by their parents' involvement in their schools, especially if the involvement is specific to certain student achievement. The fathers in the study involved themselves in their children's academic development, which resulted in students' increased reading and math performance; however, the fathers' also nurtured positive behavior in their children by engaging in their children's socio-emotional development and positive self-image, which was a representation of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) mesosystem and macrosystem (i.e., children learning about cultural values or emotional well-being in the home) (Emanique & Davis, 2009).

In another study, Huntsinger and Jose (2009) found that active participation of parents in children's education, especially when parents expressed their educational goals for their children during parent-teacher or parent-student conferences, is shown to increase students' academic success. Their study also found that students, whose parents

are hands-on in helping with homework and school activities, enjoy school and reading more than students of inactive parents. Specifically, their study found that Chinese parents and teachers were more active and consistent than European parents and teachers in correcting student behavior problems. The study found that Chinese American students had greater academic and behavioral achievement than their European counterparts did. This finding might suggest a cultural difference in how Chinese American families and Caucasian American families value their roles in their children's education. While the strength of these findings may be weakened because the sample included only the students whose parents had consistent engagement at their schools, the findings might help schools to view student diversity as a significant part of the parental involvement process.

Along with understanding student diversity as a central part of the parental involvement process, school leaders might implement parental involvement initiatives that can help parents become active participants in their children's schools starting from early childhood years and continuing throughout high school. Further research into parental involvement and its impact on students' of color academic and behavioral achievement could expose barriers of parental involvement among ethnic families. Emanique and Davis (2009) and Huntsinger and Jose (2009) suggested a need to examine how cultural and ethnic diversity in families could affect parental involvement and its relationship to academic and behavioral outcomes among students of color. According to Strayhorn (2010), academic achievement disparities have existed for years between Caucasian and African American students, despite school reform.

These disparities, in large part, are influenced by three of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) systems: microsystem (family/cultural background), mesosystem (family factors), and exosystem (outside home variables such as school).

Therefore, cultural backgrounds in ethnic families might affect levels of parental involvement. In addition, Lopez, Barrueco, and Feinauer (2007) found that only 50% of Latino kindergarten children recognized the alphabet at the beginning of kindergarten; however, 75% of Caucasian children beginning kindergarten knew the alphabet. Furthermore, while 40% of Caucasian high school students scored above "proficient" on the NAEP math exam, only 5% of African American students scored the same (Strayhorn, 2010). Further research that explores to the effects of parental involvement on students' of color academic and behavioral achievement could help reduce reading and math deficiencies and increased dropout rates among Hispanic students and other students of color.

Parent Expectations as a Means of Involvement

Parental involvement could take many forms. One way that parents could involve themselves in their children's education is by expressing high academic and behavior expectations of their children. Chen and Gregory (2009) found that low-achieving ninth grade students at a high school who reported their parents' high expectations for their educational success achieved higher grade point averages and increased classroom engagement when compared with their peers whose parents did not have high expectations for their children's educational attainment. Therefore, parents who are actively engaged in students' educational settings and set high expectations for their children may see positive gains in their children's educational achievement. Cortez and

Flores (2009) found that parents wanted their children to be successful in school, and parents reported useful partnerships between home and school environments could help foster student learning throughout high school and into college. For example, results of a study at a middle school showed a specific type of involvement, academic socialization, which included parents' communication of their expectations and educational values, to be a positive catalyst for students' academic achievement (Hill & Tyson, 2009). Students reported that academic socialization allowed them to meet their parents' expectations of their academic goals. Parents who express high expectations for their children's educational and behavioral achievement could help to increase students' achievement outcomes. Research studies that examine the effects of parents' expectations on students' academic and behavioral achievement might provide further insight into how parent expectations could be viewed as a relevant theme in parental involvement.

Sheppard (2009) utilized a comparative, pseudo-experimental design that examined the attendance of 12 to 13-year-olds to determine if parents' expectations of their children' attendance were associated with students' school attendance as children reached puberty. The study found that students with medium and high attendance liked school more than students who had low attendance did. This result indicated parents' high expectations for their children's school attendance might have been connected to students' consistently high attendance; whereas, parents' low or nonexistent expectations for their children's attendance might have negatively affected their children's school attendance. One advantage of the study was that it allowed the researcher to collect quantitative and qualitative data based on willing student participant responses. However,

weakened parental expectations were not shown to have caused decreased student attendance.

Moreover, in Snell's (2009) study, the researchers examined five six-week long focus groups lasting two hours in which random sampling was used to produce parent participants in the study. Qualitative data were collected from an inner-city middle school, a non-profit organization set inside the school, and a neighboring university to develop categories that represented participants' responses, which were used to reveal findings regarding participants' views of the importance of parental involvement on student achievement. The findings showed that participants reported their expectations of their children's academic goals as positive, and their level of involvement in the schools was predetermined by the school administrators' ability to accept them as viable components to the school's parental involvement plan. The advantage of the design approach was that the study discovered parents who were willing to become actively involved in their children's schools. However, one disadvantage to the approach was that only parents who had expressed interest in parental involvement in the schools' involvement project were mailed invitation letters to participate in the research. Doing so, may have created an immediate bias in the study by excluding the perspectives of parents who were not previously engaged in the school's parent involvement project. Eliminating the lack of parent responses might have limited data interpretations because it failed to include views from a diverse parent group. However, the findings did indicate an association between parents' expectations and positive outcomes for students' academic achievement.

Overstreet, Devine, Bevans, and Efreom (2005) examined the parental involvement of 159 economically disadvantaged African American parents in middle and high school urban environments. According to Overstreet et al. (2005), parents had high expectations for their children's education. The findings also showed that parents expressed a desire for their children to attend college. Parents reported that school administrators' ability to reach out to them and to welcome them in the schools was a predictor to parents' level of involvement in the schools. Active parental involvement could help both parents and students feel a shared sense of accountability for the students' academic and behavioral outcomes (Overstreet et al., 2005). Overstreet et al. (2005) found that parents who had high expectations for their children's educational futures were willing to be involved and engaged in their children's learning process. The study further showed a link between parents who had high expectations for their children's education and academic achievement among at-risk African American youth. Furthermore, Sehee and Hsiu (2005) examined parental involvement across four ethnic groups to determine if parental involvement was associated with achievement. Findings from the study showed that parental involvement, specifically communication and parental educational aspirations, might affect students' own educational aspirations and academic achievement.

The study also found that the more parents and students communicate with one another, the better students feel about their educational goals and academic readiness. Although Overstreet et al. (2005), Sehee and Hsiu (2005), Snell, Cortez and Flores (2009), Chen and Gregory (2009), and Sheppard (2009) showed a relationship between parents' participation in school and students' educational and behavioral outcomes, the

researchers were unable to test a causal relationship between the two variables. However, findings from these studies suggest a connection between parental expectations and positive outcomes of students' academic performance and behavioral achievement. Additional research studies that examine parents' expectations for their children's education might suggest recommendations for strategies that increase parent expectations and their effects on students' academic and behavioral achievement.

School and Community: Working Together to Increase Parental Involvement

Studies have long demonstrated the effects that a strong school-community relationship could have on positive parental involvement (Georgiou, 2008; Gillies, 2006; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Henderson and Mapp (2002) found that schools and communities have organized initiatives to build better parental involvement programs in low socioeconomic urban area schools. These initiatives were found to increase student achievement, build stronger home-school relationships, and reduce overall dropout rates among middle and high school students in low-income urban and rural area schools. In addition, studies found that parent-teacher relationships, home-school connections, and school-community relations helped to bridge gaps between parents and school leaders and increased academic and behavioral achievement among elementary and adolescent children (Georgiou, 2008; Gillies, 2006; Gonzalez-DeHass, Williams, & Doan Holbein, 2005). Other studies have shown that active parental involvement in schools can not only reduce dropout rates, but it can also assist school leaders' efforts to increase student attendance, create and maintain after school programs, help implement better parent-teacher organizations (PTO), and develop lasting relationships between school leaders and parents (Lane, Wehby, & Cooley, 2006; Martin, Tobin, & Sugai, 2002; McCoy,

2003; McReynolds, 2004). Researchers have shown a clear association between active

parental involvement and students' academic and behavioral achievement (Lane et al.,

2006). Although findings from Lane et al. (2006) do not show causal relationships

between parental involvement and student achievement, they do suggest that an increase

in parental involvement might help increase students' academic performance and

improve at-risk behaviors.

School and community leaders could work together to provide effective parental

involvement initiatives that not only increase parental involvement but also benefit

students' academic achievement. Arias and Morillo-Campbell (2008) suggested schools

implement a variety of programs that might aid effective parental involvement for

English language learners (ELL). Because ELL students and parents often have the

challenge of overcoming language barriers, programs designed to support culturally

diverse families, to encourage school-community initiatives that inform parents of school

activities, expectations, and policies could help to bridge communication gaps between

school leaders and ELL families (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008). As with ELL

students, special needs students could benefit from active parental involvement.

In a study of 350 parent participants of a special needs program for their children

in Kuwait, researchers examined the degree to which parental involvement affected

special needs students' achievement in the special needs program (Al-Shammari &

Yawkey, 2008). Findings from the study revealed that special needs programs that

include parent involvement and understanding of various disabilities are helpful in

assisting parents with their children's educational outcomes. Parents reported that school

involvement plans, knowledgeable special education teachers, and enrichment activities

designed to support parental involvement in the program increased their school

participation and helped to develop relationships with their children's teachers.

Therefore, research studies that investigate school and community leaders' relationships

and their impact on parental involvement might be key components in addressing the lack

of parental involvement in schools.

Teachers and Parents' Perspectives of Parental Involvement in the Schools

Teachers and parents have varying views of parental involvement in the school

(Lane et al., 2006). Studies that focus on parental involvement as it relates to student

achievement have found that parents reported feeling insecure and unwelcomed in their

children's schools when schools do not reach out to them first (Lane et al., 2006;

Theodorou, 2008). In a recent study by Hujala, Turja, Gaspar, Veisson, and Waniganyake

(2009), researchers examined early childhood professionals from five countries to

understand teachers' views of parental involvement in early childhood education

programs. The results of the study showed that teachers viewed parental involvement as

active, high-energy investments needed to help teachers and parents to build partnerships

that foster early childhood learning (Hujala et al., 2009). The study also found that

teachers perceived parents as customers receiving a service. Therefore, teachers viewed

parental involvement as a necessary component to establish healthy teacher-parent

partnerships.

Theodorou's (2008) study explored elementary teachers' perceptions of

immigrant parent involvement in their children's education. The study found that

teachers' perceived immigrant parents as disinterested and showed little to no interest in

their children's education. The study showed that teachers' beliefs were based on their

assumptions that parents were indifferent or disinterested due to their financial or other family challenges. In addition, findings showed that teachers perceived parents' low educational background and socioeconomic status as catalysts that drove poor parental involvement in the school. Furthermore, teachers believed parents viewed their children's school as a separate environment from the home, where students and teachers, not parents, nurture and build learning. Theodorou's (2008) findings reflect teachers' clear lack of communication and understanding of parent roles in schools, and maybe even a lack of understanding of family issues that influence parental involvement. The findings suggest a lack of parent-teacher relationships in schools might create, among teachers, negative and misguided perceptions of parents' involvement in the schools. Furthermore, teachers' misperceptions of parents' involvement in schools could be a barrier to improving parental participation in schools. Therefore, additional research studies that examine methods of facilitating strong, consistent parent-teacher relationships could close communication gaps between parents and teachers.

Further research into examining teachers' perspectives of parental involvement could help reduce teachers' negative beliefs, biases and views that might impede active parental involvement in schools. Understanding teachers' perspectives of parental involvement could also eliminate parental involvement barriers such as parents' fear of school settings, parents' feelings of intimidation and unwelcome, limited communication between-parent and teacher, and poor parent-teacher relationships, thereby, promoting students' academic and behavioral outcomes through greater parent-teacher connections. Even though teachers' perceptions of parental involvement have not been shown to cause low levels of parental-teacher relationships in schools, Lane et al. (2006) and Hujala et al.

(2009) show a relationship between teachers' perceptions of parental involvement and increases in parent-teacher communications.

Parents' Perceptions of Parental Involvement

Parents' perceptions of their involvement in their children's schools and education could affect their levels of involvement and students' academic and behavioral achievement (Solish & Perry, 2008). In a study by Solish and Perry (2008), researchers examined how parents and therapists perceived parental involvement regarding students' intensive behavioral intervention plan (IBI). Findings showed that parents of younger children perceived their involvement as positive because they felt optimistic and motivated about implementing the IBI plan at home. The study also found that therapists agreed with parents' perceptions regarding their involvement. That is, parents were involved, motivated, and willing to understand how to implement the IBI plan at home when their children began the program at early ages. Doing so allowed parents to engage effectively in their children's behavioral development.

In a qualitative single-site case study by Wanat (2010), 14 parent interviews were conducted to determine parents' perceptions of their involvement in a K-12 school district. Results of the study concluded that parents who had positive experiences with involvement reported open, positive relationships with their children's school administrators and teachers. Parents reported feeling supported by the school leaders' efforts to answer questions about their children's progress. They also reported feeling their involvement was essential to their children's success in school. On the other hand, parents who had negative perceptions of their involvement reported feeling dissatisfied with their children's schools. These parents reported feelings of disconnect from the

school due to work restraints, lack of encouragement from the school, feelings of unwelcome, lack of confidence, and frustration with school-home gaps. Although Wanat (2010) had a small number of interview participants that made it difficult to generalize findings beyond the school district used in the study, results allowed parents to voice their viewpoints regarding their perceptions of involvement.

In another study, Zarate (2007) examined Latino parents' perceptions of involvement in their children's education. Findings revealed that Latino parents perceived moral teaching and life guidance as involvement in their children's formal education. Parents reported teaching their children life lessons (i.e., respect and family values) would reinforce children's positive classroom behavior and academic achievement. Because Latino parents in this study perceived their involvement as a reinforcement of what their children learned at school, parents did not view active school participation in functions, activities, and programs as a necessary component to their involvement. Moreover, parents cited work commitments as a major reason for their lack of active school involvement. However, since parents did not perceive their active school involvement as relevant to their children's achievement outcomes, they did not pursue parental involvement roles in their children's schools. This study indicated a need for further research into parents' perceptions of their involvement in schools. Understanding how parents view their involvement might limit barriers to parental involvement, especially among culturally and ethnically diverse families. Research that further examines the area of parents' perceptions of involvement could help minimize or eliminate negative parent perspectives of involvement, which could, in turn, reduce barriers to parental involvement and improve parental participation in schools.

Family's Residence, Home-School Communication, Home Culture, and Parental

Involvement

Researchers have shown that when schools help parents become engaged in their children's academic achievement, parents become more engaged in school activities and children have increased gains in academic and behavioral achievement in school (Huang & Mason, 2008). Some aspects that could affect parental involvement include family location, home-school communication, and home culture (Huang & Mason, 2008). Research that examines these features could provide further understanding of how parental involvement is affected by issues both in schools and at home. Researchers have found that family residencies might affect parental involvement (Clark, 2005; Huang & Mason, 2008). In a past study by Sun, Hobbs, Elder and Sun (1997), researchers used data from the Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP) to examine over 57,000 Missouri parents from 296 schools to determine if family structures and rural residencies affected parental involvement in the schools.

Finding from the study revealed that families that reside in nonmetropolitan and rural areas participated more in their children's schools than families from other communities, such and urban residences. This study found that rural communities developed stronger connections with their children's schools because small structured environments allowed people within the communities and schools to develop close relationships with one another. Sun et al. (1997) is a dated source; however, it still reflects the present need of examining how a family's geographical location could affect parents' participation in schools and students' behavioral outcomes. Therefore, research into family residences and their effect on parental involvement could provide further

insight into the importance of understanding the association between home-school-community relationships and their effect on parental involvement.

Furthermore, strong, positive home-school connections could influence parental involvement in the schools. According to Musti-Rao and Cartledge (2004), parents and teacher from an urban elementary school reported consistent communication between home and school helped improve parental involvement. Teachers in the study reported reciprocal relationships between teachers and parents allowed teachers to address academic and behavioral concerns for their students in the classroom. Furthermore, parents expressed their eagerness to participate in school activities when teachers made an effort to invite them to school functions. On the other hand, some parent participants expressed frustration when their efforts to contact teachers regarding their children's progress were ignored (Musti-Rao and Cartledge, 2004). Consequently, a strong, consistent home-school relationship could increase parental involvement if schools are willing to reach out to parents. Further research into understanding how home-school relationships facilitate parental involvement might be necessary to increase parental involvement in schools.

In addition to home-school connections, home culture might affect the level of involvement that parents employ when helping their children to reach academic achievement. In a study by Clark (2005), 240 parents of 3rd-grade students from northwestern and northeastern Louisiana were examined to identify the association between home cultures, parental involvement, and student achievement. Findings from the study showed reading aloud, monitored television watching, library visits, and shared reading were all home cultures that kept parents involved in their children's academic

learning. Because home cultures were associated with increased parental involvement by creating consistent home environments, where parents promoted extended reading time with their children, students of the parents who engaged in these home cultures achieved gains in reading. Studies that investigate how home cultures might encourage parental involvement could provide researchers with the tools needed to address parental involvement strategies in research literature. Consequently, researchers have indicated that a family's way of life could positively affect parents' involvement in their children's schools (Clark, 2005; Musti-Rao, 2004). Further studies that examine the ways in which a family lives could provide an understanding of how and why family life affects parental involvement and students' achievement in schools.

School Barriers to Parental Involvement

Parental involvement barriers exist within the schools. These barriers could pose immediate and damaging consequences on school-home relationships and student achievement (Zhao & Akiba, 2009). In a comparative study that investigated schools' expectations of parental involvement and their effect on levels of parental involvement and math achievement among American and South Korean 8th-grade students, findings showed that parents, in both countries where teachers lacked collaboration and schools lacked order, were less likely to be actively involved when compared with parents of schools that had high levels of teacher collaboration and school belief of active parental engagement (Zhao & Akiba, 2009). In addition, the researchers found that high rates of school leaders' anticipation of parent engagement increased parental involvement and students' math achievement among American student but not South Korean students. However, school leaders' in both countries that engaged parents through field trips,

parent-teacher conferences, school functions that welcomed the community, school meetings, and school notifications of students' academic and behavioral goals, saw an increase in students' mathematics performance and behavior in the classroom. Although these findings do not show that factors used to assist parental involvement actually caused levels of parental involvement in school to increase, they do suggest that schools' efforts of implementing initiatives to facilitate parental involvement in schools is associated with positive gains in parent-teacher relationships and students' academic and behavioral achievement. Further research of school barriers is needed to gain more understanding of how school barriers could affect parental involvement.

In a study by Yanghee (2009), the researcher used findings from her study of school obstacles that hinder parents' engagement in their children's education to create eight categories of school barriers that she found impeded parental participation in school settings. The first barrier to parent involvement identified by Yanghee (2009) was teachers' negative perceptions of parents' efficacy. Findings showed that teachers' perceptions of parents' efficacy or value in the schools affected parents' willingness to develop strong teacher-parent relationships (Yanghee, 2009). Other findings relating to this barrier have been documented. For example, Omoteso (2010) found teachers' perceptions of parental involvement were mixed. While some teachers perceived parental involvement as important, other teachers felt that even if parents were invited to school activities or functions, they would not attend.

The second category in Yanghee's (2009) study was teachers did not perceive ethnic minority parents were capable of consistent, active involvement. The study findings showed that some teachers hesitated to involve ethnic minority parents in school

activities due to teachers' assumptions that parents were disinterested, too busy, or did

not have the money to participate in school activities. Such assumptions could lead to a

lack of parent-teacher relationships and decreased academic achievement among children

(Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005). Additionally, findings from previous studies have shown

that teachers perceive parents with a higher education and socioeconomic background

level as more actively involved in schools than parents with a low educational and

socioeconomic background (Duru-Bellat, 2004; Tett, 2004; Weinger & Lareau, 2003).

Other findings suggest that when teachers perceive parents as disinterested or incapable

of active involvement due to low educational or socioeconomic backgrounds, they might

risk negatively affecting parents' motivation to become involved as well as students'

academic and behavioral outcomes in schools (Drummond & Stipek, 2004).

Furthermore, Hauser-Cram, Sirin, and Stipek (2003) found that teachers might

perceive ethnic minority families' education values differently from their own or from

Caucasian middle-class family education values. This perception might lead teachers to

feel they do not have to seek ethnic minority families' engagement in school activities,

which could weaken the family-school relationship. Moreover, Theodorou's (2008)

ethnographic study found teachers perceived immigrant families as disinterested and

showed little to no involvement in their children's school. Teachers also reported that

immigrant families' lack of on-site presence in the school affected students' classroom

behavior and motivation to learn. Theodorou's (2008) study was qualitative in nature,

which allowed the researcher to gain candid reports from teachers. The study interviews

could help researchers to better address the issue of teachers' perceptions as barriers to

parental involvement. Just as teachers perceived parent efficacy negatively, they also perceived ethnic parents were incapable of consistent, active school involvement.

Yanghee's (2009) third category was teachers who held positive or negative beliefs about the success of parental engagement and school leaders' attitudes or beliefs in its parental involvement philosophy either understood or lacked understanding of the importance of seeking active parental involvement. According to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2007), teachers who hold positive perceptions of their schools' parental involvement initiative may likely feel more inclined to engage parents in schools' parental involvement philosophy than teachers who hold negative ideas about their schools' parental involvement initiatives. Yanghee (2009) found, in the third category, that teachers who believed in their schools' parental involvement programs and felt positively about their school climate were more willing to seek parent relationships than those teachers who thought indifferently or negatively of parental involvement programs. Similar study findings have shown that teachers' perceptions of their school administrators' efforts to adopt innovative and diverse parental involvement programs at their schools might affect their level of commitment to engage parents in schools' program development and school activities (Brown & Medway, 2007; Distefano, Monrad, May, McGuiness, & Dickenson, 2007). Additionally, according to Seitsinger et al. (2008), teachers, who held positive beliefs regarding their schools' program initiatives, increased their interactions with parents and began to view parents as collaborators in program development initiatives and tackling students' academic and behavioral concerns in schools. Furthermore, when teachers perceive their school climate as a positive one where everyone works to improve the overall learning environment of

the school, they might feel more motivated to engage parents and to give their best instructional efforts than teachers who feel negatively about their schools' commitment to success (Sebring, Allensworth, Bryk, Easton, & Luppescu, 2006). Therefore, further studies could explore the need for a positive school environment that is committed to developing an effective parental involvement policy, which might increase parental involvement and parent-teacher relationships.

The fourth category in Yanghee's (2009) study was teachers' lack of self-efficacy in teaching effectiveness affected their motivation to reach out to parents, and it made teachers less receptive to parental involvement. Findings related to this category revealed that teachers' who placed a high value on their instructional skill level tend to value parents' involvement more than teachers who do not place high value on their instructional ability. Therefore, teachers' lack of efficacy concerning their instructional skills might hinder their willingness to reach out to parents. Past findings from studies have demonstrated an association between teachers' perceptions of self-efficacy and the values they place on their instructional and parental involvement engagement (Epstein, 1986; Moosa, Karabenick, & Adams, 2001). Moosa et al. (2001) found that teachers who perceived their motivation to use culturally diverse resources to teach predominately-Arabian elementary students as strong and positive experienced greater parent-teacher relationships than those teachers who did not seek alternative measures to reach out to their ethnically diverse student population. Consequently, teachers who experienced a high level of self-efficacy initiated greater parent-teacher communications with diverse families than did teachers who experienced lower levels of self-efficacy. Even though some of the literature regarding teachers' self-efficacy is dated, the issue of low teacher

self-efficacy as it relates to parental involvement and student achievement is still relevant in schools today (Yanghee, 2009).

Furthermore, Pas, Bradshaw, Hershfeldt, and Leaf (2010).examined the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and teacher burnout of 491 teachers from 31 elementary school in Maryland. Findings showed that teachers' level of efficacy declined as the number of student behavioral problems increased in their classroom. In addition, as teachers experienced low levels of efficacy and high levels of burnout, findings suggested that they might feel less inclined to seek parents' assistance with students' behavioral problems than teachers who did not experience low efficacy and high burnout levels (Pas et al., 2010). This study suggested that teachers who became overwhelmed by increased numbers of at-risk student behaviors not only felt defeated and had low self-efficacy and high burnout levels, but they might have also felt disengaged from parents and from the school environment. Therefore, teachers' self-efficacy might be an important component in promoting both effective teaching and increased teacher morale that initiates teacher-parent relationships.

The fifth category in Yanghee's (2009) study was the lack of school friendliness and positive communication intimidated parents and made them feel unwelcomed. Although school leaders' efforts to inform parents of their children's progress might help to increase parental involvement, findings in this category revealed that school administrators and teachers who lacked friendly and welcoming dispositions might not have experienced high volumes of parental involvement in their schools. In addition, parents who experienced positive and consistent interactions at their children's schools reported they had informal communication with teachers and school personnel (Yanghee,

2009). Similar findings related to this barrier have shown that parents did not respond well to formal meetings (Halsey, 2005; Sohn & Wang, 2006). For example, Swick and Bailey (2004) suggested that school-community liaisons, consistent teacher and staff initiatives, and fulfilling parent-family requests might open lines of communication between home and school, especially for disadvantaged or displaced families, thus allowing parents to feel welcomed and motivated to undertake working roles in their children's education. Along with positive communication, school leaders could offer diverse parental involvement programs that meet the needs of ethically diverse students and parents (Barton, Drake, Perez, Louis, & George, 2004). School leaders who provide a friendly, positive environment that welcomes parents' engagement in the schools could not only promote active parental involvement, but they could also increase positive communication between schools and homes.

The sixth category in Yanghee's (2009) study was the lack of diversity of parental involvement programs impeded parental participation and offered few choices for parents to take on participatory roles in the schools, especially ethic minority parents. Findings in this category revealed that a lack of diversity in parental involvement programs could impede parental involvement. Yanghee (2009) found schools that provided limited parental involvement activities or programs for ethnically or culturally diverse families risked excluding minority parents from active school participation. Findings also revealed traditional parent involvement programs (e.g., parent teacher organizations or PTO and open house) might not be enough to build and to sustain active parent participation among diverse families in the schools. School leaders' lack of diverse parental involvement programs is a barrier to parental involvement mainly because they might fail

to meet the needs of ethnically or culturally diverse parents who seek active involvement in their children's schools (Barton et al., 2004). For example, Turney and Kao (2009) examined language among immigrants from 1,000 schools across 100 countries as a barrier that might impede parental involvement. Without parental involvement programs that address the language diversity of parents in the schools, language minority parents may not feel motivated to actively engage in their children's school, especially if they feel apprehensive or intimidated about communicating through a language barrier (Turney & Kao, 2009). Findings also showed that immigrant parents who spent time in the United States and understood the English language associated their engagement in their children's schools with positive outcomes. Meaning, English proficient parents were more confident and willing to become involved in their children's schools than parents who were not English proficient.

Furthermore, Turney and Kao's (2009) study found that ethnic minority parents had a more difficult time than their United States-born counterparts did involving themselves in their children's schools starting from elementary school, which might have been because of language differences among minorities. Therefore, findings suggest an association between immigrant parents' language limitations and their inactive involvement in their children's schools. Schools' lack of diverse parental involvement programs that meet the needs of ethnically or culturally diverse families could hinder active parental involvement among specifically diverse families. Consequently, school policies for parental involvement objectives and expectations may need clarity to resolve some of the issues that impede strong parental involvement, especially among ethnic minority parents and families (Archer-Banks, Behar-Horenstein, & Linda, 2008). In

addition, if schools begin to implement diverse parental involvement programs as part of their parental involvement policies, they could begin to reduce poor parental involvement among ethnic families.

Yanghee's (2009) seventh category was school policies that did not include clear parental involvement objectives and expectations might weaken parental involvement. Findings from this category revealed schools' lack of clear policies and expectations for parental involvement impeded active parental participation in schools. Findings in this category showed school policies that clearly addressed the role of parents regarding homework help, parent-teacher conferences, school meetings, academic achievement, and behavioral plans helped parents to define their place in their children's education process. Moreover, Zarate's (2007) study showed that parents felt communication between home and school was impersonal and infrequent, thereby, making parents feel unwelcomed or uninformed regarding their children's progress. Similarly, Archer-Banks et al. (2008) found African American parents' views of school policies and expectations for parental involvement dictated their level of involvement in the school. Parents reported that when schools had clear objectives (e.g., homework workshops, flexible meeting times and locations, and high expectations for their children and parents) they perceived their involvement as necessary and important to their children's educational success. Consequently, school leaders' efforts to improve parental involvement could increase parents' participation in their children's schools.

The eighth category in Yanghee's (2009) study was insufficient school leadership that implemented effective parental involvement initiatives weakened collaboration between home and school. Findings in this category revealed that a lack of school

leadership could be a barrier to parental involvement. Findings in this category showed that without the leadership to mandate specific objectives of parental involvement, teachers and parents might not have a clear understanding of expectations of school and home relationships. In a study by Thompson, McDonald, and Sternbinsky (2005), researchers examined students' academic and behavioral outcomes over a three-year period. Findings in this study suggested that students achieved positive academic growth in core subject areas. Researchers attributed the students' success to the school's effective leadership. Findings suggested that clearly defined teacher and school personnel roles that fostered parent-school relationships, educational strategies, academic programs, professional development, and an overall positive learning and instructional environment helped increase students' academic and behavioral achievement (Thompson et al., 2005). Additionally, Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, and Meyerson (2005) found that strong school leadership is effective in improving students' academic achievement, building positive school climate, implementing successful school programs that benefit teachers, students, parents, and communities, and creating constructive home-school relationships. Consequently, to effectively implement clear policies and expectations regarding parental involvement, schools may need to eliminate the lack of school leadership as a barrier to active parental involvement (Daniel-White, 2002; Sheldon & Epstein, 2002). Eliminating insufficient school leadership could close gaps between school-home relationships, which could increase parental involvement and student achievement.

Yanghee's (2009) eight categories above address barriers that hinder effective parental involvement. Although the findings do not show causal relationships between

each barrier and parental involvement in schools, they do suggest an association between the barriers and parents' lack of active involvement in their children's schools. Quantitative data that found a relationship between each barrier and parental involvement might be essential in determining the effects of those barriers on parental involvement. However, further research studies that are qualitative in nature could allow researchers the opportunity to report study participants' candid views and perceptions of barriers that impede active parental involvement. Furthermore, future research studies need to address parental involvement barriers as they relate to alternative school environments.

Family Barriers to Parental Involvement

Family circumstances could become barriers to active parental involvement in schools. In a study by Fletcher, Parkhill, Fa'afoi, Taleni, and O'Regan (2009), researchers examined family-school relationships regarding ethnic minority students' reading and writing skills in New England primary schools. The study found that two major issues posed barriers to parental involvement among Pasifika families, parents' role in the home-school relationship and parents lacking the time to be involved. Pasifika parents interviewed in the study reported being busy with work or family commitments that kept them from being actively involved in their children's schools. The study found that in many ethnic minority families, the older siblings often cared for children while the adults in the family worked. In addition, findings revealed that parents of ethnic minority families, such as Pasifika families, felt uncomfortable and unwelcomed and did not seek consultation with teachers and school administrators in the schools.

This lack of communication could have been because of the Pasifika people's silent respect for people in authority. As such, research studies suggest that when there is

a stable parent-child relationship in the home, students might achieve academic and behavioral success, and parents might feel motivated to engage themselves in their children's schools (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Swick, 2008). According to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) exo- and macrosystems, parents' workplace or socioeconomic status could affect parental involvement. If parents' job security and economic status are unstable, then parents might find it difficult to actively participate in their children's schools when they have financial woes on their minds. Therefore, research studies that examine families' lack of a stable home environment as a barrier to parents' involvement in schools could provide further insight into understanding reasons why parental involvement can be an issue in some families.

Additionally, in a study of the effects of homelessness on student learning and healthy family relationships, Swick (2008) found that a barrier to student learning, such as homelessness, could traumatize a child, thus decreasing the child's ability to reach his or her full academic potential. Furthermore, homelessness might affect students' behavior at school, making them feel irritable, off-task, sad, and angry. Being homeless could also affect parents' emotional stability, thus making parental involvement in their children's school insignificant. Swick (2008) also reported that homeless families felt isolated from school activities because they have to cope with the stress of their living conditions. Poverty within the family might also restrict parental involvement in school.

In a phenomenological study of 17 impoverished parents who participated in a parental involvement program that served a low-performing Title I school in a western state, researchers examined participants' narratives to understand the role of school social workers in reducing poverty as a family barrier to parental involvement (Alameda-

Lawson et al., 2010). Findings from the study showed that parental involvement levels were associated with parents' lack of financial stability. Participants reported that they had difficulty participating in their children's school activities and functions because of family financial constraints. Parents also reported that they needed to feel empathy from the school social workers. They reported having people, who have shared their experiences and could relate to their issues, listen to their stories was the first step in helping them to overcome their involvement barrier. For that reason, advanced research studies that address poverty as a barrier to parental involvement might be necessary to understand how poverty could affect parental involvement.

Other studies on family barriers that hinder parental involvement have shown that transportation issues, demanding job hours, and lack of resources affect levels of parental involvement, especially among lower-income families (Hill & Taylor, 2004; Mapp, 2003). Furthermore, in one study, findings showed parents of native countries such as China or Indonesia would be characterized as disrespectful if they involved themselves in the schools. In addition, the responsibility of caring for the elderly members in the family kept some parents from active participation in their children's schools (Mapp, 2003). Because of their narrative and descriptive elements, the use of qualitative designs (i.e., phenomenological and ethnography) to document findings of family barriers to parental involvement might assist researchers in understanding the personal problems that plague parents and hinder their parental involvement in schools (Alameda-Lawson et al., 2010; Fletcher et al., 2009; Swick, 2008;). Studies that are qualitative in nature could allow researchers to report participants' candid responses about experiences that might be associated with a specific problem or issue (Creswell, 1998, 2003), such as parents'

hindrances to their participation in their children's educational settings. In addition, further research studies that explore family issues as barriers to parental involvement could be key components to developing measures that reduce these barriers and increase parental involvement.

Research Challenges in Linking Parental Involvement to Students' Behavioral
Achievement

Although research studies have shown relationships between parental involvement and students' academic achievement, the challenges of linking active parental involvement to students' behavioral outcomes might exist within research. Fletcher et al. (2009), Swick (2008), Alameda-Lawson et al. (2010), Mapp (2003), and Hill and Taylor (2004) presented findings from nonexperimental research designs that showed associations between parental involvement and students' academic and behavioral achievement. Studies that include nonexperimental designs only link variable to another variable; there is no attempt to show a causal relationship between variables. Therefore, it is unknown if parental involvement or barriers to parental involvement does affect students' academic and behavioral achievement. Inconsistent definitions of parental involvement might also increase research challenges of relating parental involvement to student achievement. Some researchers based their studies on parental involvement as defined by attitude (e.g., Amatea, Smith-Adcock, & Villares, 2006; Hartos & Huff, 2008; Hill & Taylor, 2004); some define it by behavior (e.g., Inaba et al., 2005; Tinkler, 2002). Furthermore, using only parents' reports, as in qualitative research studies, might create a bias in a study because data are limited to just participants' accounts, and parents' views might create a one-sided perspective in a study. Therefore,

varied participation from a diverse sample and explicit information on the research processes could help the researcher to ensure validity in a study (D'Onofrio, 2002).

Advantages and Issues of Research Designs Used in the Literature

The literature review in this study represents a varied approach to methodology. The most common methodological approaches researchers used in studies presented in the literature review were case studies, phenomenological and ethnographic designs. Researchers might generally utilize phenomenological designs, ethnographic and narrative research, or case studies for topics that address a program, event, or group's experiences and views regarding a certain issue (Creswell, 2003). A phenomenological design has been used in similar studies to understand how participants' experiences with a phenomenon could assist researchers in understanding a social issue and strategies to effect positive change through extensive engagement with participants and prolonged examination of the issue.

Researchers measured levels of parental involvement and their effects on student achievement, the importance of parental involvement on students' academic and behavioral achievement, and barriers that impede parental involvement and their impact on active parental involvement in schools. Because qualitative studies generally yield raw, uncategorized data, researchers might use a variety of measures to ensure organized, detail results (Creswell, 2003). In this literature review, the most common measure used consisted mainly of in-depth interviews, observations, open-ended questionnaires, and observations. By using ethnographies, phenomenological approaches, and case studies, researchers were able to present and to describe the phenomenon of interest in full detail, using participants' original language (Creswell, 2003; Merriam, 2002). The study

findings in the literature review include teachers and parents' perspectives of how parental involvement, or lack thereof, affects students' educational outcomes. The measures used in each study provided rich, detailed accounts of participants' personal and professional experiences with the phenomenon, parental involvement barriers and their impact on students' achievement (Creswell, 2003). Just as there are positive points regarding the qualitative measures used to address the constructs examined in the literature review, there is a divisive aspect. For instance, including rich, thick detail might make it difficult for readers to determine the generalizable themes present in a study (Creswell, 2003: Merriam, 2002).

Summary

The literature review in this study examined several factors associated with parental involvement and its effect on students' academic and behavioral achievement. This review investigated the importance of parental involvement on students' academic and behavioral outcomes. It also examined themes (e.g., homework monitoring, parent expectations, and school-community communication) relevant to parental involvement and students' academic achievement. However, research studies lack information regarding the effects of parental involvement on students' behavior in nontraditional alternative school settings. The literature review explored teachers and parents' perceptions of parental involvement, school and family barriers that impede parental involvement in public schools, factors that facilitate parental involvement, research challenges of linking parental involvement to student achievement, and advantages and problems of research designs used in this review. Studies in this review examined parental involvement and its association with students' academic and behavioral

achievement (e.g., Demie & Lewis, 2010; DePlanty, Coulter-Kern, & Duchane, 2007; Domina, 2005; Green, Walker, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2007; Lo, 2008; Tam & Chan, 2009; Thompson, McDonald, & Sternbinsky, 2005). Further research of barriers to parental involvement and its effect on students' academic and behavioral outcomes, especially in a nontraditional alternative school setting for students who are at risk for consistent behavioral problems resulting in academic failure, might provide clearer insight into understanding barriers that hinder parental involvement in alternative schools. Understanding the various barriers to parental involvement could provide strategies to reducing or eliminating barriers. It could also improve active parental involvement in schools, which, in turn, might increase students' academic and behavioral performance. Section 3 will describe the qualitative research design and method used in this study.

Section 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers and parents' perceptions of barriers to parental involvement in order to decrease negative perceptions and increase active parental involvement in a nontraditional alternative high school. This section focuses on the research questions used in this study, population, sample, research design, data collection and analysis procedures used to conduct this study.

Research Questions

The following questions were used to guide this study:

1. What are teachers' perceptions of barriers to parental involvement in school?

2. What are parents' perceptions of barriers to their involvement in school?

3. How do teachers view parental involvement in school with respect to student behavior?

4. How do parents view their involvement in school with respect to student behavior?

Research Design and Approach

This qualitative study included a phenomenological design. The phenomenological research design focuses on individuals' experiences with a particular phenomenon (Creswell, 1998, 2003), in this case, parental involvement barriers and their effects on student behavior. The individuals in this study, teachers and parents, were able to express their attitudes and perceptions towards parental involvement in schools, barriers that impede parental involvement, and strategies that might help families, community and school leaders to reduce parental involvement barriers in schools,

especially in alternative school environments. The phenomenological design also includes the use of interviews to probe deeply into participants' views regarding a social problem. This method could allow researchers to explore participants' attitudes, thoughts, and feelings regarding certain phenomenon that exist in education (Creswell, 2003).

A quantitative approach was not chosen for this study because it would reflect statistical findings in a study instead of a rich detailed account of findings as reported by the study participants. Furthermore, an ethnographic design, a case study, or a mixed-method approach was not chosen for this study because with the ethnographic approach, the researcher would be required to immerse him or herself into the daily lives of the study participants (Creswell, 1998). Although this study included participants from culturally diverse backgrounds, they were the focus of the study. Therefore, an ethnographic design was eliminated from the design selection (Creswell, 2003). In addition, a case study requires an exploration of an individual or individuals instead of an issue or phenomenon, and a mixed-method would not have allowed the focus of the study to be on participants' perspectives regarding the study topic (Creswell, 2003).

In addition, although a case study could have been used in this study because it would have allowed the researcher to explore a particular individual or individuals over a period of time, this approach was eliminated because it would have required the researcher to study the participants as the object on the study, instead of their perspectives and views regarding the study topic. A mixed-method approach was also considered (i.e., sequential) because both qualitative and quantitative methods are utilized in a study. However, this approach was eliminated because the focus of this study was on participants' views and perspectives of barriers to parental involvement as they relate to

students' behavioral achievement. Additionally, significant themes relating to the study topic emerged from a phenomenological study design (Creswell, 1998, 2003).

Setting and Population

The setting for this study was an urban, private, alternative middle and high school located in southwest Texas, which was called XYZ High School for the purpose of this study. This school is in partnership with a southwest Texas school district to provide educational services for sixth through twelfth-grade students (ages 12-18) who have been referred by their home school principals for various violations of their schools' student code of conduct handbooks (e.g., gang affiliations, fighting, assaults on teacher or staff, weapons possession, drug possession, drug intoxication, excessive or extreme graffiti or tagging of public property, and truancy). Students are referred to this alternative school for a minimum of 30 days to a maximum of 180 days in a school year. Students at this school are predominately Hispanic (61%), although African American (31%), American Indian (3%), Caucasian (4%), and Asian or Pacific Islander (1%) also attend. Eighty-one percent of the students are on free or reduced lunch. When compared with students from other schools in surrounding areas, students who are referred to this alterative school usually struggle academically and behaviorally. Ninety-five percent of students are considered at-risk for consistent behavior problems and academic failure, and more than 60% of students are at least one grade level behind their home school counterparts. Approximately 50% of students are "repeaters," meaning they have been referred by the principals at their home schools to XYZ High School at least two times since the sixth grade.

There are 550 students enrolled at XYZ High School. The student population consists of 75% males and 25% females. The school consists of one principal, one assistant principal, six learning community instructional leaders (LCIL), two learning community assistants (LCA), one truancy coordinator, one attendance coordinator, one records specialist, two counselors, one social service provider, two special education teachers, two teacher assistants, and 26 classroom teachers. This setting was chosen for this study for three reasons. First, the school caters to at-risk youth. Second, school leaders encourage constructive student behavior and active parental involvement through a variety of measures that are supposed to be representative of its School Improvement Plan (i.e., parent and student contracts, parent contact logs, teacher-parent conferences, counseling services, school-community activities, and student behavior intervention plans, or BIPs). Third, this setting was chosen because I had daily access to study participants.

Sample

The sample for this study consisted of teachers and parents from XYZ High School in southwest Texas. The criteria for selecting the sample consisted of a purposeful sampling strategy that used classroom teachers who had at least a bachelor's degree in their respective teaching fields. They each had a minimum of three years teaching or classroom experience. The parents in this sample consisted of those parents who had a child or children who attended XYZ High School and who were willing to participate in this study. Parents were chosen based on their willingness to be candid and forthcoming about their perceptions of their level of active involvement in their children's school. They were also chosen based on their availability to participate in interviews during the

study process. The criterion sampling strategy was utilized because it required

participants to have had experience with the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 1998).

Therefore, all participants in this study had experience dealing with parental involvement

barriers and their effects on students' behavior (Creswell, 1998). If the sample size cited

in this study had been larger than anticipated, then participants would have been selected

in the order in which they were present. If the sample size had been smaller than

previously cited in this study, then research study advertisements would have been

distributed for another week to recruit a larger sample. However, neither of the

circumstances proved an issue, as all 10 participants were selected and scheduled for their

interviews according to their availability.

<div align="center">**Instrumentation and Materials**</div>

The following section provides an explanation and description of the instrument

that I used to guide the interview process. Details of the questions that I used to conduct

teacher and parent interviews are provided in the following section. Questions from the

teacher and parent interview guides were geared towards understanding teachers and

parents' perceptions of barriers that impeded parental involvement at XYZ High School.

Parent Interview Questions

A replica of Geenen, Powers, and Lopez-Vasquez's (2005) parent interview

question guide was used in this study. The interview question guide for parents focused

on providing insight into parents' perceptions of their involvement and their impact on

their children's educational plans. The parent interview guide consisted of seven

questions geared towards understanding parents' views on their involvement in their

children's transition plans after high school. "(a) What would you like to see your

son/daughter doing once he/she has finished high school? (b) What can you do to help your child prepare for successful behavior in school? (c) How have you helped your child develop and or maintain positive behavior so far? (d)What school activities have you participated in to help your son/daughter get ready for the future? (e)What activities do you think are most important for parents to do to help their children prepare for the future? (f) What things or obstacles have kept you from school activities or functions? (g)What things would make it easier for you to take part in school activities?" (p. 7) (see Appendix B). The interview questions for parent participants offered insight into understanding parents' perceptions of their involvement in their children's schools. Results from the findings could assist parents, school professionals, and researchers with understanding parents' views of barriers that keep them from active school involvement. The questions could also gage parents' views regarding their engagement in their children's behavior towards classroom expectations and school-based transition plans.

Teacher Interview Questions

Geenen et al.'s (2005) interview question items for professionals were used to interview teachers for this study. The interview questions for teachers emphasized teachers' perspectives of four areas of parental involvement: (a) the importance of parental involvement to transition planning, (b) realistic levels of parental involvement, (c) teachers' views on barriers to parental involvement, and (d) strategies to improve parental involvement in schools (see Appendix C). The teacher interview guide consisted of six questions that focus on teachers' views regarding barriers to parental involvement and strategies that might help improve parental involvement: (a) "Do you think parental involvement is important in transition planning? Why or why not? (b) What opportunities

are there for parental involvement in transition planning within the school? (c) In your opinion, what is the reality of parental involvement? In other words, what is the real nature of participation among parents? At what level are they getting involved and who is involved? (d) What do you think are the barriers to parent participation? Why do some parents not get in involved? (e) What things have you done or have tried to get parents more involved? How does active parental involvement affect your students' behavior in the classroom? (f) What other ideas do you have how to get parents more actively involved? What ideas do you have to minimize students' misbehaviors in the classroom?" (Geenen et al., 2005, p. 7; see Appendix C). The interview guides provided insight into major themes that existed from the interviews relating to parental involvement and its effect on students' behavioral achievement, as presented in section 4.

Data Collection

The following section provides material pertaining to the data collection process that I used in this study. Detailed descriptions of the distribution of the research study advertisement, informed consent rules, protocol for participant recruitment, and the interview process are outlined in the following section. The interview and recording protocol are described in the following section.

One-on-One Parent Interviews

According to Creswell (1998), a phenomenological study could involve in-depth interviews that might play a central role in data collection. Therefore, another instrument that was used in this study was a parent interview guide created by (Geenen et al., 2005). Parent-participants were purposefully select by presenting them with a research study advertisement disclosing information about the study (see Appendix A). In addition,

teachers were asked to recommend parents for interviews. To gain access to English as second language-speaking (ESL) parents, the research study advertisement was available in both English and Spanish. Research study advertisements were distributed to parents as they entered XYZ High School in the morning for parent conferences, student drop-off, parent pick-up, and school visits from 7 a.m.-9 a.m. and again in the afternoon from 12-1 p.m. for 3 weeks. Parents were most accessible during these allotted times each school day. Willing participants were able to contact me via email or by phone if they were interested.

Interested participants were handed, emailed, or mailed an informed consent form, available in English and Spanish, to be signed by parents and handed, emailed, or mailed back to me before the interviews began. All of the participants in this study handed their signed informed consent forms to me on the day of their interviews. Interested parents gave the available location (if the library of the study site was not feasible for them), date and time of their interview session. Parents were selected based on the first five who contacted me regarding their interest in this study. To gain a diverse sample of parent participants, interviews were conducted at locations chosen by the participants, if they did not wish to be interviewed at the study site. Because of the flexibility of allowing participants to choose the location and time of their interviews, there were no problems with the participants not attending their scheduled interview session.

Each parent brought his or her informed consent form to his or her interview, and parent interviews took 1 week to complete. Parent interviews were 60-90 minutes long and initially took place in the library of the study site or a mutual location for 1 week at

times that were most convenient to parents. Five parents were used in this study. Parents'
reposes were diverse; however, significant themes were found in their responses.
Questions were asked in a set, sequential order. Although casual conversation took place
before the recordings began to offer a sense of calm and ease and to review interview
procedures, the interviews were formal and allowed interviewees the time and
opportunity to ask and to answer any follow-up questions (Creswell, 1998).

All formal interviews were recorded using an OLYMPUS® audio recorder;
however, some field notes were taken during each interview using an interview protocol
that included the following components: a heading, interviewer instructions, main
research questions, interviewer's transition messages, and space to record interviewer's
comments and reflective notes (Creswell, 2003). Minimal field notes were taken during
the interview process in order to offer participants' undivided attention and comfort.
Interviews were recorded, transcribed, sorted, and coded for relevant themes that were
reflected in the data analysis. To ensure confidentiality, data collection materials are
stored in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's home, and names of interview
participants were excluded from the study. Instead, pseudonyms (i.e., Parent 1 or Parent
2) were assigned to each participant. Interviews were completed after three weeks to
ensure all interested participants had an opportunity to participate in this study. During
the data collection process, privacy envelopes and a combination brief case were used to
secure and to protect sensitive data. Targeting a diverse population of parents for this
study, such as consistently inactive parents and ESL parents, was attempted by greeting
parents with a warm "Hello" and information about the study; however, some of the
parents that were approached disregarded the research study advertisement and any

attempt at conversation almost immediately, without justification. The data collection

process took 3-4 weeks to complete.

One-on-One Teacher Interviews

Purposeful selection was used to recruit teachers for this study. A research study

advertisement with information regarding the study to teachers was distributed (see

Appendix A). Interested teachers were able to contact the researcher via mail, email, or in

person if they chose to take part in this study. Informed consent forms were handed,

mailed or emailed to all interested teachers. Teachers were given the location, date, and

time of the interviews, and they all submitted their signed consent forms on the days of

their interviews. Each teacher interview was 60-90 minutes long and took place after

school in the library of the research site. Five teachers in this study were chosen because

the study site is small and had only 26 teachers total, eight of whom were high school

teachers. Several follow-up questions to initial questions allowed any new responses to

be exhausted by the five teachers. Twelve relevant themes regarding barriers to parental

involvement emerged from their responses. Interviews were recorded for transcription

purposes using an OLYMPUS® audio recorder and lasted for one week to allow every

teacher an opportunity to participate in this study. Minimal field notes were taken during

the interview process to give teachers undivided attention, offer a sense of comfort, and

ease during the interview. Confidentiality was maintained by securing all data materials

in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's home, and names of teachers were eliminated

from the study as replaced with pseudonyms such as Teacher 1 or Teacher 2.

Validity and Reliability of Instruments

Creswell and Miller (2000) suggested validity in a qualitative study is an asset in the study because it is used to establish the precision of findings from the perspectives of researcher, study participants, or readers of a report. To check the accuracy of findings, rich, detailed description was used to suggest findings. In addition to rich description, member-checking was used to determine if participants felt themes from the findings were accurate. Finally, any bias was clarified regarding the interpretations of the findings and approach to the study. I did so by refraining from interjecting comments, subjective language, and excessive personal feedback during each interview. (Creswell, 2003). Instead, focus remained on the participant.

The validity of the interview questions have been tested and used to investigate parents and teachers' perceptions of parental involvement in previous research (Geenen, et al., 2005). Findings from Geenen et al. (2005) showed significant themes that reflected various barriers to parental involvement, including attitude or psychology, communication, and cultural influences to name a few.

According to Creswell (2003), reliability and generalizability play minor roles in qualitative studies. Reliability was tested in this study by choosing the same or different people to view, to transcribe, or to listen to data (i.e., transcriptions, or audio recording, field notes) multiple times. Although doing so could have produced high reliability, which could have constructed a bias in the data (Ratcliff, 1995), the attempt to verify reliability in this study, along with verifying validity, resulted in a better understanding of the data and the findings. Reliability of interview questions that were used in this study were tested in Geenen et al.'s (2005) study. "Interrater reliability was calculated at .81,

per Lincoln and Guba's (1985) procedures," (p. 8) thus allowing outside researchers to verify the study findings. The findings from the interview questions in Geenen et al.'s (2005) study revealed that parents perceived their children's education as important, but they were unaware of their roles as parents in their children's schools. In addition, lack of communication between school officials and parents hindered parents' active participation and made them feel disconnected from the school.

Data Analysis and Validation Procedures

The procedures within a qualitative phenomenological design consist of focusing on qualitative data through data collection and analysis, followed by an interpretation of the entire analysis combined (Creswell, 1998, 2003). Organizing and preparing data for analysis is central to qualitative data analysis procedures (Creswell, 2003). In this study, field notes were utilized to generate information from interviews. Interviews were recorded, reviewed, transcribed, and coded according to the *NVivo 9* software. A list of codes and themes that represented 15 categories and 115 subcategories used to define different information from the interviews were utilized. *NVivo 9* qualitative software was used to organize, sort, and code data that produced relevant themes. Once transcripts had been coded and themes had been identified, 12 themes were organized to represent each of the four research questions developed for this study. The themes were gathered from each category and interpretations of the data based on personal, research-based, and action meaning were established (Creswell, 2003).

<div align="center">

Participants' Protection and Rights

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To protect participants' rights, respect was shown toward both participants and study site. Participants were placed at minimal to no risk by disclosing personal

information that could have been harmful to them; therefore, the study site and participants' names remained confidential. Participants could have elected not to participate in the study at any time during the study process. Any person, such as a transcriber or a language interpreter, who might have had access to the study data signed a confidentiality agreement before he or she accessed to any data. Participants were able to understand the terms and conditions of their participation in this study by acknowledging and signing an informed consent form. The participants had the right to ask questions at any time during the study process, and they had access to their transcribed responses once they were completed. Informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation were used in this study (Trochim, 2006). Participants were asked to sign a written informed consent form before participating in this study (see Appendix F). Each participant handed his or her signed form to the researcher on the day of his or her interview. Walden University's IRB approval (#04-20-11-0042572) along with the school district's research study approval was determined before beginning this study. A letter of permission to conduct this study at the XYZ High School, the site selected for this study, was submitted to the alternative school district officials and school's owner for approval (see Appendix G).

The Researcher's Role

My role as researcher in the data collection procedures was to distribute and collect all data materials. Because I had worked closely with some of the participants and administrators at the campus where the study was conducted, I brought certain biases to the study. I had been a ninth through twelfth-grade English teacher at the school. I had taught at-risk students for six years, and my work with at-risk youth defines my goals for

advancement in the education field. I am an advocate for at-risk youth because I realize

the characteristics that label students at-risk for behavioral and academic failure will

become their greatest detriment, hindering their future success. Therefore, I sought to

examine some of the internal and external problems that are associated with at-risk

populations in schools, such as weakened or nonexistent parental involvement. I was sure

to make every effort to remain objective; however, my biases may have shaped my view

and interpretation of the data. My greatest challenge in conducting this study was to

refrain from subjectivity. It was my hope that through member-checking methods, I was

able to produce a sufficient study that educational leaders may use to explore the issue of

barriers that weaken parental involvement and their effects on students' behavioral

achievement in nontraditional alternative school settings.

Summary

Section 3 described this study's qualitative method. A phenomenological design

was identified as the appropriate approach for conducting this study because it was used

to provide a rich, detailed account of the findings based on participants' responses to the

study topic or phenomenon (Creswell, 2003). A phenomenological design was used to

identify 12 relevant themes regarding barriers to parental involvement and their effects on

students' behavioral outcomes (Creswell, 2003). Data collection and analysis consisted of

teacher and parent-interviews to determine teachers and parents' perceptions of barriers

to parental involvement and their association to students' behavior in school. *NVivo* 9

software for qualitative studies was used for sorting and coding to identify themes in the

findings.

Threats to validity and reliability were provided in section 3, and procedures to minimize threats to validity included member-checking, clarifying biases, and rich, detailed descriptions of the findings (Creswell, 1998, 2003). According to Creswell (2003), reliability and generalizability play minor roles in qualitative studies. However, procedures to maximize reliability included choosing the same or different people to view, to transcribe, or to listen to data (i.e., transcriptions, or audio tape, field notes) multiple times (Ratcliff, 1995). Participants' rights were protected by including informed consent, confidentiality, pseudonyms, and voluntary participation (Trochim, 2006). Before data collection began in this study, Walden University's IRB and school district approval was determined, and a letter of consent to conduct this study at the selected site was emailed to the alternative school district officials and to school's owner for approval. Section 4 provides a detailed description of the results of this study.

Section 4: Results

Introduction

The data collection process and study findings are presented in this section. Twelve relevant themes regarding teachers and parents' perceptions of barriers to parental involvement and their effects on students' behavior in an alternative school are described in this section. Participants' responses to questions provided examples of what they perceived as major barriers to parental involvement in XYZ High School and the effects the perceived barriers might have had on students' behavior, teacher-parent communication, home-school relationships, and overall parental participation in school activities and functions.

Recruitment and Description of Participants

Ten participants took part in this study, five teachers and five parents. Of the eight high school teachers who taught at XYZ High School, five responded to the research study advertisement and expressed interest in participating in this study. The other three teachers did not respond to the research study advertisement. The first five parents who responded to the research study advertisement were chosen to participate in this study. According to Creswell (2003), 10 is an adequate sample size for interviews in a qualitative study; therefore, the first 10 participants were chosen to participate in this study based on the five out of eight high school teachers who volunteered to take part and the first five parents who expressed an interest in the study. Key characteristics of the participants' demographic attributes have been included below to offer readers a sense of familiarity of the respondents. Because a qualitative study requires the researcher to focus on the perceptions of participants in a study, understanding individuals, who they are,

becomes central to the meaning and validity of the researcher's work (Bredo & Feinberg, 1982; Geertz, 1973; Rabinow & Sullivan, 1979). In addition, because qualitative researchers usually study a small sample of people, preserving the individuality of each participant and creating a vivid, colorful description of the setting becomes imperative to conducting a meaningful and reliable study (Creswell, 2003; Bredo & Feinberg, 1982). Therefore, the demographic attributes of each participant are represented in the following sections

Teacher 1 was a 43-year-old African America female. She was married with two children, a boy age 15 and a girl age 12. She had 13 years of teaching experience in the alternative school setting. She taught ninth-grade math. Her interview was conducted in English, her primary language. Teacher 1 was eager to begin her interview. We sat across from one another in the library. She brought coffee to go with the donuts I had set aside for our interview. Her attitude was warm and positive as she responded to my questions.

Teacher 2 was a 55-year-old African American male. He was married with three adult children, two boys and one girl ranging in ages 22-26. Teacher 2 had 21 years of teaching experience. He taught special education math, Grades 9-12. His interview was conducted in his primary language, which was English. As he sat across from the table, his demeanor appeared quiet and a little nervous, but with a beverage, a light refreshment of cookies, and several minutes of informal conversation, he was able to begin his interview. Although he confessed his apprehension about his interview being audio recorded, Teacher 2 addressed each question with ease and candor.

Teacher 3 was a 57-year-old African American female. She was married with two adult children, one boy and one girl, ages 32 and 28. Teacher 3 had 15 years of teaching

experience. She taught science, Grades 10-12. Her interview was conducted in English, her primary language. To make her comfortable, I arranged coffee and donuts for our interview in the library. Teacher 3 seemed at ease and friendly throughout the interview, as she addressed each question openly.

Teacher 4 was a 37-year-old single African American female. She had two boys, ages two and four. She had 7 years of teaching experience both in a public school district and in an alternative school setting. Teacher 4 taught English language arts, Grades 10-12. Her interview was conducted in her primary language, English. Teacher 4 was quiet but friendly. She appeared ready for her interview as she brought her own coffee and cookies to the library. She responded to each question with care, pausing before she answered every question. Her interview was smooth, and her positive demeanor kept the tone light.

Teacher 5 was a 53-year-old Caucasian female. She was single with no children. Teacher 5 had 20 years experience in customer service before deciding to become a teacher. She had 3 years teaching experience. She taught English language arts, Grade 9. Her interview was conducted in English, her primary language. Teacher 5 seemed a bit anxious at first, but her nerves began to settle after her first cup of coffee and a response to her first question. Her interview was straightforward and open.

Parent 1 was a 34-year-old African American female. She was a single, working mother of two, with a daughter in the fifth grade and a son in the ninth grade. Her son had received a 90-day referral from his home school to XYZ High School for consistent misbehavior that included verbal abuse of his teachers and truancy. Parent 1's interview was conducted in her primary language, English. When Parent 1 sat down in the library,

her tension was evident, so I immediately tried to break the ice with a hug and a warm, "Good morning. Thank you so much for your time. Please help yourself to some coffee." Parent 1 said a quiet, "You're welcome. I told you I had the off-days coming to me," she smiled. I reviewed all of the procedures that were to take place during and after the interview with her. After I completed my review of the information that we had previously read, I offered Parent 1 a slice of coffee cake to go with her coffee, which seemed to ease the tension in the room.

Parent 2 was a 38-year-old stay-at-home mother of three. She was Hispanic and was married to an auto sales representative. Her daughter was a ninth-grade student at XYZ High School. Her daughter had been referred by her home school for a period of 180 days for fighting and constant misbehavior in class. Although she was bilingual and spoke English and Spanish at home, Parent 2's interview was conducted in English. When I met with Parent 2 in the library, her demeanor was warm and light. Once I began recording, I was pleasantly surprised about how engaging and forthcoming Parent 2 was, even with the audio recording her responses.

Parent 3 was an African American 41-year-old working mother of four. Her oldest son was a 10th-grader who attended XYZ High School on a 60-day referral from his home school for excessive absences and verbal abuse against a staff member. Parent 3's interview was conducted in English, her primary language. Parent 3 had a pleasant attitude, and she seemed to welcome the chance to talk about her child.

Parent 4 was a 39-year-old African American female. She was a single working mother of a ninth-grade son and a sixth-grade daughter. Both of her children had been referred to the school by their home schools for constant misbehavior, the son 180 days

and the daughter 90 days. Parent 4's interview was conducted in her primary language, English. When interviewing Parent 4, I noted immediately her nervous energy. I gave Parent 4 a hug and thanked her for her time. It was midmorning, and she had just dropped both of her children at XYZ High School. Although Parent 4 looked tired and nervous, she made a great effort to respond truthfully to the questions. We sat across each other in a quiet eatery, not far from the school. We ordered iced tea and Danish. When asked how she felt about both her children's referrals to XYZ High School, she stated that it made her feel angry because she had to borrow a friend's car to take her children to school when they missed the bus.

Parent 5 was an African American male who coached at a high school. He was a 44-year-old divorced father of one ninth-grade son. His son was referred by his home school for a period of 180 days for possession of a controlled substance at school. Parent 5's interview was conducted in his primary language, English. Parent 5 was friendly but appeared nervous at first. After a few moments of casual conversation, though, he began to share his views regarding each question I asked.

Data Analysis

The goal of presenting data analysis for a phenomenological study is to utilize the examination of important responses, the core of participants' statements, to generate meaningful themes or patterns (Moustakas, 1994). Creswell (2003) suggested six basic steps to use when analyzing data. The first step in analyzing data in this study included organization and preparation of the 10 interviews conducted for this study. Interviews were first recorded with an OLYMPUS® digital voice recorder then transcribed to make sorting, coding, and categorizing information easier. Minimal field notes were taken

during the interview process to keep the focus on each participant as he or she responded to questions. After interviews were transcribed, the second step in the analysis process was to read carefully through all of the materials (Creswell, 2003). Footnotes were written in the margins of each participant's transcribed interview to obtain a sense of tone, overall meaning, or credibility of each participant's responses. Footnotes also provided a clear assessment of each participant's perceptions regarding barriers to parental involvement, the reality of parental involvement, teacher-parent and home-school connections, and student's behavior.

After all transcribed interviews were reviewed and footnotes were completed, it was time for Step 3 in the analysis process. This step consisted of coding or organizing the data into "chunks" before analyzing the data for meaningful, descriptive themes (Rossman & Rallis, 1998). Step 3 entailed placing transcribed data into groups or categories. Fifteen categories (nodes) were created in *NVivo 9* to mirror the interview guides presented in section 3. The interviews conducted in this study were imported and coded to the 15 categories using *NVivo 9* qualitative software. Additional subcategories for each node were created, and coding was refined in the interview guide questions, resulting in 115 subcategories.

Step 4 in the analysis process involved generating a description of significant themes from the coding process. According to Creswell (2003), codes can be used to generate five to seven themes in a qualitative study. However, because 115 subcategories were found in participants' responses in this study, a reasonable 12 themes based on the similarity of participants' responses regarding each category were generated. These 12 themes are described in Tables 1-4.

After Step 4 was completed and coding was done with significant themes regarding teachers and parents' perceptions of barriers to parental involvement emerging from the data, Step 5 recommended using a narrative segment to represent an advanced description of the most prevalent themes found in the data (Creswell, 2003). A discussion of participants' perceptions and the themes that emerged from their views regarding each interview question are presented in the following sections.

Step 6 was the final step in the analysis process. Creswell (2003) suggested that once themes had been described, an interpretation of the findings would allow the researcher to make meaning of the data and to learn a lesson from the study experience. Therefore, once a detailed, rich narrative passage describing each theme supported by colorful, detailed description of the setting and participants' verbatim quotations had been completed, an interpretation of the data was completed, which is presented in this section and in section 5.

Interview Findings

Twelve significant themes regarding participants' perceptions of barriers to parental involvement resulted from the participants' interview responses, which are revealed in the following sections. Participants' verbatim responses are included as support for the themes found and presented in the following sections. Creswell (2003) recommended the use of participants' direct quotations in addition to detailed narrative of setting to offer readers a clear understanding of the findings. Significant themes of parental involvement barriers were found in this study: (a) time constraints, (b) personal issues, (c) transportation issues, (d) parents' feeling anxiety, fear, or unwelcomed, (e) parents' lack of awareness of their role in the school, (f) a lack of community/school

outreach programs, (g) teachers' belief of parental involvement to help minimize

students' misbehaviors in the classroom, (h) Teachers' beliefs that parental involvement

did not improve students' behaviors, (i) parent-child communication, (j) parents'

participation in extracurricular activities to minimize students' misbehaviors, (k)

discipline, and (l) rewards as motivation for improving students' behaviors.

Themes for Research Question 1

The first research question in this study asked, "What are teachers' perceptions of

barriers to parental involvement in school?" Themes relating to Research Question 1 are

provided in Table 1. Participants' verbatim responses are also presented in addition to the

themes.

Table 1

Frequency of Themes for Research Question 1

Teachers' Responses: Barriers to parental participation	No. of Interviews (5)	% of 5 Interviews
Time constraints	5	100%
Anxiety - fear - unwelcome	4	80%
Personal issues	4	80%
Transportation	4	80%
Lack of awareness	3	60%

Table 1 represents the five teacher-participants' responses to Research Question 1.

Because frequency counts (i.e., participants' similar responses resulting in themes) add to

five, readers are able to see how many of the five participants had similar responses

regarding what they perceive as major barriers to parental involvement at their school.

According to the results from Table 1, 100% of teachers interviewed perceive parents' time constraints as a major obstacle to their active involvement in the school. Teachers' responses to this theme support the high frequency count listed in Table 1. Teacher 1 was asked what she thought were the barriers to parental participation in her school. She did not hesitate to share her thoughts regarding the issues that affected active parent participation at her school.

> I feel like the barriers are jobs, schedules, which we know we have to do in order to provide for the students, for our kids. But, at the same time, there has to be a balance. There has to be time that we sacrifice, not just after school when they come home, but, again, when there are awards ceremonies, when there are counseling sessions that are needed from the teachers, with the teachers and the students. When you look at the differences of kids that have had that parent, that have been there versus the parent that put everything else – and even though, again, I know the jobs are needed. We have to work to provide, but we have to balance it out. We have to show them that, you know, "Mommy and daddy – I understand I have a job, but you are my top priority also." In that way, even them, when they become parents, they will have that in their lives to say, "You know what? My mom was there for me and it was really a positive, you know, effect on my life. So, let me be there for my child." So, you know, I think that's something that we have to sacrifice.

Teacher 1 offered an understanding of her views regarding obstacles that impede parental participation at XYZ High School. Although she consistently mentioned that work or

jobs are important and parents have to provide for their children, she focused on the importance of having active parental engagement in the school for the sake of children' overall well-being.

Teacher 2 responded to the question of barriers to parental involvement at his school. His calm response to the question provided a clear affirmation that the issue of time or job constraints may pose a major problem in parents' lack of involvement at school activities or functions. "You know, I don't see a whole lot that is keeping them from being involved. If I had to say anything that may keep them from being involved at all, I would say their time on their jobs." Teacher 3 also provided a consistent perception of parents' time constraints being a major barrier that she felt hindered parents' involvement. She stated:

> Sometimes, they [parents] can't get off work. A lot of parents work. And I
>
> had one parent to tell me that she does – she works during the hours when
>
> we have detention and one day, we got her and she let her daughter stay,
>
> and she said, 'I would let her stay. I'm off work today, so I did let her
>
> stay.' She said, 'But I can't take off work to come get her and I can't let
>
> her on the bus.' So, you know that type of thing.

Teacher 3 spoke candidly about parents' time constraints, especially with respect to jobs, being a major obstacle to their level of involvement:

> Our hours are kind of long– during the workday, a lot of parents have
>
> problems getting here. You know, the kids are here the majority of the
>
> day, but if the parents are working, you know, it's kind of hard for them to
>
> just come check on their kids. So, I think that that has a lot to do with the

participation because, you know, you just have life after your child. You

know, you still have things that you have to take care of.

Teacher 4's views of parents' time that hindered parental involvement were short and

direct. When asked what she thought were the obstacles that kept parents from actively

engaging in the school, Teacher 4 replied:

Some [parents] have to work late hours. And I think a lot of that may be

because most of the kids we service are from single parent homes. So I

would say the parent could come and meet the teacher, but they're at

work. So it could just be a scheduling conflict and not necessarily that the

parent doesn't want to be, they just can't be as involved as they'd like to

be.

Teacher 4 was open and direct about her views regarding a lack of time as a barrier to

parental involvement in XYZ High School.

When asked what she perceived were the barriers to parental involvement in the

school, Teacher 5 expressed her view: "Some parents have to work. Some parents go to

school themselves." One hundred percent of the teachers interviewed perceive parents'

time constraints as a major barrier to active parental involvement. While 100% of

teachers view time constraints as a barrier, 80% of teachers also viewed parents' anxiety

or fear of the school environment as a consistent obstacle to parental engagement at XYZ

High School. The theme of parents' anxiety or fear was one clearly expressed by the

respondents. When asked what other barrier kept parents from participating in school

activities, Teacher 2 responded:

A lot of times, though, parents just are, you know, might feel like they may not be accepted or wanted. Yeah, the parents who feel unwelcomed may see that feeling of being unaccepted as a barrier, yeah– Well, I think it might be just subconscious or just it may not be a real barrier, but they might feel, you know, may feel that way from some kind of prior experience that they may have had at school.

Teacher 3 also views parents' anxiety or fear as an obstacle:

Some parents feel afraid or insecure about being here, maybe feeling unwelcomed because their kid is at this school. A lot of parents have gotten to the point where they feel like it's a lost cause. A lot of parents don't understand the system here. It's an alternative school for students with bad behaviors. And a lot of parents just fear coming into this type of system 'cause it's kind of strict. We have – you know, we have officers and stuff and some of 'em are intimidated by just the whole environment. I had one parent to tell me, "This is like a prison to me," and I'm like, "It's not. You should go and see, you know? Our classrooms are nice. Our teachers are nice." And she's like, "It's not you." She said, "It's just the whole idea of alternative."

Teacher 3 further spoke about the anxiety and fear some parents experience when entering the alternative school setting. According to Teacher 3, some parents do not want to engage themselves in the setting because it feels "like a prison," and they do not feel a sense of welcome.

As with the theme of parents' anxiety or fear, 80% of teachers view transportation problems as a major barrier to active parental involvement. Teacher 2 stated, "Also, we have parents who struggle with transportation and can't get here." Teacher 3 also believes issues with reliable transportation hinder parental involvement. According to Teacher 4, "Some [parents] have no way to get here."

Eighty percent of teachers also view personal problems as barriers to active parental involvement (e.g.., single parents struggling to raise multiple children alone, a lack of parenting skills, and drug-addicted or incarcerated family members) Teacher 3 replied, concerning personal barriers to parental involvement that she felt were relevant:

> We have a lot of parents that have a lot of other things going on. Some parents just refuse to take responsibility for their kids. They kind of enable the kids. You know, "No, I don't believe my child did this." And a lot of people have other things going on. They have other kids. They have, you know, they have responsibilities.

Teacher 4 stated, "Sometimes it's just, a lot of the parents are young and have their own personal issues and they're not parenting their children. That's one of the problems." Teacher 5 also stated, "Parents have their own personal issues, too, which keep them away from the school."

Teacher 3 went on to respond to a follow-up question about the barriers that keep parents from participating in school activities also keep them from parent-teacher conferences.

> Interviewer: Do you think some of the barriers that keep them [parents] from participating [in school functions] also keep them from participating in these conferences?

Teacher 3: Absolutely. Absolutely. Money, transportation. I had a parent

to come and pick up her child from detention on the metro bus. You know,

she had to come catch the bus to the school, pick him up, and, you know,

go home. But, she was willing to do that to support the teachers. So, you

know, it's a lot that goes on that we don't know.

Teacher 5 stated, "Some parents deal with broken homes, incarcerated spouses, domestic

violence, drug addictions in the home or family, financial pitfalls, and a lack of outside

family support." These personal issues, according to Teacher 5, could affect the level to

which parents engage themselves in the school. With so many personal problems parents

have to juggle daily, parents might see "their involvement at school as a secondary

concern to their personal problems."

Teachers interviewed also view a lack of awareness as an obstacle to parental

involvement. In fact, 60% of teachers perceive a lack of awareness of parents' role in the

school as a barrier to active parental engagement. Teacher 4 stated, "Besides scheduling

and that, ignorance. I shouldn't say ignorance; it's just lack of knowledge, not being

informed. Some of it may be just lack of knowledge on the parent's part. You know the

parent isn't involved because they're not aware that they could be as involved as they

should be. That's a barrier." Although the majority of teachers interviewed perceive

scheduling, anxiety or fear, personal issues, transportation, and parents' lack of

awareness as major barriers to parental involvement, interestingly, Teacher 5 mainly

regards school barriers, such as a lack of teacher efficacy in regards to reaching out to the

parents and an uninviting school atmosphere, as a major barrier to parental involvement.

The school. There's barriers in the homes. Why? Is because, everybody's

pointing fingers at somebody else. It's their kid. They [parents] should

come. They [parents] should do something. Well, you know it's the school

that should provide it, and people just aren't active. They don't – they're

not – they're just busy. They don't want to know. The kids are pretty

much on their own. I just think it's American society today and the

economy. Teachers feel that they're overworked already. They're like,

now, I've got to stay after school. So, I really – I have to say unfortunately

that, I think the burden should be on the schools to make it an inviting

atmosphere where parents are not forced to come to school, but really

enticed to come to school to get to know where their kids spends 40 hours

a week.

Although all of the five teachers share similar views regarding their experiences

with barriers that hinder parental involvement in their school, Teacher 5 is the only

participant who sees the school as a major barrier to parental involvement. The major

themes found in Research Question 1 are parents' time constraints, personal and

transportation issues, parents' feeling anxiety, fear, or unwelcomed, and parents' lack of

awareness of their role in the school. Teachers' verbatim responses regarding barriers to

parental involvement were clear, direct, and candid.

Themes for Research Question 2

Research Question 2 asked, "What are parents' perceptions of barriers to parental

involvement in schools?" Themes relating to Research Question 2 are provided in Table

2. Participants' verbatim responses are also presented in addition to the themes.

Table 2

Frequency of Themes for Research Question 2

Parents' Responses: Barriers to school activities or functions	No. of Interviews (5)	% of 5 Interviews
Time Constraints	4	80%
Transportation	4	80%
Communication-Outreach	5	100%

As with teach-participants, parent-participants were able to share their views regarding the things they feel hinder their active participation at XYZ High School. Eighty percent of parents interviewed perceive time constraints or work schedules as a major barrier to their involvement at the school. The theme of time constraints is shared among four of the five parents interviewed.

When asked what obstacles keep her from attending school activities and functions, Parent 1 stated, "If I did miss something it was because of my work schedule. That's the only reason I ever missed anything for my child, but if I wasn't there, we always had somebody from the family there."

When asked about the things that keep her from attending school activities and functions, she replied, simply, "My schedule sometimes is crazy, you know? I have three kids, and they all need me to be somewhere all the time, but I can't be everywhere."

Parent 3 responded to the question of things that keep her from participating in school activities and functions in a casual tone. Parent 3 seemed a bit distracted, but she politely stayed engaged in the moment.

Interviewer: What things or obstacles have kept you from school

activities or functions?

Parent 3: My hours at work. My hours at work.

Interviewer: Okay. Is that the main barrier that you have as a parent?

Parent 3: That's the main barrier. Other than that, I can make any other

function.

Parent 3 shared that her work schedule is long and she finds it difficult for her to participate in school functions. Although Parent 3's responses were short and direct, she made it clear in the interview that she tries her best not to allow her work schedule to interfere with her making visits to XYZ High School to check on her son's progress.

Parent 5 and I met at a local eatery near the school for his interview on a Saturday afternoon. After several minutes of conversation, recording began with the question about the barriers that keep him from participating in school activities or functions. His response was short and direct. "Well, mostly work. I'm always coaching, the time constraints. But I do attend when I can." Four of the five parents view work schedules as a major obstacle to their active involvement in their children's schools. Parent 5's lack of involvement is due to his work constraints and was evident in his response. The theme of parents' time constraints, mainly work schedules, was clear in each response.

The theme of transportation was also a prevalent one shown from the interviews, with 80% of parents viewing a lack of transportation as a major problem to their involvement in the schools. Parent 2 stated, "My transportation isn't always reliable." I then asked Parent 4, "What things keep you from attending school activities or functions?

Transportation, mainly – lack of transportation, not being able to be there,

when I know that there's a definite need. Say a parent/teacher meeting or

an activity in general, even if it's just something as simple as a ceremony or something during the lunch period, little things like that I can't make it.

One hundred percent of the parents interviewed perceive a lack of community outreach for families as a barrier to parental involvement, and they felt that efforts to develop community outreach activities and programs could help to increase parental involvement at XYZ High School. All parents shared the theme of a lack of community outreach for families, and they expressed their concern and hope for increased outreach and school programs geared towards parental involvement. Parent 1 seemed forthcoming and comfortable during our introduction; I asked her a question pertaining to what she felt was needed at the alternative school to engage more parents. She replied, "They need more parent activities and activities for the kids. You really don't know what's going on here at XYZ High School. The kids just pretty much do their time and go back to their home school." Parent 1 seemed concerned about the lack of activities and community outreach programs provided for families at the school. Upon completion of our interview, I thanked Parent 1 for her candor and time.

I asked Parent *2* what she felt needed to happen at the alternative school to engage more parents, and she replied:

> I would like to see more parent activities at this school. They really don't
> provide any things for parents and kids to do here at XYZ High School. I
> wish there were all types of extracurricular activities for the parents. I
> have only seen the conferences and the open houses sometimes. I think the
> school would definitely benefit from having more of a family or
> community oriented awarding type program for the parent and children to

engage in as opposed to just some type of phone session. If the weekday

activities were on the weekend – that would help a lot. Also if there were

more bilingual teachers available. Yeah. Because our primary language is

Spanish at home. My children and me are bilingual, yes, but when there,

you know my mother and my grandmother is still alive, and she's very

active as well in my children's school life, so when they have to represent

me that can be a challenge, but, I haven't had a problem so far, but for

parents who can't speak the language, making sure someone can help with

talking is helpful.

Parent 2 was open and candid about what she perceived as major problems with

parental involvement at the school. With regard to personal issues such as scheduling and

transportation, Parent 2 did not make excuses for missing some of the activities at her

children's schools. However, she did express her wish to see more family/community

activities hosted by the alternative school to draw parents into the school.

Parent 4 was asked to respond in regards to what she found lacking at XYZ High

School.

I'd really like to see more of a community outreach as far as the

communication, both with the teachers and the staff and parents. Where

instead of everyone's just going at each other with their own thought

process, just really enjoy. Just take to heart what it is that's going on with

the child. If we put the child first, maybe we can help them out, because

we just can't just assume that something is the answer. Let's talk to the

children more. The school and community should work together to give

kids that chance to show you what they know and what they can do, and

help nurture that, to grow into a little more positive child.

Parent 4's passionate response showed her dedication to her children. Although both of her children were at the alternative school, she did not allow their referrals to stop her from trying to continue to reach her children, to help them become positive well-behaved students at school. I gave Parent 4 a warm hug before we left the eatery.

When asked what the school could do to increase parental involvement at the alternative school, Parent 5 stated:

I would like to see them [the school] make more of an effort to get parents

and community involved. I would like to see them have outreach programs

that are focused on getting parents engaged. Just doing whatever they can

to show parents that we want their involvement. If I saw them making

more of an effort to get parents engaged, if I saw them making more of an

effort to get after hour activities for parents to get involved. I would like to

see them do things on the weekends, even if it's for one hour, on a

Saturday or a couple of hours on a Sunday.

Parents' responses to questions regarding Research Question 2 resulted in three main themes: parents' time constraints or work schedules, transportation issues, and a lack of community/school outreach programs geared towards bridging the communication gap between parent-teacher and home-school. Parents viewed these themes as barriers to parental involvement at school.

Themes for Research Question 3

3. Research Question 3 asked, "How do teachers view parental involvement in schools at it relates to student behavior?" Themes relating to Research Question 3 are provided in Table 3. Participants' verbatim responses are also included to offer added support for prevalent themes found.

Table 3

Frequency of Themes for Research Question 3

Teachers' Responses-How parental involvement affects classroom behavior	No. of Interviews (5)	% of 5 Interviews
Improves behavior	5	100%
Does not change behavior	3	60%

A significant theme regarding Research Question 3 revealed 100% of teachers believed active parental involvement improved students' classroom behavior. Teacher 3 was asked to share her perception of parental involvement at the school and how it affected her students' behavior.

I think it is so important for the parents to be involved so that the kids can be successful. If the parents don't have any input on what's happening with their kids, they won't know what's going on. The kids will be lost. They need some kind of back up. They need some support. So, the parents have to be involved. And I think that, you know, they should have some say so in, you know, the kids gradually coming back into the regular school setting instead of just dumping 'em into the regular school setting.

Teacher 3 was also asked about parental involvement in helping to reduce students' misbehaviors.

Interviewer: How does active parental involvement affect your students'

behavior in the classroom? So, when parents are involved and they're

active with it, how does that impact student behavior?

Teacher 3: I think it has a real good impact in the classroom because

automatically, the students' whose parents are gonna allow them to take

the after school detention, their behavior is gonna decrease because they

already know once they get so many write ups or you redirect them so

many times, and you call that parent, that parent is gonna say, "Yes, they

can stay." So, their behavior is gonna be a whole lot less active than the

parent that we don't have a phone number on. I know that family

situations change a lot, so I think just keeping in contact with the parents

is important. Try to give 'em help when they need it, you know, through

the student services or the principal or whatever providers we have. You

know, sometimes, they just need you to listen if you call and, you know,

they get kind of long-winded. Sometimes, you just need to take that extra

minute and listen. And, you know, just don't give up on the parents or the

students.

When asked how parental involvement affected her students' behaviors, Teacher

4 replied:

Now most of the time a child whose parent who really is involved and

actually parents them, all I have to say is "All right you already know I'm

going to call your mom." And they'll beg me not to call. "Ms., please

don't, please don't." But the ones who already know nothing's really

going to happen once they get home, they continue to act a fool. And then

what do you do? You issue them the consequence. They'll have ASD

[after school detention] all week long. Well like I said, we keep the

routine. And usually I don't even have to say anything. Like now it's to

the point where the students will say just be quiet. You know, it's not time

for us to talk. Like they know the time. They know my expectation. So

it's already been established, and I don't have any issues with – you know

when someone walks in and they see the class is quiet, they fall in line.

And when someone comes in and the class is quiet and they're loud, the

other students actually get on them, so I don't have to say anything.

Teacher 5 was also asked how important parental involvement with respect to

managing students' classroom behavior is:

If their parents are on top of it, and exercising control, the kid's more

likely to come to the classroom understanding that he needs to follow the

rules, or the consequences are going to be supported by both, the school,

the teacher, and his parents. That is a large amount of opposition to any

kid, even the bad ones, won't want to stand up to that. You know and I've

seen a lot of times the kids – the teacher's against them, the school against

them. The whole rule system's against them, but the parents are there like,

backing them up. So the kid doesn't have any doubt that he's going to

come out ahead. So the parents definitely need to be involved with the

school as far, as supporting the school rules, and making the kid – well,

helping the kid be a better student, sort of like that.

Although 100% teachers viewed parental involvement as a major component in helping to reduce students' misbehaviors, 60% of teachers also did not feel parental involvement changed some students' misbehaviors. When asked how parental involvement affects his students' classroom behavior, Teacher 2 replied, "I think that some kids, it helps a lot and with some, a very low percentage, it doesn't make much difference because some of the kids will come up to the school and have confrontations with their parents here at the school." I asked Teacher 2 to explain what procedures were in place when a confrontation between parent and child occurred. He stated, "The counselor usually has to step in to try to mediate. But, in a lot of cases, it doesn't make a lot of difference. It sometimes don't make a difference in the way the student behaves. But then sometimes, you just have to threaten to call the parent and they'll, you know, act right." Teacher 4 stated that classroom expectations, rules, and polices along with teacher-parent communication for those students with consistent misbehaviors helped to minimize students' misbehaviors, not necessarily parents' involvement in some cases.

Teachers' perceptions regarding parental involvement at their school and its effects on students' behaviors in the classroom resulted in two major themes for Research Question 3: teachers believed parental involvement helped to minimize students' misbehaviors in the classroom; 60% of teachers believed parental involvement did not improve some students' misbehaviors.

Themes for Research Question 4

4. Research Question 4 asked, "How do parents view parental involvement in schools at it relates to student behavior?" Themes relating to Research Question 4 are

provided in Table 4. Parent-participants' verbatim responses are embedded to offer added

support for significant themes found in this question.

Table 4

Frequency of Themes for Research Question 4

Parents' Responses-You have done develop maintain child positive behavior	No. of Interviews (5)	% of 5 Interviews
Extracurricular activities	4	80%
Discipline	4	80%
Communication (parent-child)	5	100%
Rewards Motivation	4	80%

A prevalent theme found in Research Question 4 revealed that 80% of parents

believed their participation in their children's extracurricular activities positively affected

their children's behavior. Parent 1 was asked what she could do to help her child prepare

for successful behavior in school. Parent 1 believed her involvement in her child's

extracurricular activities helped her child to maintain positive behavior at school.

> I am very active in his academics, in his extracurriculars. I make sure he
>
> keeps his grades up. I make sure the people on the PTO know me at his
>
> home school. His teachers know me, the principal knows me very well,
>
> 'cause I'm there consistently. I parent my child all the way. I'm consistent
>
> with him. He knows what behaviors are allowed, what's not allowed, and
>
> when he crosses the line, he gets the consequence consistently. So, and
>
> he, you know he has me, and he has positive male role models in his life to
>
> guide him in the way he should go. We're real active in church, so we
>
> have a lot of church folk helping us raise him.

Eighty percent of parents viewed discipline as important in developing and maintaining their children's behavior in the classroom. Parent 1 believed her child's positive behavior was a reflection of discipline:

It is very important. You know he better go to school and act right. He's there to learn not to act a fool. Even though he messed up at his home school and he's here now, I don't play. I expect him to behave so that he can finish his days here at get back to his home school. If he clowns, then his mother clowns. He knows the rules. I did not spank my child. We do a lot, he, let me say I didn't spank him often. He got spanked for you know throwing things or punching a wall. He gets talked to first. We discuss what the issue is and what he thinks the consequence should be. If he steps outside of what the consequence is, then he'll get another consequence. But we have a consistent system that works for us. I push my child to do well. He knows my expectation. But I don't push so hard that he doesn't enjoy doing his school work. He gets rewarded for doing well. We have a reward system, so I find that works.

Parent 3 also believed discipline was a major component in helping her child to maintain positive classroom behavior. She stated, "Discipline at home and trying to connect with his teachers" was important "in staying on top of his behavior." When asked about major influences that affected his son's behavior, Parent 5 said simply, "I take away his phone, because he loves his phone. I don't let any friends come home. I don't allow him to do anything on the weekends. That usually influences him to straighten up." Therefore,

parents viewed discipline as a means of helping their children develop and maintain their children's positive behavior in the classroom.

One hundred percent of parents believed communication with their children helped their children maintain positive behavior in the classroom. Although Parent 2 faced several challenges with her child, she tried to focus on the positive aspects of her situation with her daughter. "I make sure to encourage her, even when she's feeling down I make sure to keep it on a positive note, because I understand that it doesn't take much for a kid to feel like the world is against them. So I make sure I stay positive with her, beginning with her." Parent 2 further expressed how communication with her child influenced her child's behavior in school:

> You know it's challenging at times because the behavior is definitely her weak point, but again constant communication. We have to; I'm constantly talking to her all the time, constantly staying in touch with the school, making sure that there is an open line of communication between her teachers and myself. Making sure that the behavior is improving. If there are any hiccups or pauses in that we revisit it and we are making sure that things are, it's progressing and it's getting better as opposed to being stagnant and getting worse.

Parent 3 also believed parent-child communication helped to build her child's positive behavior in the classroom. "I don't think you can achieve, if you don't have good behavior. You can't focus on what needs to be focused on, if you're acting up." Parent 3 was direct about using her son's mistakes to try to reinforce and to help him maintain "good" behavior while he was at the alternative school. She reiterated that she viewed an

open line of communication between her and her son was important in minimizing his misbehaviors. "Well, I'm a stickler for behavior, for my son, and their grandma is also. So, I mean I don't know how Neanderthal this sounds, but you know you act up in school, you won't forget the consequences that goes with acting up in school." Parent 3 went on to share her views about helping her son maintain positive behavior:

Interviewer: Okay. How have you helped your child develop and maintain positive behavior, so far?

Parent 3: I talk to him. I work with him. I remind him of where his mistakes at his home school got him, sent over here, and he acts right then 'cause he hates it at XYZ High School. For my son, I try to talk to him and I don't mind reminding him of his mistakes. His messing up at his school cost him his playing on the football team, his friends that he can't see 'cause he's at XYZ High school now. He's mad about having to go to XYZ High School, but that's his consequence for acting up. Yeah, I think he's learned his lesson 'cause he don't want to be at XYZ High School no more. He's got another 60 days left before he can return to his home school. So, what I try to do is maintain positive behavior. One of the things that I try to do on a frequent basis is stay in touch with the teachers.

Parent 4 expressed how her communication with her children helped them to have positive behavior in school:

Trying to keep as peaceful of an environment as possible, at home. Just making sure that I can keep positivity, keep a little calm and keep an open door communication with my children and myself, so that if anything

should go on at school that's causing a problem, they feel free enough to come home and say, "Mom, can you help with it, because this is the problem." Instead of saying, "Okay, well I have problems at home now. I'm taking them to school with me."

Parent 4 expressed family communication was a major influence in her children's behavior:

Making sure that I keep an open door for communication with my family. They're a strong support. They're with my children and myself, so that we know – well, so that my children know that they're not alone. They don't feel that they have to do everything by their self, and if there's something that I can't do, they know they can reach to other family members that can help them along the way, just as helpful as I can be.

The theme of rewards as motivation for their children's positive behavior was also shared by parents, with 80% of parents believing that rewards were key components to helping their children maintain positive behaviors at school. Parent 2 commented on her views regarding rewards as motivation for her child's behavior. "You know I make sure I reward her for the achievements that she's made this far. I make sure I recognize the effort. Parent 2 further stated, "So he [her son] knows, you know he gets rewarded for his good behavior and his good grades."

Four prevalent themes emerged from Research Question 4, parental involvement as it related to student behavior: extracurricular activities, discipline, communication, and rewards as major influences in their children's behavior at school. However, at XYZ High School, Parent 1 revealed she did not see a great deal of teacher-parent

communication, which she felt could help to increase "good" behavior among students in the classroom. Furthermore, although both of Parent 4's children attended XYZ High School, she did not allow that fact to interfere with her efforts to stay active in their lives. She also perceived "better teacher-parent communication" could help to minimize students' "poor conduct." Lastly, Parent *5* was asked what he perceived were helpful tools in minimizing students' misbehaviors at school, and he stated, "I can make more of an effort to have a better relationship with the teachers, and try to have a relationship with the principal, if possible." Even though Teacher 5 felt disconnected from XYZ High School and viewed it as a temporary obstacle to his son's achievement, he did realize that initiating communication between himself and his son's teachers could help to maintain his son's positive behavior while at the alternative school. Parents' views regarding each of the four themes were clear and direct. Relevant themes revealed 100% of parents viewed parent-child communication as important in developing positive student behavior. In addition, 80% of parents viewed discipline, extracurricular activities, and rewards as major influences in minimizing students' misbehaviors in the classroom. Parents' views regarding each of the themes indentified helped to understand their perceptions of what they perceived as important aspects of their children's success in their schools.

Validating the Truthfulness of Results

Validation of study findings is supposed to occur through the research process (Creswell, 2003). The validity of the findings in this study was based on the candid responses of the participants. To further secure the validity of the findings, member-checking was used. All five teacher-participants were able to view their transcribed responses before analysis began. Three of the five parent-participants wanted to view

their responses for accuracy and were satisfied with the results, while two parent-participants did not feel the need to review their transcribed responses. A rich description of the participants, interview settings, initial contact, and prerecorded casual conversations between each participant and the researcher helped to create a colorful visual of the participants and their experiences for readers, as recommended by Creswell (2003). Lastly, clarified bias was used to validate findings.

Throughout each interview, I remained objective and allowed each participant to expand his or her views with minimal interruptions. Although I went into each interview with my own thoughts regarding the importance of parental involvement, I did not allow my ideas to affect my job as interviewer and listener. Participants were encouraged to share their views openly without feeling insecure or intimidated by my own ideas. I refrained from subjectivity by focusing my attention and thoughts on the participants and their responses. Findings in this study verified other qualitative studies that indicate evidence of associations between perceptions of barriers to parental involvement and their effects on students' behavior in high school as evidenced in the literature review.

Summary

A phenomenological approach was used to examine and to understand teachers and parents' views regarding barriers to parental involvement at a private alternative high school in southwest Texas. Ten one-on-one interviews were conducted to gather data regarding participants' perceptions of barriers to parental involvement and their effects on students' behavior. There were 15 categories, and 12 themes were generated from 115 subcategories. Section 4 provided a review of the findings of the 10 detailed interviews. Section 4 also entailed a summary of the research objectives, sampling process, data

collection process, population of study site, and analysis of interviews, which included

verbatim participant responses and tables that reflected participants' frequency of

response rates.

Significant themes, regarding barriers to parental involvement, resulting from 10

interviews were summarized in section 4. The 12 themes included: (a) time constraints,

(b) personal issues, (c) transportation issues, (d) parents' feeling anxiety, fear, or

unwelcomed, (e) parents' lack of awareness of their role in the school, (f) a lack of

community/school outreach programs, (g) teachers' belief of parental involvement to

help minimize students' misbehaviors in the classroom, (h) teachers' beliefs that parental

involvement did not improve students' behaviors, (i) parent-child communication, (j)

parents' participation in extracurricular activities to minimize students' misbehaviors, (k)

discipline, and (l) rewards as motivation for improving students' behaviors. An analysis

of each theme as it related to each research question is described in this section. Section 5

will exhibit an interpretation of the findings, discussion of the findings, the limitations of

the study, implications for social change, recommendations for future study, and

concluding remarks.

Section 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine five teachers and five parents to gain an understanding of their perceptions of barriers that hindered parental involvement and their impact on students' behavior at a private, alternative southwest Texas high school. This study was developed based on the extensive literature review that indicated two major aspects concerning student achievement in school. First, the absence of active parental involvement in schools could jeopardize students' overall educational growth and achievement; second, barriers to parental involvement could affect teacher-parent, home-school, community-school, and student-teacher relationships (Alameda-Lawson et al., 2010; Demie & Lewis, 2010; Green et al., 2007; Pas, Bradshaw, Hershfeldt, & Leaf, 2010 Tam & Chan, 2009;Yanghee, 2009). Understanding why and how teachers and parents' views of barriers to parental involvement affect students' behavior in schools could offer insight into developing strategies for reducing or eliminating some of the barriers.

The findings presented in this study revealed similarities to previous studies and theory indicated in existing literature, and they showed 12 themes relevant to parental involvement: (a) time constraints, (b) personal issues, (c) transportation issues, (d) parents' feeling anxiety, fear, or unwelcomed, (e) parents' lack of awareness of their role in the school, (f) a lack of community/school outreach programs, (g) teachers' belief of parental involvement to help minimize students' misbehaviors in the classroom, (h) Teachers' beliefs that parental involvement did not improve students' behaviors, (i) parent-child communication, (j) parents' participation in extracurricular activities to

minimize students' misbehaviors, (k) discipline, and (l) rewards as motivation for improving students' behaviors. The tables in section 4 displayed the themes found in each research question.

Interpretation of the Findings

This section presents the interpretation of findings for each of the four research questions presented in this study. It shows the themes that were found for each research question and presents the explanations for themes found. This section also presents themes from other studies presented in the literature review that were similar to the themes found in this study.

Interpretation of Research Question 1

The first research question presented in this study was what are teachers' perceptions of barriers to parental involvement in schools? The examination of teachers' perceptions of barriers to parental involvement in this study produced five themes that were relevant to understanding teachers' views regarding the things that they believed affected active parental involvement. Teachers found (a) parents' time constraints, (b) personal issues, (c) transportation issues, (d) parents' feeling anxiety, fear, or unwelcomed, and (e) parents' lack of awareness of their role in the school to be major hindrances to consistent and active parental engagement in XYZ High School. Teachers' indicated their concerns regarding the obstacles they believed impeded parental involvement and expressed their concerns regarding the continued decline of parental involvement due to the barriers listed above. All of the teachers interviewed believed the barriers listed above greatly affected their consistent communication with parents and their students' classroom behavior. The findings regarding teachers' perceptions of

barriers to parental involvement were similar to findings revealed in Comer (2005) and Duschesne and Ratelle's (2010) studies regarding barriers that hindered parental involvement in the schools.

According to Comer (2005), parents' work schedules and transportation problems were major barriers that impeded parents' participation in schools. Furthermore, Comer (2005) and Duschesne et al. (2010) found parents' negative perceptions of school environment and teachers' negative perception of parental disengagement could be associated with inconsistent parental involvement in schools (Duschesne et al., 2010). Additionally, the theme regarding teachers' perceptions of barriers to parental involvement in schools, which was parents' feelings of anxiety or fear of the school, related to the fifth category in Yanghee's (2009) study, which also found parents' feelings of anxiety or fear could have damaging effects on parents' willingness to connect with a school. Yanghee (2009) found the lack of school friendliness and positive communication intimidated parents and made them feel unwelcomed. The similarity of findings between themes regarding teachers' perceptions of barriers to parental involvement in schools and findings from Comer (2005) and Duschesne et al.'s (2010) studies were significant.

Possible explanations for findings regarding teachers' perceptions of barriers to parental involvement in schools include parents' feelings of uncertainty or insecurity to meet with teachers due to a lack of consistent communication or relationship, which might have decreased the level to which teachers and parents engaged with one another. Comer (2005) and Perkins (2008) presented similar results based on teachers' beliefs regarding their lack of teacher-parent connections. Furthermore, many students were

referred to the school for brief periods before returning to their home schools, which could have restricted teachers' endeavors to engage with parents. Another explanation of the findings could have been due to the operation of the school (e.g., students' searched through metal detectors, police officers throughout the campus, and restricted movement of students), which could have made parents uneasy in that kind of setting. According to Perkins (2008), teachers and parents reported feelings of unease and unwelcome in schools where the climate felt uncomfortable due to strict law enforcement procedures. In addition, parents' feelings of unwelcome or anxiety could have come from the strict operation or structure of XYZ High School. Perkins (2008) also reported parents' feelings of anxiety and disconnect due to strict regulations needed to protect staff, teachers, and students in urban school settings. Because XYZ High School is an alternative school, with its focus being the management of student behaviors, some parents might have felt intimidated by its environment, as stated by Teacher 3.

Interpretation of Research Question 2

Research Question 2 read as follows: What are parents' perceptions of barriers to parental involvement in schools? Results from an examination of parents' perceptions of barriers to parental involvement at XYZ High School revealed three major themes: (a) parents' time constraints, (b) transportation issues, and (c) a lack of community and school outreach programs geared towards bridging the communication gap between parent-teacher and home-school. These three barriers emerged as major themes regarding parents' perceptions of barriers to parental involvement in schools, and parents expressed how they believed that greater school/community efforts to implement programs geared towards increasing parental involvement could help to improve their participation at their

children's schools. Parents who struggled with time constraints and transportation issues shared their desire to be more active in their children's schools; however, their work schedules or unreliable modes of transportation did not allow them to participate in school functions held during school hours.

Parents believed school and community outreach programs that focused on providing transportation for parents to school functions held at hours convenient to parents could help to improve the level of parental involvement at the school. The theme of parents' time constraints was found in Fletcher et al.'s (2009) study. Fletcher et al. (2009) found that parents reported being busy with work or family commitments hindered their active involvement in their children's schools. Furthermore, as with the theme of parents' time constraints, Fletcher et al. (2009) found that parents lacked the time to engage in their children's school activities due to family or personal issues, including financial and transportation problems. Zarate (2007) also found that parents reported time issues as a major barrier to their involvement in their children's schools. Concerning the theme of communication-outreach between school and community, Tolan (2004) found schools that initiated parent-school connections through program and community outreach gained greater parent support than schools that did not initiate community outreach programs.

There are two possible explanations for the findings revealed concerning parents' perceptions of barriers to parental involvement in schools. The first explanation is that parents' daily work schedules or transportation problems might have affected their ability to become actively involved in their children's school. Moreover, all of the parents, except Parent 2, were the sole providers for their child or children. Therefore, parents

might have found it difficult to divide their time between work and school participation. Second, because of XYZ High School's lack of outreach programs geared towards engaging and encouraging parental involvement, some parents might have felt disconnected from the school, as perceived by the parents interviewed in this study.

Interpretation of Research Question 3

Research Question 3 in this study read as follows: How do teachers view parental involvement in schools as it relates to student behavior? Findings from an examination of teachers' views regarding parental involvement at XYZ High School and its effects on students' behavior revealed two major themes: (a) teachers believed parental involvement did improve students' behavior in the classrooms; (b) teachers did not believe parental involvement improved some students' behavior. These two themes revealed that all teachers agreed upon the first theme regarding their views of parental involvement and its effect students' behavior in the classroom. Only one teacher shared a different view regarding the second theme. Teachers perceived parents' active involvement as a helpful tool for assisting them with attaining and maintaining positive behavior among their students. Huang and Mason (2008) found that teachers perceived parents' engagement in school activities as a helpful way to build and maintain positive behavior among children in schools. Furthermore, Hujala et al. (2009) showed that teachers perceived parental involvement as active, high-energy investments that helped teachers and parents develop relationships that fostered early childhood learning and student behavior.

The theme of parental involvement used to improve student behavior was also noted in Sheppard's (2009) study. Sheppard (2009) found that inactive parental involvement could have adverse effects on students' achievement and behavioral

achievement. Sheppard (2009) found that 45% to 65% of parents failed to complete parent-training programs in schools initiated to increase parental involvement, which was associated with at-risk students' increased rates of school suspensions and drop out. As with Sheppard's (2009) study, this study demonstrated 100% of teachers' interviewed believed active parental involvement and consistent parent-teacher contact did have positive effects on their students' behavior in the classroom; however, students whose parents were consistently inactive were often in constant trouble for misbehaviors in the classroom. There are some possible explanations for the findings presented in Research Question 3. The teachers at XYZ High School who dealt with consistent misbehavior among students might have seen an improvement in their students' behavior after parents became involved.

Interpretation of Research Question 4

Research Question 4 in this study was how do parents view parental involvement in schools as it relates to student behavior? Results from an examination of parents' views regarding parental involvement at XYZ High School and its effects on students' behavior revealed four major themes: (a) parents' engagement in extracurricular activities used to motivate students' positive behavior in school, (b) parents' use of discipline to build and to sustain students' positive behavior in school, (c) parent-child communication as important in shaping children's behavior at school, (d) rewards as motivation to improving students' behavior at school. These four themes showed that parents encouraged their children's educational and behavioral progress through open communication at home and rewards; however, findings also revealed that parents perceived the XYZ High School offered little support for parental involvement in

extracurricular activities at school. Furthermore, findings showed that parents viewed parent-child connections as important factors in building lasting relationships and positive student behaviors at school.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) realized the importance of family and community connection concerning the development of healthy parent-child and home-school connections, which related to the theme of parent-child found in this study. He understood that when barriers or obstacles interfered with parents' connections with children's education, (i.e. work, economics, and home cultures as defined in the exo- and macrosystems) children's school achievement could become affected. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) microsystem specifically related to the teachers and parents' perceptions in this study. They believed in certain factors that helped to determine the overall educational achievement of a child such as family, school, neighborhood, or childcare community connections. At this stage, a child could become influenced by his or her parents' beliefs, behaviors, and vise versa.

Furthermore, the theme of parents' parent-child communication was found in Cortez and Flores' (2009) study. Their study found that parents' viewed open communication with their children helped their children to develop and sustain positive behavior in their schools. Chen and Gregory (2009) found that parents who had good communication with their children's educational achievement had children who performed well in class and maintained positive behavior. Solish and Perry (2008) found that parents of younger children perceived their involvement in their children's schools as positive because it made them feel optimistic and motivated about the effects that a behavioral plan could have on their children's behavior in the classroom. Concerning the

theme of extracurricular activities regarding parents' view of parental involvement in schools as it relates to student behavior, Dougherty (2006) found that parents reported seeing positive gains in their children's behavior when after-school or extracurricular activities were made available for parents and students in the schools. Parents who felt engaged in extracurricular activities with their children also reported having fewer issues with discipline than those parents who did not participate in extracurricular activities with their children.

Possible explanations for findings regarding parents' view of parental involvement in schools as it relates to student behavior could be that parents who encouraged open lines of communication with their children were better equipped to address and to manage their children's misbehaviors because they were more aware of what was going on in their children's classrooms than parents who did not communicate openly and regularly with their children. Furthermore, parents might have viewed extracurricular activities with their children as a strategy to connect with their children, thus allowing parents to assess their children's behavior closely and regularly.

Discussion of the Findings

The teachers and parents who experienced the phenomenon of barriers to parental involvement and their effects on students' behavior at XYZ High School have demonstrated the importance of understanding how their perceptions of barriers to parental involvement can greatly affect students' behavior in the school. They have also demonstrated that home-school relationships; parent-child connections; teacher-parent relationships; parental involvement levels; and overall teacher, school, and parent morale concerning consistent active parental participation in the school are important. There are

many ways to interpret the data in this study; coding can be a subjective process, and so the coding was not exhaustive. In general, the coding strategy used in interpreting the data in this study was to provide reminders within various categories rather than attempt to code every line of text to every single category possible. Data were also coded for context. More content than might have seemed necessary was captured; this approach saved time in the end from having to look for context when the final analysis was made. The 12 themes that emerged from the data revealed several factors that participants viewed as significant issues related to inactive parental involvement at XYZ High School as shown in previous studies (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Comer, 2005; Duschesne & Ratelle, 2010; Sheppard, 2009; Yanghee, 2009). All of the factors primarily related to the lack of consistent communication and connection between teachers and parents. Based on the themes presented in this study, the home-school relationship appeared broken with no real effort made by the school, community, or families to bridge the broken relationship.

One of the possibilities for this lack of effort could have been because the school provides only a temporary setting for many of its students. Because students are expected to complete their referred days as dictated by their home school, some parents did not feel the need to reach out to the school to build better relationships, as some parents revealed in their interviews. Therefore, the 12 themes are a direct reflection of five of the eight high school teachers who work at the school and five parents whose child or children attend the school. Although some parents may not have reached out to the school because their child or children were at the school only temporarily, all of the parents interviewed mentioned the need for some form of community outreach program or school activities that engaged parents more at the school than the mediocre phone calls home or other

inconsistent forms of communication. Therefore, teachers and administrators at XYZ High School might begin to see greater increases in parental involvement than they currently see if they make the first step in implementing school policy that clearly defines parental involvement expectations at the school. Doing so could help tackle the issue of constant misbehaviors among students in the classroom.

<div align="center">**Limitations of the Study**</div>

The analysis of the data came from participants in a single school and contained frequency counts and percentages based upon the number of parent or teacher interviews out of five each that were coded to each category. The frequency counts sorted in descending order within each subcategory. In qualitative studies, it is essential that reports are read and evaluated qualitatively rather than relying on frequency count of words (Gibbs, 2002). The frequency counts could be used to assess how many participants shared similar words in their responses; however, they should be used with discretion. The tables in section 4 are based upon qualitative coding from open-ended questions and are open to further interpretation; therefore, data were selected from participants' open-ended question responses that best represented the four research questions in this study. As with any research design, the phenomenological design has some weaknesses attributed to its use. The strength of construct validity and reliability in a phenomenological study is dependent upon clearly defined steps in data collection, analysis, and participants' ability to articulate information well enough to draw significant results. Concerning generalizability and the phenomenological method, the focus of the method relies upon an individual's experience with a certain phenomenon to provide others with an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. This study did not

include the perceptions of participants who represented a diverse sample of ESL parents or chronically inactive parents.

Implications for Social Change

The findings from this study could provide a dialogue for schools seeking to understand barriers that hinder parental involvement in their schools. The data from the interviews revealed significant themes regarding teachers and parents' perceptions of barriers that hindered consistent parental involvement. Theodorou (2008) suggested additional research studies are needed to examine strategies for implementing strong, effective parent-teacher relationships, which could close communication gaps between parents and teachers. Therefore, the findings in this study could aid school administrators and teachers with developing PTA that helps parents to engage in an alternative school environment, implement extracurricular activities for at-risk students, and develop on campus parent centers where parents feel comfortable meeting teachers and checking on their children's academic and behavioral progress. Furthermore, Comer (2005) and Duschesne and Ratelle (2010) recommended further research studies that focus on how teachers and parents view parental involvement and barriers that affect their participation, which could provide schools with a measure to decrease or eliminate barriers to parental involvement. The results of this study could reduce the gap in the literature pertaining to effective methods of reducing or eliminating barriers that hinder parental involvement and home-school connections.

Yanghee (2009) suggested future studies that address school policy regarding parental involvement initiatives, programs that increased home-school and teacher-parent relationships, reformed PTA programs, and parental involvement programs that defined

parents' role in schools were needed to increase parental involvement in schools. Green et al. (2007) and Georgiou (2008) recommended future studies that examine the effects that school-home relationships could have on high schools students' behavior and overall educational achievement. Consequently, this study could contribute to positive social change among high schools in southwest Texas and in the United States by providing an understanding of how to address barriers to active parental involvement, which, in turn, could help to improve teacher-parent relationships and students' behavior in high schools.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study was conducted at a single alternative high school in southwest Texas where parental involvement was weakened and, in some cases, nonexistent. Future research can address the limitations of this study by examining parental involvement from other schools where active parental involvement is high. Furthermore, research can address the limitations of this study by focusing on a more diverse sample of participants than was represented in this study (i.e., ESL and chronically inactive parents). Future research studies could focus on ESL parents' perceptions of barriers to parental involvement. Studies that focus on why chronically inactive parents do not engage themselves in their children's schools could help educators to understand inactive parents' viewpoints of the issue and eventually increase their level of involvement in the schools.

Teachers and parents revealed their concern regarding the temporary referrals of students sent to XYZ High School for home-school infractions. Their concerns stemmed from the notion that teachers and parents believed the environment did not encourage consistent parent-teacher connections because student turn-around was high throughout a

school year, leaving little room for home-school or parent-teacher relationships.   Future studies that explore teachers and parents' perceptions of other barriers that exist within an alternative school setting could provide insight into how to better implement effective parental involvement polices within alternative school setting such as XYZ High School. The qualitative nature of this study leaves the data analysis open for further interpretation. The recommendations for further study were based on the limitations of this study that require further study for analysis and interpretation. This study included teacher and parent-participants who shared their perceptions of barriers to parental involvement. However, future research that focuses on administrators and students' perceptions of barriers to parental involvement could be conducted to help to explain the findings observed in this study.

Concluding Remarks

This phenomenological study was conducted to shed light on the issue of barriers to parental involvement and their effects on students' behavioral achievement. The site for this research study serves a population of at-risk students who have violated the rules set forth in the Student Code of Conduct at their home schools. The vast majority of the students who attend this private alternative school have been referred to this school on more than one occasion. Because this school caters to such a vulnerable and specific population of students, examining the perceptions of the teachers and parents who are knowledgeable of its environment and operation was important in determining if student misbehaviors were rampant when active parent engagement was evident.

According to 100% of the teachers interviewed, more actively involved parents would help to minimize students' delinquent behavior in the classroom and reduce the

rate of repeaters at the school. Parents interviewed cited work schedules, lack of home-school connections, and transportation as major influences in their lack of involvement at the school; however, parents did mention that their level of involvement was better at their child or children's home schools. The intent of this study was to provide a catalyst for dialogue among educational researchers regarding teachers and parents' perceptions of barriers to parental involvement. Exploring strategies for reducing teacher-parent relationship barriers, eliminating lapses in home-school communication, initiating parent outreach programs, implementing school policy that caters to parental involvement programs in an alternative school setting, and defining roles of parents in schools could offer alternative schools much needed solutions to some of the many issues that keep parents from actively engaging in their children's schools.

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Appendix A: Research Study Advertisement

To All Teachers and Parents! ☺

A research study will be done at your (your child's) School! Please respond to this ad if you're interested!

Reason for this Study: To understand how you feel about these questions: What things hold back parent interest in school? How do these things affect student behavior? How do parents taking part in school events affect student behavior?

What Will You Talk About?: One-on-one talks will include teachers and parents' views of parents taking part in school, things that stop parents from taking part in school, and things that might affect how students behave in school. You will be asked to take part in an interview.

- **Interviews:** One-on-one interviews will be held in the school's library or a location chosen by the participant and will last about 60-90 minutes.

Please respond to this ad if you're interested!: If you're interested in being interviewed, then please call the researcher by email her at nicole.antoine@waldenu.edu

Your Rights: If you take part in this study, you will have the right to leave at any time. Your name, personal information, and the name of the school will remain unknown to the public. All of your answers will be preserved after the study is done. When time permits, all data will be destroyed.

Appendix B: Teacher Interview Question Guide

Directions

- **Purpose of Interview Questions**

The interview questions for teachers offers teachers' an opportunity to gage share perspectives of four areas of parental involvement: (a) the importance of parental involvement to transition planning, (b) realistic levels of parental involvement, (c) teachers' views on barriers to parental involvement, and (d) strategies to improve parental involvement in schools. Questions were replicated from Geenen et al. (2005, p. 7).

- **How to Respond to Questions**

Teachers will be asked to respond with candor to a question (in no set order) from the guide. Teachers may take their time in answering each question, and they may ask, or be asked by the interviewer to respond to, any follow-up questions regarding each question.

- **Confidentiality and Rights**

All responses will be confidential and recorded for study purposes only. All responses and notes will be destroyed once the study is complete. Teachers reserve the right exclude themselves from this study at any time during the process. They may choose to respond to any or all of the questions during the interview process. They will be able to ask questions at any time, should they feel the need.

Questions:

1) Do you think parental involvement is important in transition planning? Why or why not?

2) What opportunities are there for parental involvement in transition planning within the school?

3) In your opinion, what is the reality of parental involvement? In other words, what is the real nature of participation among parents? At what level are they getting involved and who is involved?

4) What do you think are the barriers to parent participation? Why do some parents not get in involved?

5) What things have you done or have tried to get parents more involved? How does active parental involvement affect your students' behavior in the classroom?

6) What other ideas do you have for how to get parents more actively involved? What ideas do you have to minimize student misbehaviors in class?

Appendix C: Parent Interview Question Guide

Directions

- **Purpose of Interview Questions**

This interview guide may offer parents insight into understanding parents' views of their involvement in their children's schools. It may assist parents, school professionals, and researchers with understanding parents' views of barriers that keep them from active school involvement. The questions might also gage parents' views regarding their involvement in their children's school-based transition plans.

- **How to Respond to Questions**

Parents will be asked to respond openly to a question (in no set order) from the guide. Parents may take their time in answering each question, and they may ask, or be asked by the interviewer to respond to, any follow-up questions regarding each question.

- **Your Rights to Participate**

All responses will be confidential (private) and recorded for study purposes only. All responses and field notes will be destroyed once the study is complete. Parents reserve the right to stop their participation in this study at any time during the process. They may choose to respond to any or all of the questions during the interview process. They will be able to ask questions at any time, should they feel the need.

Questions:

1) What would you like to see your son/daughter doing once he/she has finished high school?

2) What can you do to help your child prepare for successful behavior in school?

3) How have you helped your child develop and or maintain positive behavior so far?

4) What school activities have you participated in to help your son/daughter get ready for their academic future?

5) What school activities do you think are most important for parents to do to help their children prepare for the future?

6) What things or obstacles have kept you from school activities or functions?

7) What things would make it easier for you to take part in school activities?

Appendix D: Research Study Advertisement in Spanish

Para todos los maestros y padres! ☺

Un estudio de investigación se llevará a cabo en su (su hijo) la escuela! Por favor responda a este anuncio si te interesa!

La razón para este estudio: Para entender cómo se siente acerca de estas preguntas: ¿Qué cosas frenar interés de los padres en la escuela? ¿Cómo los siguientes factores afectan el comportamiento del estudiante? parte ¿Cómo los padres que en los eventos escolares afectar el comportamiento de los estudiantes?

¿Qué vas a hablar sobre: Uno-a-uno conversaciones son profesores y opiniones de los padres de los padres que participan en la escuela, las cosas que hacen que los padres de participar en la escuela, y las cosas que pueden afectar a cómo se comportan los estudiantes en la escuela. Se le pide que participe en una entrevista.

- **Entrevistas:** Uno-a-uno entrevistas se llevarán a cabo en la biblioteca de la escuela o en un lugar elegido por el participante y tendrá una duración de 60-90 minutos.

Por favor responda a este anuncio si te interesa: Si estás interesado en ser entrevistado, por favor llame al investigador por correo electrónico a nicole.antoine @ waldenu.edu.

Sus derechos: Si usted participa en este estudio, tendrá derecho a salir en cualquier momento. Su nombre, datos personales, y el nombre de la escuela siguen siendo

desconocidos para el público. Todas sus respuestas se mantendrán después del estudio que se hace. Cuando el tiempo lo permite, todos los datos serán destruidos.

Appendix E: Teacher Interview Question Guide in Spanish

Instrucciones

- **Propósito de preguntas de la entrevista**

Esta guía de entrevista puede ofrecer conocimientos a los padres en la comprensión de las opiniones de los padres de su participación en las escuelas de sus hijos. Puede ayudar a los padres, profesionales de la escuela, y los investigadores con la comprensión de los padres puntos de vista de los obstáculos que les impiden la participación de la escuela activa. Las preguntas que se galga opiniones de los padres respecto de su participación en los planes de transición de sus hijos en la escuela.

- **Cómo responder a las preguntas**

Los padres se les pidió que respondieran a una pregunta abierta (no en ese orden) de la guía. Los padres pueden tomar su tiempo para responder cada pregunta, y piden pueden, o ser invitado por el entrevistador para responder a cualquier pregunta de seguimiento respecto a cada pregunta.

- **Sus derechos a participar**

Todas las respuestas serán confidenciales (privados) y registrados para fines de estudio solamente. Todas las respuestas y notas de campo serán destruidos una vez que el estudio se ha completado. Los padres se reservan el derecho de detener su participación en este estudio en cualquier momento durante el proceso. Se puede optar por responder a cualquiera o todas las preguntas durante el proceso de la entrevista. Ellos serán capaces de hacer preguntas en cualquier momento, en caso de que sienta la necesidad.

Preguntas:

1) ¿Qué le gustaría ver a tu hijo / hija, haciendo una vez que ésta ha terminado la escuela secundaria?

2) ¿Qué puede hacer usted para ayudar a su hijo a prepararse para el comportamiento de éxito en la escuela?

3) ¿Cómo ha ayudado a su hijo a desarrollar y / o mantener un comportamiento positivo hasta el momento?

4) ¿Qué actividades de la escuela ha participado en ayudar a su hijo o hija a prepararse para su futuro académico?

5) ¿Qué actividades de la escuela cree que son más importantes para los padres hacer para ayudar a sus hijos a prepararse para el futuro?

6) Qué cosas u obstáculos han impedido que las actividades escolares o funciones?

7) ¿Qué cosas haría más fácil para que usted tome parte en las actividades escolares?

Appendix F: Permission Letter

Date: Wednesday, December 8, 2010

To: Mr. _____

From: _____ (high school teacher/college instructor)

Subject: Permission to Conduct a Qualitative Research Study for Completion of my Doctoral Study Requirements

Dear Mr. _____,

My name is _____, and I am a high school English teacher in southwest Texas. I also teach English Composition at _____ Community College. Currently, I am seeking to fulfill requirements for my Ed.D with a specialization in Teacher Leadership from _____ University. I am writing this letter to you to seek your permission to conduct my study at your school, XYZ. Because I have experience working with at-risk youth and I enjoyed my experience working with this specific population, I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to conduct my study using this school site. All information and data collected will be preserved after the study is complete. The name of the school, location, participants' information, and responses will remain confidential throughout the study process. Threats to confidentiality will hold minimal risks because, as researcher, I will be sure to respect and to protect the school and participants' rights to privacy and confidentiality. When time permits, I will be sure to shred and to erase all electronic and raw data collected during and after the study. I have attached an informed consent form for your review to be signed by interested study participants, should you grant me permission to use your school. The consent form will provide you with information regarding the purpose of my study, participants' rights to privacy, to ask questions, and study procedures. Again, I would appreciate an opportunity to conduct my study at your school for two main reasons: (1) I have had experience working at the study site and (2) I would like to use the school to complete my program requirements. I would gratefully appreciate your permission to conduct my study at your school. Please feel free to contact me via email or by phone about any questions or concerns that you may have regarding my study. Your response to my request may be written or emailed at your convenience.

Curriculum Vitae

Nicole Erica Lewis-Antoine, EdD

Work Address: Houston Community College (Southwest/Northwest Regions)
West Loop Campus: 5601 West Loop South, Houston, Texas 77081
Alief Campus: 2811 Hayes Road, Houston, TX, 77082

nerica1920@yahoo.com

Certification:
Texas Teachers Alternative Certification Program (ELA and Reading, Grades 8-12)

Work Experience:
Adjunct Faculty   **Aug 2008-Present**
Houston Community College System   **Houston, Texas**
- Teach English Composition I and II (ENGL 1301 and ENGL 1302)
- Observe peers and participate in professional practice dialogues
- Develop strategies for effective writing composition skill enhancement
- Facilitate student grammar and writing tutorials

English Teacher, Grade 9-12   **Apr 2009-Oct 2010**
CEP Beechnut Academy   **Houston, Texas**
- Developed and presented comprehensive lesson plans, with a focus on grammar, expository/argumentative writing, poetry, and Shakespeare. Incorporated exciting thematic units such as *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Odyssey*, *Beowulf*, and *Macbeth* to encourage class participation, enhance literary skills, and foster a fun and active learning environment
- Implemented varied strategies and differentiated assessments to accommodate diverse needs of students who were transitioning from various feeder schools.
- Implemented positive classroom management strategies and disciplinary programs that effectively handled challenging behavioral issues
- Collaborated with colleagues and parents to resolve lingering disciplinary issues of students with consistent behavioral problems

Lead English Teacher, Grades 6-12   **Aug 2006- May 2007**
Southwest Schools   **Houston, Texas**
- Observed fellow teachers' instructional and management styles in the classroom
- Facilitated writing assessments for non-English speaking student in all classrooms
- Developed Academic Improvement Plans for below grade level students and modified activities and lessons in the classroom
- Worked on grade level teams, which led to the development of creative projects and lessons that were aligned with Houston ISD's curriculum
- Provided professional and instructional support for classroom teachers

English Teacher, Grades 9-12   **Aug 2003- May 2006**
ALTA Academy   **Houston, Texas**
- Designed and implemented well-balanced lesson plans that facilitated all learning styles
- Adhered to IEPs of students with special needs
- Maintained a focused and interested group of students
- Communicated curriculum and students' progress to parents on a regular basis

Reading Teacher, Grade 3   **Aug 2002- June 2003**
Houston Academy   **Houston, Texas**
- Collaborated with fellow teachers and parents of children who were at-risk of falling and had moderate to severe behavioral issues
- Provided extracurricular tutoring for TAKS testing preparation
- Incorporated various teaching strategies that encouraged student participation
- Designed and implemented a third-grade Read-a-Thon to promote reading

Other Experience:
Professional Scoring Supervisor   **June 2001- June 2002**
NCS Pearson   **Houston, Texas**

- Supervised a team of scoring professionals to score the writing component of various states' standardized tests, Grades 3-8

Education:

Doctorate of Education in Teacher Leadership   **January 2012**
Walden University, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Master of Arts in English   **May 2001**
McNeese State University, Lake Charles, Louisiana

Bachelor of Arts in English   **Dec 1998**
McNeese State University, Lake Charles, Louisiana

Skills:
Proficient in Microsoft Windows and PowerPoint
Knowledgeable in reading and writing strategies
Exceptional writing skills

Honors and Awards:

Received Teacher of the Year Award for 2004-2005 school year at ALTA Academy

Interests:

Expanding the use of technology in the ELA classroom, improving students' reading comprehension and writing skill development

Professional Development

Classroom instructions that Works~ 6+1 Traits of Writing ~ Classroom Management ~ Teaching Social Skills ~ Essentials of Writing ~ Reading and Writing Across the Curriculum ~ Tiered Learning