

# *High School Students' Perceptions of the Importance of Parental Involvement as It Relates to High School Success*



*Kristina Laura Yarborough*



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## **Abstract**

Numerous studies have revealed that parents' involvement in their children's education is important to academic achievement. However, little research exists surrounding students' perceptions of parental involvement and its effect on their high school success. This study qualitatively explored this aspect of parental involvement using surveys to obtain demographic information and interviews with students from a rural high school located in southeastern North Carolina to obtain their perceptions of parental involvement. The participants' parents granted permission for the interviews. Results indicated the students wanted their parents to be involved and parents wanted to be involved, but the students ultimately felt responsible for their academic success. Further research replicating this study using an urban or inner city school setting would provide greater validity to the results.



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## **Dedication**

To my dedicated husband, loving children, and parents who have stood by me and encouraged me to continue this lifelong endeavor. I cannot say thank you enough for all of the times you have excused my absence to pursue the research to complete this task.



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# Chapter 1

## The Problem



Parental involvement has been an important part of legislation related to K-12 education since 1965 with the enactment of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, but has come to the forefront since No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2002) became public law in 2002 (Lloyd-Smith, 2008). The purpose of NCLB was to equalize education among all student populations in the United States; one strategy for accomplishing this goal was to mandate that every school develop a plan to involve parents in the educational setting (U.S. Department of Education, 2004b). Even though NCLB did not include guidelines for schools to achieve this goal, it did give each school the responsibility of designing a parental involvement plan (Lloyd-Smith, 2008; U.S. Department of Education, 2004b).

In order for any plan to be successful, all of the stakeholders must have input (Stringer, 2007). Stakeholders who are affected by parental involvement include the school system and individual school administrators, teachers, community, parents, and students. Research that explored the perceptions of parental involvement held by administrators, teachers, community, and parents is easily accessible, but the perceptions of high school students are more difficult to locate, and yet they are a stakeholder in the process and need to be heard (Faber, 2008). Having worked in the public school setting at the high school level for over 20 years, this researcher came to question why parental involvement is a struggle for all schools, but especially so at the high school level (Lloyd Smith, 2008; Lowman & Elliott, 2010). As students progress into the higher grade levels, parental involvement declines (Lloyd-Smith, 2008). This study explored the perceptions of high school students to determine whether they agree that parental involvement has, in fact, declined, in their situation. According to a study conducted by Stanik (2007) that consisted of interviews with numerous parents and high school students, parental involvement has been an issue at all grade levels because the government has

not taken into account individual state and community availability of resources. Furthermore, those considered to be at the poverty level do not have as many resources available for parents and students as do those in high-income communities. The lack of resources mentioned by Stanik includes the availability of transportation to get to the school, having to work long hours and not being available to come to the school for conferences, or not being available to the student at home to assist with homework or discuss school activities at home (Stanik, 2007).

The guiding questions in this study were: How do high school students define parental involvement? How does parental involvement affect their high school success? These are important questions as high schools across the nation struggle with developing parental involvement plans that actually increase the time parents are involved in their children's education and produce higher academic achievement.

## **1.1 The Problem**

Parent involvement is an ongoing concern among all levels of schooling with high school being no exception (Lloyd-Smith, 2008). This researcher teaches high school career courses and is concerned about how students perceive parental involvement in their education. This is an age when students are striving for independence so the study explored what being successful in school means to high school students, how the high school students describe parental involvement, and how parental involvement affects the success of high school students. The following situations are some in which parental involvement opportunities existed. Some were successful, while some were not. All of the names have been changed to protect confidentiality.

Jamie began making inappropriate comments in class and wearing inappropriate garments to school, which brought disciplinary action. The



classroom teacher made attempts to contact her mother, who was a single parent. When phone messages were not answered, the matter was referred to an administrator who was successful in speaking directly with Jamie's mother. A meeting was set up and Jamie came into class excited that her mother was coming to school and could hardly wait for me to meet her. At the appointed time, her mother did not arrive. A message was left with the front office to contact me when she arrived and I would come to the front office to meet with her. Her mother did not arrive that day or any other day an appointment was made.

Brandon had an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) in place. His mother called an assistant principal asking that his teachers call her and arrange an appointment to discuss his progress in class. I called and suggested three times when I would be available to meet with the mother. Each suggestion was met with, "I have a doctor's appointment that day. I have to pick up my daughter from her appointment that day." I asked the mother to set a day and time that would work with her schedule, and she did, but she did not show up for the appointment or call to cancel or reschedule. I was able to meet with the mother when she was called to complete a yearly evaluation of Brandon's IEP at the end of the school year.

Mandy was an academically gifted student. Her mother called to schedule an appointment to meet regarding Mandy's progress in class. I asked Mandy's mother to please bring Mandy with her for the appointment. Her mother arrived at the designated time with Mandy and we proceeded to the classroom for an informal setting as opposed to meeting in a conference room, in an attempt to make both the mother and Mandy feel more comfortable about discussing Mandy's progress. The mother and I sat at a table toward the front of the room, motioning for Mandy to have a seat. Mandy did not sit down, but proceeded to the back of the room and pretended to read a poster during the conference, but stayed within hearing range of the discussion. At the end of the conference her

mother asked, "Mandy, do you understand what has been said and your responsibilities for succeeding in the class?" Mandy, "Yes." Mother, "Do you intend to follow through with your responsibilities?" Mandy, "Yes." Mother, "Do you have any questions of your teacher?" Mandy, "No."

Mandy's academic progress improved but Jamie's and Brandon's did not. The question that keeps recurring is why did Mandy's mother attend the scheduled conference but not Jamie's or Brandon's? Could it be that Jamie and Brandon had given the perception that they did not want their parents to meet with their teachers or come to school (Faber, 2008)? If given the opportunity, how would these students describe their experience and what would they say about their feelings about parental involvement and its effects on their success in school?

## **1.2 Problem Background**

Parental involvement was mandated by NCLB (U.S. Department of Education, 2004b) because research has repeatedly shown that parental involvement in a child's education raises academic achievement (Epstein, 2005, 2007; Rogers, 2006; Walker, Shenker, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2010). Much of the research conducted on parental involvement and its influence on student academic achievement has focused on elementary education (Catsambis, 2002; Lloyd-Smith, 2008). Parental involvement is high at the elementary level of education and has positive results on student achievement, but lessens as the student progresses to higher levels of education (Catsambis, 2002; Lloyd-Smith, 2008). One reason suggested for this decline is that students are giving parents the impression that they do not want them to be as involved because they are searching for autonomy at this age (Lloyd-Smith, 2008). This study explored this question as it uncovered students' definitions of parental involvement.

While research studying the effects of NCLB and parental involvement has shown that student achievement increases when parents take an active interest

in their children's educational activities, other research has revealed factors that prevent parental involvement from occurring (Epstein, 2007; Rogers, 2006; Walker et al., 2010; Xitao & Michael, 2001). Socioeconomic and ethnicity factors impacting parental involvement in school have been the subject of previous studies by Epstein (2007), Rebell and Wolf (2008), and Rogers (2006). Some studies have shown that socioeconomic and ethnicity factors affect student achievement negatively while others have shown these factors to have positive or little to no effect on student achievement (Lowman & Elliott, 2010). Bembenutty (2011) and Patall, Cooper, and Robinson (2008) studied parental involvement with homework for elementary, middle, and high school students with the same results; some students had higher achievement when parents were involved while other students showed no increase or a decrease when parents took an active role in their homework (Tan & Goldberg, 2008). The current study explored high school students' perceptions of the importance of parental involvement as it related to their high school success.

NCLB (2002) promotes student success as being the responsibility of both parents and schools. The Act holds schools accountable for designing and implementing a plan for parental involvement. NCLB did not state how the schools should involve parents, just that parents are to be involved (U.S. Department of Education, 2004b). If administrators understand students' feelings about parental involvement and how students define the type of involvement that will support their school success, then parental involvement plans can be more effectively designed to benefit the students, parents, school, and community.

Studies conducted by Epstein (2007) and Rogers (2006) showed a positive correlation between parental involvement and student academic achievement. Rogers, as well as Rebell and Wolf (2008), studied the correlation between socioeconomic background and parental involvement in the school and

determined that parents from lower economic communities were less involved in the school and students' academic achievement was lower. Walker et al. (2010) studied the process of parental involvement, or how parents were involved in school, rather than the relationship between parental involvement and student achievement, and noted an increase in student achievement if the students perceived their parents to be involved in their education, regardless of the parents' actual amount of involvement. This information leads to the belief that from the students' perspectives, it did not really matter whether their parents were actually involved in their schooling as long as the student perceived that the parent was involved in some way. Did the students perceive parental involvement because the parents asked questions about their school day and activities? Did the parents make calls to the school to check on the student's progress? What indication did the students have that their parents were involved? The current study asked students to define parental involvement.

Administrators and teachers realize the potential impact of parental involvement on the academic success of students (Epstein, 2005; Gardner, Burton, & Klimes, 2006; Lloyd-Smith, 2008; Lowman & Elliott, 2010). The interpretations that administrators and teachers have of parental involvement may be vastly different from the interpretations held by students. Administrators and teachers define parental involvement as parents volunteering in the school and attending school activities and conferences (Lloyd-Smith, 2008). Epstein (2007), on the other hand, gave six different types of parental involvement in a child's education, including parenting types, communication, volunteering, home involvement, decision making, and community collaboration. Parental involvement is a term that could have many different meanings depending on the entity, or stakeholder, and context (Hickman, 1991). There is a gap in the literature regarding students' perceptions of parental involvement, and it was the goal of this researcher to attempt to close this gap.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The overall purpose of the study was to investigate how students feel about parental involvement. Specifically, the study asked students to define parental involvement and school success, and describe how parental involvement affected their high school success. Several studies have researched the positive and negative effects of parental involvement on student success, but few have examined students' interpretations of parental involvement (Epstein, 2007; Rebell & Wolf, 2008; Rogers, 2006). Faber (2008) examined high school students' perspectives of parental involvement as related to parents' and students' participation in extracurricular activities. The current study was similar to Faber's except it examined parental involvement as it related to in-school and out-of-school activities and factors, and whether the students encouraged or discouraged their parents' involvement in their education. This study used basic qualitative methodology to examine the students' descriptions and interpretations of the term parental involvement (Merriam, 2009).

Current studies have focused on elementary and middle school students (Bembenutty, 2011). In a literature search through numerous databases and over 1,600 articles, less than five studies emerged that focused directly on high school students' perceptions of parental involvement (Faber, 2008; Hayes, 2011; Trusty & Lampe, 1997; Whitfield, 2006). This is an area of little research, but a necessary consideration when administrators and teachers are attempting to increase the involvement of parents at the high school level of education.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

This researcher explored the main question: What are high school students' perceptions of the importance of parental involvement on high school success? The following questions were answered during the study.

1. How do high school students describe parental involvement?

2. How do high school students define success in school?
3. How do high school students describe the effects of parental involvement on their high school success?

## **1.5 Theoretical Framework**

The researcher based this study on Bandura's self-efficacy theory, which indicates that the confidence students have in their abilities affects the choices and outcomes of their endeavors (Usher & Pajares, 2008). Self-efficacy, as described by Bandura, is influenced by peers, teachers, and parents (Usher & Pajares, 2008). The current study focused on parents' influence on students' ability to feel successful in school. The study also compared the responses of students with findings by Trusty and Lampe (1997), and the theories of Hickman (1991) and Epstein (2007).

Trusty and Lampe (1997) described parental involvement as the way in which parents responded to and interacted with their children and the effects of these interactions on the children's behavior inside and outside of school. Hickman (1991) stated that there are seven types of parental involvement at the secondary level; "(a) parent as communicator, (b) parent as supporter of activities, (c) parent as learner, (d) parent as advocate, (e) parent as decision maker, (f) parent as volunteer/professional, and (g) parent as home activities teacher" (para. 4). Epstein (2007) addressed similar types of parental involvement at the secondary level to create the Framework of Six Types of Involvement, and added collaboration with community entities as resources for family interaction and student success. NCLB (2002) described parental involvement as a means to close the achievement gap with accountability, flexibility, and choice, so that no child is left behind (Introduction section, p. 1).

The effects of NCLB on schools and the interpretation of parental involvement in the school have been the focus of many researchers (Epstein,

2005, 2007; Loveless, Parkas, & Duffett, 2008; Rogers, 2006). Studies have indicated varying degrees of parental involvement in the schools based on economic factors; the lower the economic status, the less parental involvement occurred, having a negative impact on student achievement (Epstein 2005, 2007; Rogers, 2006). Patall et al. (2008) went outside of the school building to study the importance of parental involvement in homework and concluded that parental involvement in homework does increase student achievement. Again, the lower the economic status, the less the parent is involved in the student's homework, decreasing student achievement (Epstein, 2005; Rogers, 2006).

Solorzano (2008) researched Latino and Caucasian parents' perspectives of parental involvement and found that income and education influenced their involvement in their children's education. The researcher also stated that involvement in, or with, their children's school was a concern with both groups of parents (Solorzano, 2008). Trusty and Lampe (1997) studied high school students' perceptions of parental involvement and the students' locus of control. They focused on the students' identity development based on how they perceived their parents' involvement in their schooling (Trusty & Lampe, 1997).

This researcher expanded on a study conducted by Whitfield (2006), who interviewed five students from various ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds, by also interviewing five students from varied backgrounds. The researcher asked the students to describe what success in school meant to them, how they would define parental involvement, and what effect parental involvement had on their school success. Obtaining the students' perceptions as a stakeholder in the process adds to the existing body of knowledge about the perceptions held by parents, teachers, and administrators regarding parental involvement. Having the students' perceptions will enable local administrators to develop parental involvement plans that fit the needs of the students and enable parents to become more active in their children's education.

Oyserman, Brickman, and Rhodes (2007) theorized that parents perceive their involvement in their child's school will give the message that the student can achieve and that the parent's presence will keep the child focused and on track in obtaining his or her goals. The current study looked for themes to indicate agreement or disagreement with this theory. The research was based on Epstein's theory of community and parental involvement, which includes six forms of involvement in the schooling of students (Epstein, 2008). The six forms of parental involvement described by Epstein (2005) include parents' involvement at home, communication between school and home, parents volunteering in school activities, parents' involvement in helping the student with homework, parents supporting the students' decisions regarding school, and parents obtaining support from the community to assist the child in school. This study also considered Bandura's theory of how self-efficacy is formed in students to affect their success in school (Usher & Pajares, 2008). Bandura theorized that self-efficacy was the motivation to promote a student's school success and the factors that produced self-efficacy included teachers, community background, and parents (Cowan, 2006; Usher & Pajares, 2008). The key focus in this case was on the parents' influence.

## **1.6 Significance of the Study**

Parental involvement is important to high school and school system administrators because they are interested in retaining program funding by complying with the mandates of NCLB (Lloyd-Smith, 2008). Studies have repeatedly shown parental involvement to be a factor in students' academic success (Epstein, 2005, 2007; Rogers, 2006; Walker et al., 2010). Administrators have stated that implementing a successful parental involvement plan is challenging and have speculated that parents who perceive their children do not want them involved in their schooling are hesitant to become involved and that this occurs at the high school level because students are attempting to



assert their independence (Lloyd-Smith, 2008; Tan & Goldberg, 2008). Determining how students want their parents to be involved in their education will determine the program design used by a school or school system for helping parents become involved in ways that will benefit students.

Key factors in the current study were the students' perceptions of parental involvement and its impact on their academic success. The research will add to the current knowledge of the effects of parental involvement on student school success by focusing on the high school level and adding to current knowledge about parental involvement at the elementary and middle school level (Tan & Goldberg, 2008). It also tells the story from the students' voices, not parents, teachers, or administrators. Three studies were located that occurred within the past 5 years and directly focused on high school students' perspectives of parental involvement (Hayes, 2011; Tan & Goldberg, 2008; Whitfield, 2006). These studies neither fully covered the high school students' perceptions nor can their findings be generalized to the population of the nation. It is for these reasons that the findings of the current study will add to the results of the previous studies for a continuation of how high school students describe parental involvement and its effect on their success in school.

Whitfield (2006) conducted a similar qualitative study using five students chosen by the guidance counselor at their school based on characteristics determined by the researcher. These characteristics included athlete, scholar, someone considered to be rebellious, someone considered to be popular, someone considered to be an average student, and students from the sophomore, junior, and senior classes. The current study was also qualitative and used five students with varied backgrounds, but focused only on students who were juniors or seniors due to their longer span in the high school setting. This study examined attitudes and barriers of participants concerning parental involvement. Information gathered could aid school officials in developing a parental

involvement plan, building school and family partnerships, and enhancing student academic achievement.

The results of the current study explained high school students' perceptions of the importance of parental involvement based on the five participants chosen for the study. The results add to the base of knowledge established by Whitfield (2006) by interviewing students of similar and different ethnic backgrounds as those used by Whitfield and comparing the results for similarities and differences. The results are the students' interpretations of parental involvement and school success adding to existent literature regarding the perceptions of administrators, teachers, parents, and community entities in reference to parental involvement and student success in school.

NCLB (2002) has impacted all schools across the nation by mandating they develop a plan for parental involvement (Epstein, 2005, 2007; Loveless et al., 2008; Rogers, 2006). Understanding students' perceptions of parental involvement could enable schools to be better equipped to design a parental involvement plan. Local schools can then present their plan to state policymakers with evidence supporting their plan for funding (Office of State Budget and Management, 2010). If parents are involved in ways they and their children agree are acceptable, it will motivate students to be academically successful (Faber, 2008).

## **1.7 Assumptions and Limitations**

Assumptions are the values the researcher places on the study before it begins (Bryant, 2004). The assumptions in this study included being able to identify the students' definitions of parental involvement. It was assumed that the students would be able to define academic success. It was also assumed that themes would develop to aid in understanding factors the students felt

encouraged or discouraged their parents' involvement in the school and had a positive or negative effect on their success in school.

Bryant (2004) described limitations as restrictions created by the methodology chosen for the study. This study was limited by the population used for the study. Students used in the interview process were those who were willing to participate and had signed consent forms from their parents. Other limitations involved with using a qualitative methodology were the researcher's biases and how these affected data interpretation, as well as the anxiety or personal bias of those being interviewed (Patton, 2002). The students who participated in the interviews had never been in a class taught by the teacher, nor were they involved in a student organization advised by the teacher.

Other limitations included:

- The researcher was a teacher in the school used for the study.
- Participants may have answered the way they perceived the researcher wanted them to answer.
- Interpretation of results may have been biased because the researcher knew the students, the school, and the community culture.

## **1.8 Delimitations and Scope**

Delimitations include generalization factors of the study (Bryant, 2004). This study took place in one high school located in North Carolina. The results of this study are only transferable to other high schools in the same or similar locality as the facility in which this study was conducted. Other factors that influenced the transferability of the results include ethnic, economic, and educational levels of the parents of the students who participated in this study as these may have influenced the answers given by the students during the process. The researcher did not examine test scores as the time frame did not allow for a comparison from

one year to the next to look at any changes that resulted from participation in the study. The researcher did not conduct interviews with parents as the students' answers and perceptions were the major concerns of the study.

- Student answers to interview questions were the only data used in the study.
- The study is only generalizable to other schools in the same school district with a similar socioeconomic background.
- The study did not use data from test scores to determine each student's academic success, only the students' definitions of school success.

## **1.9 Definitions of Terms**

- No Child Left Behind: Legislation mandating schools "to close the achievement gap with accountability, flexibility, and choice, so that no child is left behind" (NCLB, 2002, Introduction section).
- Parental involvement: Shared accountability between the school and parents for student success including increased resources and abilities to enable the parent to help the child gain academic success (U.S. Department of Education, 2004b).
- Parents: Biological mother or father, legal protector or guardian of a child (UC Davis, n.d.)

## **1.10 Conclusion**

NCLB has mandated that every school in the nation develop a parental involvement plan without giving guidelines as to how to develop the plan (Lloyd-Smith, 2008; U.S. Department of Education, 2004b). Research has shown that several factors affect parents' involvement in their children's education, including socioeconomic conditions and ethnicity (Epstein, 2005, 2007; Hayes, 2011; Loveless et al., 2008; Rogers, 2006; Solorzano, 2008). Numerous studies

have focused on the perspectives of administrators, teachers, and parents regarding parental involvement (Berliner, 2006; Epstein, 2005; Patal et al., 2008; Payne, 2005; Rebell & Wolf, 2008; Rogers, 2006; Xitao & Michael, 2001). Only a handful of studies have focused on students' perceptions of parental involvement and how it affects their high school success (Faber, 2008; Hayes, 2011; Lowman & Elliott, 2010; Trusty & Lampe, 1997; Whitfield, 2006).

Chapter 2 presents a literature review of the history of NCLB and its effects on parental involvement. It discusses studies that focused on administrators' perspectives of parental involvement, as well as teachers' and parents' perspectives. It also reviews current studies that focused on students' perceptions of parental involvement and whether the students felt parental involvement influenced their achievement in school.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology chosen for this study. A basic qualitative research design allowed the researcher to construct reality by interacting with the participants throughout the interview process. Meaning was constructed from the responses of the students as to how they defined parental involvement and school success. This chapter details the research plan, how the participants were chosen, and how permission was obtained for the students to participate in the study.

Chapter 4 describes the data obtained from the interviews with the students. Themes and how the themes were drawn from the data are described. Results of the study are explained. A final summary of the research and findings is included (Bryant, 2004).

Chapter 5 contains the conclusions of the study. The researcher discusses any major themes and their indications for further research and outlines the students' responses to the guiding questions of this study. Recommendations for further research and how the findings of this study add to the current body of knowledge are outlined in this final chapter.



# **Chapter 2**

## **Literature Review**





This chapter discusses literature related to high school students' perceptions of parental involvement and how it affects their high school success. Studies were reviewed to give different perspectives of parental involvement from parents, teachers, and administrators to show how students' perceptions are a needed component in the development of a parental involvement plan. The researcher analyzed previous research related to students' perceptions of parental involvement and how the previous research may or may not agree with the findings in the current study. The strategies used to locate relevant research are explained. Factors that affect parents' involvement in their children's education are also examined, as well as what is currently understood about high school students' perceptions of parental involvement.

This chapter also presents a discussion of NCLB and its effects on parental involvement in the school system (Epstein, 2005, 2007; Loveless et al., 2008; Rogers, 2006). The relationship of parental involvement to students' education and its impact on student achievement are described. Studies correlating parental involvement and ethnicity and parental involvement and economic factors are explained (Bianchi & Lancianese, 2005; Epstein, 2005; Rogers, 2006). Ethnicity and economic factors may contribute to parental involvement, and were explored in the current study (Berliner, 2006; Epstein, 2005; Patall et al., 2008; Payne, 2005; Rebell & Wolf, 2008; Rogers, 2006; Xitao & Michael, 2001). Current research on students' perspectives of parental involvement is described (Faber, 2008; Lowman & Elliott, 2010; Trusty & Lampe, 1997; Whitfield, 2006). Keywords used to obtain resources included student perspective of parental involvement at the high school level, high school parental involvement and the student perspective, high school student perspective + parental involvement, high school students' perception of parental involvement (Hayes, 2011). The results of this study indicate what factors do or do not play a role in parental involvement at the high school level, according to students.

## 2.1 Studies Related to Problem

By reviewing current research about parental involvement and its effects on student achievement, the focus of the current study was determined. It is widely understood that parental involvement is mandated by NCLB (U.S. Department of Education, 2004b). The concentration of existing research was on elementary students and data obtained from test scores, parents' perceptions of how their children interpret parental involvement, and the viewpoints of teachers and administrators surrounding parental involvement and its effects on student success in school. Three studies were found that were similar in nature to the current study and were used as guides for conducting the interviews with the high school student participants in this study to obtain, first-hand, how the students described parental involvement and its effects on their high school success.

NCLB mandates parental involvement in the school, at all levels of education (U.S. Department of Education, 2004a). Designing parental involvement plans at the high school level is difficult for administrators when they do not understand all of the reasons parents are hesitant to become involved in their children's schooling (LloydSmith, 2008, Stanik, 2007). Two of the reasons given by parents as to why they are not involved in their children's schools include lack of financial resources or transportation to the school. Would providing transportation when parents are not at work encourage more parents to become involved in their children's schooling? What other options exist for parents to be involved in their children's education besides being on the school campus? Research has focused on parents' perceptions of parental involvement and factors that affect this involvement in both positive and negative ways, but little research exists that discussed high school students' perceptions of parental involvement (Catsambis, 2002; Lloyd-Smith, 2008; Tan & Goldberg, 2008).

Two research studies have shown that at the high school level, parent involvement is just as important to the student as it was during the elementary

and middle school levels (Lloyd-Smith, 2008; Tan & Goldberg, 2008). Some parents have stated they do not feel the need to be as involved in their children's schooling at the high school level, as children should be at an age where they can be responsible for their own academic success (Lloyd-Smith, 2008; Whitfield, 2006). Students at this age are also striving to obtain independence, giving parents the impression they should not be as involved in their schooling as much as they were in earlier years (Lloyd-Smith, 2008; Tan & Goldberg, 2008). The question that guided this study was how high school students perceive parental involvement in the school. Is it important to high school students that their parents be involved in their schooling? Do high school students perceive parental involvement in the school to be beneficial or detrimental to their school success? In what ways do high school students want their parents to be involved in their school and activities related to school?

### **2.1.1 Deficiencies in Previous Studies**

Two studies conducted in the past 5 years focused directly on students' perspectives of parental involvement (Faber, 2008; Whitfield, 2006). Both studies involved five students and the use of interviews and surveys that contained questions about how the students' parents were involved in their school activities. Faber (2008) studied parental involvement in extracurricular activities such as attendance at sporting events in which the child was participating but not parental involvement at home or at meetings within the school facility. This represents only a small number of students who have been studied, and parental involvement has been studied in only limited ways, as opposed to the six types of parental involvement outlined by Epstein (2005). More studies, following their formats, are necessary to develop a greater understanding of students' perceptions of the importance of parental involvement and its relationship to their success in school.

Other researchers, such as Tan and Goldberg (2008), mentioned parents' feelings toward involvement in their children's schools at the high school level, but were done with elementary school children and their parents. Tan and Goldberg looked at many facets of parental involvement but recorded data based on parents' perceptions of how their children thought about parental involvement. The children's perceptions were not recorded in the first person. It will be more meaningful to record students' perceptions in their own words and experiences rather than what their parents perceive to be their perceptions.

Curry (2007) studied students' perspectives of parental involvement as related to test results in Georgia. The current researcher hoped to expand on the students' perceptions to include how this affected their success in general in school, not just on state tests. The current study was also conducted in a different state, which when compared to Curry, explains whether the results can be transferable to other regions of the nation.

Many of the studies that dealt with parental involvement focused on a specific ethnic background and socioeconomic status. Carranza, You, Chhuon, and Hudley (2009) studied student perceptions of parental involvement with Mexican American students. Results from the current study needed to be compared to the findings of Carranza et al. to determine whether the perceptions of Mexican American adolescents paralleled the perceptions of other students from different ethnic groups about parental involvement. A comparison of the students' experiences from various ethnic backgrounds enhances the body of knowledge related to parental involvement at the high school level. Cultural influences did not appear to affect the students' perceptions of parental involvement in school-related activities in the current study. Whitfield (2006) commented on the lack of ethnic diversity in her study. This factor was a consideration when selecting participants in the current study. Greater ethnic

diversity will determine how readily the results may be generalized to other ethnic populations in the United States.

Perry, Liu, and Pabian (2010) conducted a study of 285 high school students ranging from seventh grade through twelfth grade with a variety of ethnic backgrounds from one public high school and one private parochial school in an urban area of the Midwest United States. Data in this study were collected through having the students complete a series of questionnaires. One of the four questions answered by this study was how parental involvement affected the students' career preparation. The study found that parental involvement played a role in keeping students engaged in their schooling, but the effect of parental involvement was not as influential as the teacher's involvement in the students' career preparation. The study also noted that middle school age students were more motivated to succeed in school than their high school counterparts. The current study raised the question, what are high school students' perceptions of parental involvement and how does this affect their success in school?

Oyserman et al. (2007) focused on African American and Latino students from low-income backgrounds. This was a psychology-based study focusing on how parental influence encouraged the students to self-moderate the behaviors that helped or prevented them from becoming successful in school, such as early pregnancies, drugs, and gang involvement. The question answered in the study was whether intervention programs that helped the students self-moderate could compensate for a lack of parental involvement in the school. The results were positive for the use of intervention programs. The study also examined the effect of parental involvement and found a positive correlation between parental involvement and student success in school but did not answer the question why this occurs. Again, the need to explore students' perceptions of parental involvement and how it affects their success in school becomes apparent.

Hayes (2011) conducted a similar study using African American students from various socioeconomic backgrounds. He believed it was important to look at various socioeconomic backgrounds as previous studies only focused on low socioeconomic status and the findings were generalized to all students of African American heritage, specifically noting Oyserman et al. (2007). The findings of this study are important because they noted that parental involvement is not significantly impacted by socioeconomic background as reported by other studies (Catsambis, 2002; Rogers, 2006). The parents reported teacher support and school receptiveness as having a greater impact on parental involvement than socioeconomic background. Hayes also stated that the results from his study were not general to other populations due to the convenience population used for the study and called for further research to be conducted with students and teachers to obtain their perceptions of parental involvement to compare with the perceptions of parents.

The deficiencies noted in previous studies included the small populations used for the studies, which prevented the results from being generalized to the larger population of high school students or to other geographic areas of the nation. Only two studies focused specifically on using students' voices and this was through using surveys and questionnaires. The current study involved interviewing students and looking for themes to emerge related to parental involvement and its effect on their success in school. Quantitative studies using data will not provide the meaning of school success and parental involvement as perceived by the students. School success may not be defined in the same way by high school students as academic success, so it is important to understand their interpretations of these concepts. Questionnaires and surveys contain too much researcher bias in forming the questions. By using questionnaires and surveys, researchers can determine ways in which students want their parents to be involved in their schooling but not why this is important to the students. This

study questioned what types of parental involvement were important to the students interviewed.

### **2.1.2 Contributions to Current Research**

The shortcomings in the current literature included their primary focus on elementary and middle school students (Catsambis, 2002; Tan & Goldberg, 2008). Specific ethnic backgrounds have also been used rather than sampling all ethnic backgrounds (Carranza et al., 2009; Hayes, 2011; Oyserman et al., 2007). Previous studies also used the voices of the parents, teachers, and administrators (Lloyd-Smith, 2008; Tan & Goldberg, 2008). The question becomes, how do students, specifically at the high school level, perceive parental involvement and will the findings of these previous studies parallel the findings of the current study or will there be significant differences? The current study adds to the body of knowledge began by Faber (2008) and Whitfield (2006) who conducted studies using the voice of high school students. The researcher compared the results of the current study with those of Faber and Whitfield to describe similarities and differences. This study is important to help the school system form a parental involvement plan that fits the needs of the students who will benefit from the plan.

### **2.1.3 Strategies Used to Obtain Literature**

EBSCO, ERIC, Google Advanced Search, and ProQuest databases were used to obtain articles related to the research topic. Keywords used to search included: NCLB and economic status, No Child Left Behind and economic status, NCLB and parental involvement, No Child Left Behind and parental involvement, No Child Left Behind and parent participation, student perspective of parental involvement at the high school level, high school parental involvement and the student perspective, high school student perspective + parental involvement, and high school students' perception of parental involvement.

## **2.2 No Child Left Behind and Socioeconomics**

According to Epstein (2005, 2007), Loveless et al. (2008), Rogers (2006), and Stanik (2007), NCLB has impacted schools across the nation by stating that every school must have a plan in place to promote parental involvement. The guidelines by which school systems should achieve parental involvement are very general and non-specific (Crosnoe, 2009; Epstein, 2005; Morris, 2009).

Superintendents and principals have often questioned what type of parental involvement would meet the mandates of NCLB (Lloyd-Smith, 2008; Morris, 2009). This study aimed to determine whether students at the secondary level want their parents to be involved in their education and in what ways, as well as how parental involvement affects their success in school.

From a very young age, children begin to identify themselves according to economic status, an identity that continues into adulthood (Bianchi & Lancianese, 2005). Children who come from a higher socioeconomic background often believe they are smarter than other children, so they make greater efforts in their schoolwork (Bianchi & Lancianese, 2005). Children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds often develop the concept that they cannot be successful in school and therefore do not strive for academic success (Rogers, 2006). The internalized self-identity reflects in a student's work habits and attitudes toward school (Bianchi & Lancianese, 2005). Students who believe they have high socioeconomic status perform better than students who believe they have low socioeconomic status (Bianchi & Lancianese, 2005). The study by Bianchi and Lancianese (2005) also showed that Hispanic and African American students have a lower level of difference between high socioeconomic status and low socioeconomic status, indicating that race is a factor in academic achievement. Rogers (2006) indicated that parents of African American descent are accustomed to their children scoring low on achievement tests, so this has become the norm, and their expectations for their children are



lower than those of parents of other ethnic backgrounds. Bianchi and Lancianese, as well as Rogers, stated that NCLB does not incorporate the influences of societal norms on students' achievement and this needs to be the focus of future research.

### **2.2.1 High Economic Status Community**

Berliner (2006) conducted a study that examined student scores based on five levels of income and found the wealthier students had the highest scores. Tan and Goldberg (2008) studied 91 families and found the higher income students to have a higher enjoyment of school leading to higher academic achievement. The inception of NCLB forced schools to focus on low achieving students, so the high achievers make less gains in academic achievement due to a lack of attention from teachers and a lack of resources directed to meet their needs (Loveless et al., 2008). On the other hand, schools in high-income communities have greater access to resources, making the task of reaching high standards easier for the school population (Borkowski & Sneed, 2006).

### **2.2.2 Middle-Class Status Community**

Wells and Crain (1999) in their book, *Stepping Over the Color Line: African-American Students in White Suburban Schools*, found that minority students who moved to middle-class neighborhoods had a higher success rate than their counterparts who were living in lower class neighborhoods. Berliner (2006) hypothesized that middle-class students were monitored closely by parents, leading to higher school achievement. This indicates that student achievement can be influenced as much by the community in which the student lives as by the mandates of NCLB (Berliner, 2006). Borkowski and Sneed (2006) referred to the lack of achievement being less genetic and more about environmental influences on the child, which is also an indication that parents and community play an important role in academic success.

### **2.2.3 Low Economic Status Community**

According to Berliner (2006) and Rogers (2006), poverty has a powerful effect on student success in school. Even though schools and educators attempt to influence children, community influences are often greater (Berliner, 2006). The United States ranks as one of the richest countries in the world, yet it has one of the highest childhood poverty rates (Berliner, 2006).

Berliner (2006) found, in his research of student assessment scores disaggregated by income levels, that students from the poorest families had the lowest assessment scores. Comparing achievement rates between high-income and low-income families, Rebell and Wolf (2008) found similar results. They concluded that NCLB focused on closing the achievement gap, yet there were no provisions made regarding funding and resources to complete the task (Rebell & Wolf, 2008; Stanik, 2007). The study also indicated that lower income students have less accessibility to community resources to promote early learning such as daycares, health facilities, proper nutrition, family support, and cultural experiences (Rebell & Wolf, 2008). Borkowski and Sneed (2006) highlighted that even if resources are available to students of lower income, less than half of all students who are eligible for the services take advantage of the opportunities. Some of this is due to the parents' lack of knowledge of the resources, and some to the inability of parents to provide transportation or encouragement for their children to attend support programs (Borkowski & Sneed, 2006).

## **2.3 Principals' Attitudes toward Parental Involvement**

A study conducted by Lloyd-Smith (2008) centered on principals' attitudes about parental involvement in South Dakota. According to the results, principals understood the necessity of parental involvement at the secondary level but had difficulty determining beneficial ways to include parents

(Lloyd-Smith, 2008). The principals stated that the responsibility for parental involvement should fall on the teachers because there needs to be communication between the teachers and parents (Lloyd-Smith, 2008). Parents who perceive that their children do not want them involved will not become involved and principals understand this is an issue with parental involvement (Lloyd-Smith, 2008). This study also left out the perceptions of high school students regarding the need for parental involvement or the effect parental involvement has on their success in school.

## 2.4 Parental Involvement Related to Student Success

Yan and Lin (2005) described parental involvement as *social capital*, and explained that people benefit from interactions with other people and this interaction is especially important for adolescents as they are in a stage of developing independence and self-awareness and need adult guidance to be successful. Adolescence involves group membership and building relationships and resources to perform important developmental tasks (Yan & Lin, 2005). Yan and Lin classified parental involvement into three categories: “family obligation, parent information network, and family norm” (p. 16). *Family obligation* refers to the family’s participation in school functions and activities (Yan & Lin, 2005). *Parent information network* involves communication between parents and schools, among parents, and between parents and students (Yan & Lin, 2005). *Family norm* refers to the family dynamics from which each student learns values and customs (Yan & Lin, 2005).

NCLB requires schools to communicate with parents and encourages parental involvement, but it does not state a specific plan for schools to accomplish this requirement (Crosnoe, 2009; Epstein, 2005; Lloyd-Smith, 2008; Morris, 2009; Stanik, 2007). Previously mentioned studies have shown that parental involvement is influenced by ethnic and economic background and the needs of

the parents (Berliner, 2006; Borkowski & Sneed, 2006; Epstein, 2005; Oyserman et al., 2007; Rebell & Wolf, 2008; Rogers, 2006). The findings of a study conducted by Epstein (2005) concluded that parents with higher educational backgrounds were more likely to be involved and stay involved with their children's schools. Programs specifically developed to train parents in the skills needed to work with their children and maintain communication with their children's schools showed gains in student achievement scores across economic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds (Epstein, 2005, 2007; Rogers, 2006; Walker et al., 2010).

Perry et al. (2010) and Walker et al. (2010) determined that children of parents who communicate that education is important are academically more successful than their peers. Even if parents are not equipped to help with homework, they can provide emotional support to their children and promote a positive attitude toward school-related efforts (Walker et al., 2010).

Catsambis (2002) concurred with Walker et al. (2010) that parental influences impact students' schooling regardless of ethnic or economic background. Catsambis stated that parental supervision lessens at the high school level, but communication regarding school matters and volunteering in the school setting increases. She noted discrepancies among research regarding parent and teacher communications, sometimes having positive effects and other times having negative effects, depending on the reason for the communication (Catsambis, 2002). Negative effects occur when the communication focused on poor academic achievement or behavior (Catsambis, 2002; Yan & Lin, 2005). Her final findings indicated that high school students have greater academic success when parents serve as a guide to help them make decisions about careers and postsecondary education and ask about classes and teachers, rather than supervising homework and activities at home (Catsambis, 2002).

Patall et al. (2008) reported that parental involvement with homework produced higher achievement for students in some cases. The studies that Patall et al. examined showed an increase in student achievement at the elementary and high school level but not at the middle school level. There were also discrepancies in the studies based on characteristics of the students and community influences (Patall et al., 2008). Parent involvement in homework may promote student self-discipline and higher student achievement (Patall et al., 2008). Setting rules as to when and where homework was to be completed led to positive results for student achievement in each of the studies (Patall et al., 2008).

Bembenutty (2011) also stated that homework increases student achievement and parent involvement, especially at the high school level. Homework develops time management skills, delayed gratification, and self-regulatory skills (Bembenutty, 2011). Edwards (2010) determined that parental involvement, regardless of whether at home or at school, increased student achievement. It is important during the high school years when students are attempting to develop their independence for parents to continue their involvement with homework and school activities to promote higher academic achievement for their children (Edwards, 2010).

Barwegen, Falciani, Putnam, Reamer, and Stair (2004) found several sources that verified home schooled students, especially at the high school level, scored significantly higher on standardized tests than their public schooled counterparts. One of the reasons given for the students' success was parental involvement in their schooling (Barwegen et al., 2004). They further stated that there was no difference between home schooled students and public high school students whose parents were perceived as highly involved in the school by the student (Barwegen et al., 2004). Edwards (2010) pointed out that even though students perceived their parents to be actively involved in their education, there was no evidence that parental involvement increased test scores.

Tan and Goldberg (2008) determined that having at least one parent who was highly involved in the child's schooling was more beneficial to student achievement than having two parents with low involvement in the child's schooling. Mothers who worked generally were not as involved in their children's schooling and as children became older the involvement of mothers tended to decrease (Tan & Goldberg, 2008). Fathers' involvement was beneficial to the students' success when it was in the form of communication regarding the children's experiences during the school day, but tended to have negative effects on academic success when fathers were directly involved in the school setting (Tan & Goldberg, 2008). It is important to note that the study conducted by Tan and Goldberg focused only on elementary age children. It would be beneficial to conduct the same study at the high school level to determine whether differences or similarities exist between the two age levels.

Lee, Kushner, and Cho (2007) pointed out that the effects on the child may vary in single parent homes depending on whether the single parent is a mother or father and suggested that further research focus on each gender of single parent rather than grouping them as "single parent" homes. Their research noted that female students with actively involved fathers had higher academic achievement than other categories of single parent homes—males with single mothers, males with single fathers, or females with single mothers (Lee et al., 2007). The current study did not identify differences in the students' perceptions based on mother or father single parent homes or two parent family homes.

### **2.4.1 Ethnic Background of Community**

Lack of proper housing, health care, and secure employment in low-income communities affects student achievement and inhibits parental involvement in the schools (Rogers, 2006). Rogers (2006) and Oyserman et al. (2007) asserted that those living in low-income communities consist mostly of Latino and African American families. It is not that the parents do not want to be involved

in their children's education, it is that they do not know how to become involved and must focus on providing for their children financially (Rogers, 2006). Yan and Lin (2005) stated that for African American students, parental involvement was not an influential factor in academic achievement.

Mexican American high school students achieve higher academically when they perceive high expectations from their parents regarding schoolwork, homework, and grades (Carranza et al., 2009; Yan & Lin, 2005). This fact was more evident with female students than males (Carranza et al., 2009). Carranza et al. (2009) stated that immigrant parents might not feel as equipped to help their children with homework or become directly involved in school activities. Yan and Lin (2005) agreed with the theorization stated by Carranza et al. and suggested that programs needed to be designed to help these parents become more involved.

Student expectations vary depending on ethnic background only because a higher percentage of minority parents are also of low socioeconomic status (Lowman & Elliott, 2010; Oyserman et al., 2007). Neither of these factors, ethnic background or economic status, are as influential to student success as parents' expectations of the student to achieve (Lowman & Elliott, 2010; Yan & Lin, 2005). Understanding this factor will help the school system develop a parental involvement plan that focuses on teaching parents skills to encourage and help their children at home as well as in the school facility.

## **2.4.2 Economic Status of Community**

When parents do not have a high economic status, it is more difficult for them to be involved with their children's homework because they need to work (Patall et al., 2008). Lowman and Elliott (2010) stated that parents of lower socioeconomic status tend to have lower expectations of their children's educational achievement, leading to lower academic expectations by the student.

Leadership from the community and school need to work with the parents to find ways for them to become involved in their children's education (Epstein, 2005). Epstein (2005) and Rogers (2006) worked with parents and communities to develop plans to encourage parents to become actively involved in their children's school and education. Both studies indicated an increase in student achievement (Epstein, 2005; Rogers, 2006).

### **2.4.3 Students' Perceptions**

Parental involvement takes many forms in the academic life of students (Catsambis, 2002). Some students consider their parents to be involved in their schooling if a parent asks about classes or knows the teachers' names (Whitfield, 2006). Others consider their parents helping with or asking about homework to be parental involvement (Patall et al., 2008). Most high school students want their parents at their extracurricular activities (Faber, 2008). For some students, having parents express their expectations of academic success is considered parental involvement (Constantino, 2002). Constantino (2002) also discovered that parental involvement through communication could have positive and negative effects on a student's academic achievement or enjoyment of school depending on how the parent approached the subject. If parents questioned and accepted the answers given by the student regarding his or her school activities or gave praise for accomplishments, the motivation of the student was higher (Constantino, 2002). If the parent was judgmental in communication about school with the student, this lowered the student's motivation (Constantino, 2002).

Faber (2008) studied high school students' perceptions of parental involvement in extracurricular activities. Faber defined extracurricular activities as events that the parents attended and supported. Students responded that even if their parents were not involved, they perceived a benefit of parental involvement as higher academic achievement as well as a closer bond with their parents (Faber, 2008). Students stated that if their parents were encouraging,



they would be more involved with extracurricular activities and benefit from the social and responsibility promoting aspects of being involved in activities and maintaining their schoolwork (Faber, 2008). Lowman and Elliott (2010) found in their study that students who were involved in extracurricular activities had greater success in academic pursuits, concurring with the findings of Faber.

Whitfield (2006) interviewed five high school students of varying backgrounds and found that all of the students wanted their parents to be involved in their schooling; however, each noted different ways and to different degrees. Other influences on the students' education were revealed, such as friends, use of cell phones, after-school jobs, and the community (Whitfield, 2006). According to Whitfield, students wanted their parents to know the courses they were enrolled in and the teacher's name who taught each course. The students also wanted their parents to ask them about their schoolwork as well as be involved to some degree in voluntary activities within the school (Barwegen et al., 2004; Whitfield, 2006). Barwegen et al. (2004) stated that students' achievement varied depending on how parents communicated their school involvement to the students. Parents may call the school during the day but not discuss the phone call with the student, leaving the student to perceive that the parent is involved in his or her schooling to a lesser degree than is actually true (Barwegen et al., 2004).

Curry (2007) conducted a study correlating students' perceptions of parental involvement with success on the Georgia testing system. What Curry discovered did not coincide with previous research. When comparing student responses with success on course exit tests, there was no correlation between the students' perceptions of parental involvement and their success on the tests (Curry, 2007; Edwards, 2010). Curry noted that those students who perceived their parents as being involved in their education in some way did not score as well as students who said their parents were not involved in their schooling.

Edwards (2010) found that students who did not perceive their parents as involved in their schooling did not have lower test scores than students who perceived positive parent involvement. The current study did not measure student achievement, but rather sought an answer to the question, "What is your perception of parental involvement and how does it affect your school success?"

## **2.5 Summary**

NCLB has mandated that all schools implement a plan for parental involvement, but has not specified the guidelines for the plan (Epstein, 2005, 2007; Loveless et al., 2008; Rogers, 2006; Stanik, 2007). Parental involvement is often influenced by socioeconomic factors that are beyond the control of the school (Berliner, 2006; Rebell & Wolf, 2008; Rogers, 2006; Stanik, 2007). Research has been done regarding parents' perceptions of parental involvement as well as administration's perceptions of parental involvement (Lloyd-Smith, 2008; Morris, 2009; Rogers, 2006).

Little research exists surrounding high school students' perceptions of parental involvement (Faber, 2008; Whitfield, 2006). The research that has been done has found that high school students want their parents to be involved, but they realize there are factors that could limit the amount of involvement parents are able to accomplish (Whitfield, 2006). Parents who take the time to communicate with the school should communicate this to their children so that the children know of their involvement, because this may affect students' achievement (Barwegen et al., 2004). Tan and Goldberg (2008) raised the question of which parent students perceive as being more involved in their education (i.e., mother, father, or both), and whether the involvement is beneficial. Crosnoe (2009) also asked the question of whether all parental involvement was positive.

Lowman and Elliott (2010) found that student expectations varied with ethnic background only because a higher percentage of minority parents were also low socioeconomic status. They concluded that neither of these factors was as influential to student success as was parents' expectations of their children's achievement (Lowman & Elliott, 2010; Yan & Lin, 2005). Lee et al. (2007) noted differences between females with fathers in single parent homes as compared to other categories of single parents, stating that females with single fathers had higher academic achievement. Perry et al. (2010) reported in their study examining influences on career preparation that the majority of the students stated they were more influenced by their mothers than their fathers and had better communication with their mothers about career options, which encouraged their school engagement. The current study asked how parents or guardians communicated their educational expectations to their children and whether this affected the way the children performed academically in school. The study also explored any differences between student perceptions based on family structure.

Yan and Lin (2005) concluded that programs focusing on parental involvement should look at training parents to communicate with their children and express high academic expectations. They found these two factors to be more influential on the academic achievement of twelfth grade students than actual involvement within the school environment (Yan & Lin, 2005). They suggested further research to study the parental network and the benefits it provides to students (Yan & Lin, 2005).



# **Chapter 3**

## **Methodology**



This study explored how high school students described parental involvement and its effect on their academic success. This topic was chosen because this is an issue at the high school level of education (Lloyd-Smith, 2008). High school administrators are striving to increase parental involvement in the school as well as outside of the school to meet students' education needs (Lloyd-Smith, 2008). Research on this topic has seldom focused on the perceptions of high school students (Faber, 2008; Whitfield, 2006).

### **3.1 Research Design**

The study used a basic qualitative research design as described by Merriam (2009). Basic qualitative research examines participants' experiences and interpretations of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). Basic qualitative methodology was best suited for this study as it did not fit under the heading of phenomenology, which looks at the experience and how the person uses this experience to change his or her behavior (Merriam, 2009). High school students are not at an age to be interested in how experiencing parental involvement changes their behavior. The researcher did not become part of the culture of the students' experience, so the study was not appropriate for ethnography (Merriam, 2009). The researcher did not intend to produce a theory, such as that produced in grounded theory, nor were the students' experiences intended to be told in a story format with a beginning, middle, and end (Merriam, 2009). These students discussed experiences that would continue throughout the remainder of their schooling (Merriam, 2009). Finally, the study was not intended to transform and empower the students, as is the case when critical research is used (Merriam, 2009). It was for these reasons that basic qualitative methodology was determined to be the best for this particular study as the students gave their definitions of parental involvement and school success and told the researcher how they described parental involvement and how it affected their school success.

Each student participant described experiences that led to the development of themes (Patton, 2002). Basic qualitative research was used to look at each student's themes individually and collectively to finalize the results of the study (Patton, 2002). Qualitative data were collected by having the students complete a demographic survey and interviews. The students were selected based on characteristics such as academic success, extracurricular involvement, and socioeconomic factors to look for similarities and differences in their experiences.

Using this methodology involved gathering and analyzing the answers to initial interviews, determining what themes developed, and designing additional interview questions if necessary based on the identified themes (Patton, 2002; Appendix B). Each additional interview with the students built on the previous interview as the researcher attempted to understand their perceptions of parental involvement and the importance it had on student success in school from the experiences of the students (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). All data were analyzed using a software program designed for the specific purpose of defining themes in qualitative data.

Much of the research pertaining to parental involvement has been based on quantitative research (Epstein, 2005, 2007; Rogers, 2006; Walker et al., 2010). When a similar methodology, such as quantitative, is used consistently over time, it becomes routine and mundane (Patton, 2002). Using qualitative methodology with this study added an additional dimension to the current body of knowledge that was not as common, but just as relevant. Qualitative methodology allowed themes to emerge as the participants' varying perceptions and these themes guided the study to its conclusions.

Whitfield (2006) used qualitative methodology and the current study used a similar model. The results and conclusions of this study were compared with those of Whitfield to note any similarities and differences that occurred. Whitfield surmised that additional research using a similar methodology, but



using a population with greater diversity, would add to current research regarding high school students' perceptions of parental involvement and its effects on their high school success.

### **3.1.1 Research Questions**

This researcher explored the question: What are high school students' perceptions of the importance of parental involvement on high school success? The following questions were answered during the study.

1. How do high school students describe parental involvement?
2. How do high school students define success in school?
3. How do high school students describe the effects of parental involvement on their high school success?

### **3.1.2 Population and Sampling Procedure**

The population used for the study included junior and senior high school students as they had more experience in the high school setting and with parent involvement within that setting. The students were from one high school located in southeastern North Carolina. The high school serves a rural community and has a population of 1,300 students (Gray's Creek High School [GCHS], 2010).

Letters of informed consent (Appendix A) were sent home with all junior and senior students attending the school. Once the letter of informed consent was returned from parents granting permission for the student to participate in the study, the students completed the survey (Appendix B). The demographics collected from the surveys determined the five students chosen for the interview process (Appendix C). This was a nonrandom selection of participants (Steinberg, 2008). The students were selected to look for similarities and differences in their experiences based on their demographics.

### **3.1.3 Access Plan**

The researcher worked at the school used for the study. Permission for the study was requested from the Principal of the school and the Research Approval Committee at the district office. Once permission was obtained to proceed with the study, invitation letters to participate in the surveys and interviews were sent to parents of the students chosen using the address information provided by the school (Appendix A). Parents returned the invitation to the school with their contact information included if they wished to be contacted to ask questions of the researcher before final consent was given.

Participants were chosen based on demographic characteristics given in the survey (Appendix B).

### **3.1.4 Sources of Data**

The study involved the use of multiple data collection methods to strengthen the results (Patton, 2002; Soy, 1997). Creswell (2009) and Patton (2002) recommended using a variety of methods to collect data from participants to explore an activity in depth. In this study the activity was parental involvement and how students perceived its impact on their academic success. Letters of informed consent were given to 525 students; 147 students returned the letters from their parents giving them permission to participate. From the 147 returned letters, 24 students were randomly selected to complete the survey (Appendix B). This was the first phase of the research. Four of the surveys were used for reliability purposes and the additional 20 were used to collect themes for the study. From the surveys, seven students were chosen for the interview phase of the study. Two of these interviews were also used for reliability purposes and the additional five were used to determine themes for the study. The researcher was seeking the students' perceptions of parental involvement and its effect on their high school success. Each student was asked to describe his or her experiences, which would become a part of the whole, to be analyzed

for themes (Soy, 1997). Data obtained from all surveys and interviews were analyzed using the software program NVivo9 for objectivity and to reduce researcher bias during the analysis process (Creswell, 2009).

Qualitative data were collected through surveys that contained multiple-choice and short answer questions that were administered to students individually in a private setting. The surveys gathered the students' demographic information and specific characteristics related to the study (Stringer, 2007). Personal interviews with students obtained their perceptions of parental involvement in and out of the school setting and its effects on their high school success (Patton, 2002). The interviews were used to analyze the students' feelings and thoughts about parental involvement, rather than as a measurement of how often parents were involved in the school setting (Patton, 2002). Additional interviews were conducted with the students to clarify or confirm the results reported by the researcher.

Information from the student surveys was collected and students were interviewed for approximately 15 to 20 minutes using questions that addressed themes previously identified in the surveys (Patton, 2002). Patton (2002) described this as layering the information to obtain a more in-depth understanding of the cultural concepts as defined by the participants.

The survey used with the students was a combination of two surveys found on SurveyShare.com: "High School Students - Study/Grade" survey and "Home Environment - Child Survey." There was a minimal fee for using material published by the site, but it did allow edits to be made to the surveys and provided the capability of analyzing the data obtained. The questions were both categorical scales and open-ended (Creswell, 2009). As validity and reliability scores were not provided by the author, the instrument needed to be piloted with a small population of students to determine both its validity and reliability (Creswell, 2009).

The preliminary interview questions for the students were designed by the researcher (Appendix C). The interview format was an informal conversation allowing the conversation to go in the direction of emergent ideas as the interview progressed (Patton, 2002). Each interview differed, but themes developed during the process (Patton, 2002).

**Pilot study.** A combination of two surveys was used for the first phase of the research. Because the surveys had not been used previously in a combined state, a pilot group was necessary to test the validity of the instrument (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002). This was accomplished by having four students who were not chosen for the actual study, but who had similar characteristics to the study participants, complete the survey and measuring the results from these four participants with those of the population chosen for the study.

**Validity.** Validity of the survey instrument was determined by comparing results from the pilot group with those of the study group and completing a correlation between the two (Creswell, 2009). It was also necessary to examine the survey instrument to determine whether the information collected was meaningful to the study; that is, would it help determine themes that would serve as the basis for the interview questions (Creswell, 2009).

Using interviews in conjunction with the surveys improved the validity of the interview questions, as they were initially based on the themes that were deciphered from the surveys (Patton, 2002). Validity and reliability issues were lessened by using a software program specifically developed to locate themes in interview data (Stringer, 2007). This method of analysis reduced research bias, making the method more valid (Stringer, 2007).

Additional validity of the study data occurred when they were compared to the findings of Faber (2008), Whitfield (2006), and Hayes (2011) to determine similarities and differences and whether these similarities and differences could be explained through the study (Merriam, 2009). The researcher needed to

determine whether the similarities occurred because of similarities in the population characteristics and the differences because of the differences in the population (Merriam, 2009).

**Reliability.** No reliability scores for the surveys were provided by the company from which they were obtained. The only reliability measures came from first administering the survey to the pilot group and then to the study group to determine whether students were answering the questions in a similar manner (Creswell, 2009).

Reliability with the interview portion of the study was established by comparing answers from two of the participants to answers from the additional five participants for consistency. Merriam (2009) stated that each participant views his or her experience from a different perspective. Reliability was also established by mapping out the study in such a way that it would be able to be repeated by another researcher in the future (Merriam, 2009). When conducting qualitative research, the goal is for the data to be meaningful and thus reliable (Merriam, 2009).

### **3.2 Assumptions and Delimitations**

Assumptions are the values the researcher places on the study before it begins (Bryant, 2004). The assumptions in this study included being able to identify the students' definitions of parental involvement. It was assumed that the students would be able to define academic success. It was also assumed that themes would develop to aid in understanding factors the students' felt encouraged or discouraged their parents' involvement in the school and had a positive or negative effect on their success in school.

Delimitations include generalization factors of the study (Bryant, 2004). This study took place in one high school located in North Carolina. The results of this study are only transferable to other high schools in the same or similar

locality as the facility in which it was conducted. Other factors influencing the transferability of the results include ethnic, economic, and educational levels of the parents of the students who participated in this study, as these may have influenced the answers given by the students during the process. The researcher did not examine test scores as the time frame did not allow for a comparison of test scores from one year to the next to look at any changes that occurred as a result of participation in the study. The researcher did not conduct interviews with parents as the research concerned the students' answers and perceptions.

### **3.3 Data Collection Procedures**

Permission for the study was obtained from the Research Committee, Curriculum and Instruction Department of the local school system (Cumberland County Schools, 2003). The Research Committee required a written proposal of the study containing information pertaining to the research methods to be used, type of data to be collected, protection of participants, and copies of consent letters to be sent to the participants (Cumberland County Schools, 2003). The request form requested a copy of the research proposal or prospectus that had been submitted to the Institution Review Board (IRB; Cumberland County Schools, 2003). After permission for the study was granted by the county Research Committee, permission was asked of the building Principal, who received a copy of the proposal submitted to the county for his signature of approval.

Permission forms for student participation were sent home with the students for parents to sign and return by a given deadline date (Appendix A). All permission forms and data will be kept in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office for the minimum of 5 years as specified by the institution.

Qualitative data were collected through surveys administered to students during the homeroom portion of the school day when instruction was not taking

place. The surveys gathered the students' demographic information and specific characteristics related to the study (Stringer, 2007). Personal interviews were then conducted with students to obtain their perceptions of parental involvement in and out of the school setting and its effects on their high school success (Patton, 2002). The interviews were used to analyze the students' feelings and thoughts about parental involvement rather than as a measurement of how often parents were involved in the school setting (Patton, 2002).

### **3.4 Data Analysis Procedures**

Data analysis of the surveys and interview transcripts was performed using NVivo9, a data analysis software package specifically designed for this purpose. Themes were coded and then used to develop further interview questions. Once all data were coded, the themes were determined and are reported in the results and conclusion sections. The process of using multiple sources of data collection is referred to as *triangulation* (Merriam, 2009). The multiple sources of data collection included the use of surveys, interviewing students with different perspectives, and conducting multiple interviews with each student. Using triangulation increased the credibility of the study (Merriam, 2009).

### **3.5 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations involved using students who may have been under the age of 18. Letters of consent were submitted to the school system Superintendent's office and Institutional Review Board for approval. Students will not be identified by name in the research study and only those who returned letters of consent with a parent's signature on file were allowed to participate. All survey and interview material with identifying information will be kept in a locked cabinet.

### **3.6 Summary**

The study was conducted using qualitative method, specifically a basic qualitative approach (Merriam, 2009). The population consisted of high school junior and senior students whose parents returned signed consent forms allowing them to participate. A survey was administered to 24 students and seven students were chosen from those 24 to participate in the interview portion of the study.

A pilot study was conducted as the survey was a combination of two existing surveys and no validity or reliability scores currently existed for either survey. Reliability is difficult to defend as this was a qualitative study and no two participants answered survey or interview questions in the same way (Merriam, 2009). Data were analyzed using a computer software package to reduce researcher bias.



# **Chapter 4**

## **Analysis And Results**



Parent involvement is an ongoing concern at all levels of education, with high school being no exception (Lloyd-Smith, 2008). Lowman and Elliott (2010) reported that high school is a time when students are striving to become more independent. One has to ask whether the lack of parental involvement in high school is due to circumstances of the parents or whether parents sense that their children may not want them to be as actively involved in their schooling at this stage.

## **4.1 Restatement of the Purpose**

The overall purpose of the study was to investigate how students feel about parental involvement. Specifically, the study had students define parental involvement and school success and describe how parental involvement affected their high school success. Several studies have researched the positive and negative effects of parental involvement on student success, but few have examined students' interpretations of parental involvement (Epstein, 2007; Rebell & Wolf, 2008; Rogers, 2006). Faber (2008) examined high school students' perspectives of parental involvement as related to parents' and students' participation in extracurricular activities. This study was similar to Faber's except that it examined parental involvement as it related to in-school and out-of school activities and factors, and whether the students encouraged or discouraged their parents' involvement in their education. This was a qualitative study using basic qualitative methodology to examine students' descriptions and interpretations of the term "parental involvement" (Merriam, 2009).

Existing studies focused on elementary and middle school students (Bembenutty, 2011). In a literature search through numerous databases and over 1,600 articles, fewer than five studies emerged that focused directly on high school students' perceptions of parental involvement (Faber, 2008; Hayes, 2011; Trusty & Lampe, 1997; Whitfield, 2006). This is an area of little research, but a

necessary consideration when administrators and teachers are attempting to increase the involvement of parents at the high school level of education.

## **4.2 Organization of Data Analysis**

Information from the survey (Appendix B) is presented first followed by the information received from the interviews (Appendix C). The themes of the interviews were identified according to the guiding questions of the research: How do high school students describe parental involvement? How do high school students define success in school? How do high school students describe the effects of parental involvement on their high school success?

### *Survey*

The survey instrument was a combination of two surveys obtained from SurveyShare.com: “High School Students - Study/Grade” and “Home Environment - Child Survey.” The survey consisted of 20 questions and can be found in Appendix B. The first section of the survey asked questions about grade point average, amount of time spent on homework, and involvement in work and extracurricular activities. The second section of the survey asked student about rules enforced by their parents with regard to time spent with friends, curfews, and time parents spent talking with the students about homework or school activities.

Because the survey was a combination of two surveys obtained from SurveyShare.com, a reliability study had to be completed. Four students were randomly chosen from 143 returned surveys to be used for the sample group while an additional 20 surveys, as the sample set by the researcher for ease of analysis, were used for the study population. When analyzed, the survey had a Cronbach's coefficient of .832 which was less than the .870 acceptable score, so the survey was determined to be reliable (Institute for Digital Research and Education, n.d.). Tables were developed using SPSS 16.0.

A demographic survey that contained preliminary questions was administered to 20 students before seven from this population were chosen to be interviewed. Because students were used as the participants, a letter of consent was signed by the parents (Appendix A). Half of the students surveyed were male and the other half were female. Half of the students were juniors in high school and the other half were seniors. The first question asked, “Who do you live with?” Fifty-five percent of the students stated they lived with both parents, 30% lived with their mothers, and the remaining 15% lived with a sister, grandparents, or dad and stepmother (Table 4.1).

**Table 4.1** *Participants’ Living Situations.*

Answer	Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Dad/Stepmother	1	5	5	5
Grandparent	1	5	5	10
Mothers	6	30	30	40
Parents	11	55	55	95
Sister	1	5	5	100
Total	20	100	100	

When asked how much time they spent on homework, 40% stated that they spent less than 1 hour each day. There were no differences between the responses from males or females, nor between juniors and seniors. When asked how many hours they spent each week on homework (Table 4.2), 50% said 5 hours or more.

**Table 4.2** *Hours Spent on Homework Each Week.*

Answer	Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
2	3	15	15	15
3	6	30	30	45
5	10	50	50	95
10	1	5	5	100
Total	20	100	100	

Sixty percent of the students stated that they participated in extracurricular activities, as shown in Table 4.3.

**Table 4.3** *Participation I Extracurricular Activities.*

Answer	Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Yes	12	60	60	60
No	8	40	40	100
Total	20	100	100	

Thirty-five percent of all of the students said they spent more than 10 hours a week involved in extracurricular activities with 45% saying they spent no time each week involved in extracurricular activities outside of the school day (Table 4.4). It is appropriate to point out that 80% of the students surveyed claimed to be above average academically (Table 4.5).

**Table 4.4** *Hours Spent per Week Involved in Extracurricular Activities Outside of School.*

Answer	Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
0	9	45	45	45
2	3	15	15	60
3	1	5	5	65
10	7	35	35	100
Total	20	100	100	

**Table 4.5** *Grade Average as Stated by Student.*

Answer	Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
A-B	16	80	80	80
C	3	15	15	95
D	1	5	5	100
Total	20	100	100	

In response to the question regarding rules parents had about an established bedtime (Table 4.6), 75% stated they had a specified time to be in bed on school nights. When asked whether their parents had rules about how late they stayed

out with friends (Table 4.7), only one student responded that there were no rules regarding time with friends.

**Table 4.6** Rules Regarding Bedtime.

Answer	Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Yes	15	75	75	75
No	5	25	25	100
Total	20	100	100	

**Table 4.7** Rules Regarding How Late Student Stays Out with Friends.

Answer	Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Yes	19	95	95	95
No	1	5	5	100
Total	20	100	100	

Sixty percent of the students said their parents had rules for them concerning time to complete homework (Table 4.8).

**Table 4.8** Rules Regarding Completion of Homework.

	Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Yes	12	60	60	60
No	8	40	40	100
Total	20	100	100	

When asked, “How often do you ask your parents for help with homework,” 55% of the students said seldom, 15% said often, and 25% said whenever they needed help (Table 4.9).

**Table 4.9** How Often Students Asked Parents for Help with Homework.

Answer	Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Seldom	11	55	55	55
Often	3	15	15	70
Whenever I need it	6	30.0	30.0	100
Total	20	100	100	

When responding to the question, “How often do you talk with your parents about things that happen at school?,” 65% stated that they talked with their parents daily, a lot, or often about school activities. Fifteen percent said they never talked with their parents about things that happened at school and the remaining 25% said they occasionally talked with their parents about things that happened at school (Table 4.10).

*Table 4.10 How Often Students Talk with Parents about School.*

<b>Answer</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Valid %</b>	<b>Cumulative %</b>
Daily, a lot	13	65	65	65
Often	4	20	20	85
Never	3	15	15	100
Total	20	100	100	

### *Interviews*

Interviews were conducted with five students: four seniors and one junior. There were three female students: Marissa, Jasmine, and Monica. Males were much more difficult to persuade to participate, as they were contacted and agreed to a time and date and then would not show. They were called a second time and arrangements were made. If they did not show the second time, another participant was contacted. Marvin agreed on the first call and showed for the interview. Billy wanted to participate, but had to be contacted a second time due to illness. Seniors were also more willing than juniors to be interviewed. Table 4.11 illustrates the basic demographics of the students who participated in the interview process. It is important to know that the answers are the students' direct words, and were not adjusted by the researcher.



**Table 4.11** *Students' Demographic Information.*

<b>Student's Name/Living arrangement</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Average Grades</b>	<b>Ethnic Background</b>	<b>Socioeconomic Status</b>
Marvin/Mom	Senior	A/B with IEP	African American	Middle
Marissa/Dad and Stepmother	Senior	C average	Caucasian	Middle
Jasmine/Mother and Sister	Senior	D average	Hispanic	Low middle
Monica/Parents	Junior	A/B	Mixed (Caucasian and African American)	Middle
Billy/Mother and sister. Father military (deceased)	Senior	B average	Caucasian	Middle

Question 4 asked how the students defined parental involvement. Some of the answers are reported in Table 4.12.

**Table 4.12** *Answers to Interview Question 4.*

<b>Student</b>	<b>Description</b>
Marvin	Active in helping out. Active as in helping others and doing the right thing, not just laying around, but active in doing things with the student in all ways.
Marissa	With your parents being involved with all of my activities, all of my life.
Jasmine	It is good. They have already had the experience of being in school and they want the best for their child. It is a good thing.
Monica	Parents are highly involved in what their child is doing, volunteering, chaperoning field trips. They help with sales at the school.
Billy	I would probably define it as being able to participate, keeping up with children's grades, doing homework, participating in after school activities. Getting the education they need to be productive citizens, going to college and build upon that.

The students were asked how they defined success in school (Table 4.13).

**Table 4.13** *Answers to Interview Question about Success in School.*

<b>Student</b>	<b>Description</b>
Marvin	As making good grades and doing what is right.
Marissa	I define success that you have to try, not just give it 50%. You have to give it 100%. You have to try, not just throw my book away. Success is all about you.
Jasmine	[It] is reaching your goal in life. [When asked if she would be able to do that, she smiled and said] Yeah I will.
Monica	Setting goals and accomplishing what needs to be done. Make them realistic. Set your grades at Bs the first year and keep bumping them up so you can reach them.
Billy	I would define it as trying your best and get the As. Making hard enough effort, even if you need tutoring. You do not have to make straight As, but showing that you want to learn.

Question 7 asked the students about the effects of parental involvement on their school success (Table 4.14).

**Table 4.14** *Answers to Interview Question 7.*

<b>Student</b>	<b>Description</b>
Marvin	It has been positive and helpful. Yes.
Marissa	No, they are there to guide me. I am 18. They are just there to support me, but they let me grow up.
Jasmine	The problem is, I choose not to be so successful. She [mom] has given me encouragement, but I chose not to take that path. Yeah, at time, I have my grades up when I want something, but when I get it, my grades go back down.
Monica	Yes, with my grades for example. If I'm failing, they sit down and talk to me. They help me with my homework if I ask.
Billy	I feel that I have people that support me. That I have family and friends come to my games and encourage me to continue doing well in school.

### 4.3 Summary

The participants involved in the interview process included ethnicities consisting of African American, Caucasian, Hispanic, and African American and Caucasian mixed heritage. They stated that their parents were middle to low income. One student lived with both biological parents, one with father and step mother, and the others lived with a single mother and siblings. Four of the

participants stated that they were average to above average academic standing, while the fifth student stated that her academic success was low but it was her choice. Even though the participants came from varied ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds, they all stated that parental involvement did impact their academic success but that the ultimate responsibility was theirs. They also stated that they felt all students should have their parents involved in some way in their schooling and that it would affect their academic success in a positive way.

Even though the surveys were given to an even mix of students by gender and grade, the interviews involved four seniors and one junior; two males and three females. The females were called, scheduled an appointment, and kept the appointment. Male students were called twice and on one occasion three times. After the second attempt to schedule an appointment and the male student not showing, a different student was chosen for the interview. Once interviewed, the responses between males and females were consistent. One male chosen for the validation group gave different responses, stating that his mother came to football games to watch him perform in the band, but that her involvement or lack of involvement did not affect his academic success. He stated that his goal of going to college was motivation to maintain his grades.

Chapter 5 presents the comparison of the results of this study with results of previous studies conducted in a similar manner with varied participants. The researcher also compared current findings with previous research on parent involvement. Further areas of research on this topic are suggested. The researcher discusses how the results of this study can be used in the planning of parental involvement activities at the high school level.



# **Chapter 5**

**Discussion, Conclusions,  
Recommendations**



This chapter summarizes the results from the research as well as presents the conclusions drawn and comparisons made with previous research. This chapter ends with recommendations and the significance of the research to the body of knowledge established by previous studies.

## **5.1 Discussion of Survey Results**

A survey was administered to determine the demographics of students who participated in the research. The survey indicated the majority of the students stated they lived with both parents. In actuality, this terminology may have meant biological parents or one biological and a stepparent. Only one student specifically stated that she lived with her dad and stepmother.

Ninety-five percent of the students stated that they spent 5 hours or less on homework each week, but they also stated that they made above average grades. Most of the students said they participated in extracurricular activities, spending 3 or fewer hours each week involved in the extracurricular activity. The majority of the students said their parents had rules about bedtimes and how late they stayed out with their friends. An interesting note is that 45% said they asked their parents for help with homework, while 65% stated that they talked daily with their parents about things that happened at school.

## **5.2 Discussion of Interview Results**

Five students were chosen for the interview portion of the study. The researcher attempted to choose students from varied backgrounds, but all of the students stated they were from middle socioeconomic families. Their ethnicity did vary and included African American, Caucasian, Hispanic, and African American and Caucasian combined heritage. No Native American students participated in the study, although they make up 2% of the population of the school system (Cumberland County Schools, 2012). The students varied in

ability and background, ranging in academic ability from participation in the exceptional children's program to academically gifted. Billy and Monica were involved in ROTC, Marvin and Billy were also involved in sports, while Marissa and Jasmine stated no involvement in extracurricular activities.

One question the researcher had was whether parental involvement declined as the students progressed through school into high school. The students gave the impression that their parents' involvement, or lack of involvement, had not changed during their high school years. They felt that having their parents involved in their education was important, but ultimately their success in academics rested with them. When asked how they would define academic success, all responded with a similar answer of making good grades or putting forth the effort to improve their grades even if they did not make straight As, doing what is right, and setting goals.

### **5.3 Conclusions**

Catsambis (2002) and Lloyd-Smith (2008) stated that parental involvement tended to lessen in the high school years. The students interviewed in this study indicated that their parents' involvement in their schooling had remained consistent throughout their school years. Lloyd-Smith did theorize that parents may become less involved in their children's education during the high school years because students at this age are striving for greater autonomy. The researcher found that participants in the current study placed emphasis on self-responsibility for academic success, which agreed with the autonomy theme found by Lloyd-Smith (2008) and Whitfield (2006).

Lowman and Elliott (2010) and Hayes (2011) found little to no effect of socioeconomic and ethnicity factors on student achievement. The participants in the current study all stated they had above average grades. The students were from varied ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds, based on their interview



and survey answers. This indicates that these factors had no or little effect on the students' perceived academic success, so the findings were in agreement with Lowman and Elliott, as well as Hayes.

Patall et al. (2008) and Tan and Goldberg (2008) found no increase or a decrease when parents took an active role in their children's homework. The current study found no difference in student success when parents were or were not involved with homework. One student said his parents were not currently involved, nor had they been involved in the past. He attributed his academic success to his goal setting and striving to meet those goals as his motivation to do well in school.

Lloyd-Smith (2008) stated that administrators and teachers defined parental involvement as parents volunteering in the school and attending school activities and conferences. The students in the current study defined parental involvement as helping with homework, being actively involved with activities, volunteering, chaperoning field trips, and keeping up with the students' homework and grades. The definitions of both sets of participants were similar, so all entities agreed on the definition of parental involvement.

## **5.4 Implications**

The study showed that although they wanted their parents to be involved in their high school careers, the students ultimately took responsibility for their own success. The study was based on Bandura's self-efficacy theory, which says that the confidence students have in their abilities affects the choices and outcomes of their endeavors (Usher & Pajares, 2008). Self-efficacy is influenced by peers, teachers, and parents (Usher & Pajares, 2008). This study verified that high school students feel they are confident enough to make choices regarding their ability to be successful in school, but it is their choice whether they are successful or not.

Trusty and Lampe (1997) described parental involvement as the way in which parents responded to and interacted with their children and the effects the interaction had on the children's behavior inside and outside of school. The responses of the participants during the interviews indicated this was a factor in their academic success. The students' definitions of parental involvement compared to Hickman's (1991) seven types of parental involvement.

Knowing how students responded to the questions set as the guidelines for the study will help local school administrators develop parental involvement implementation plans. Understanding that students take responsibility for their choices regarding their academic success will affect the emphasis placed on parental involvement during conferences and the incorporation of parents in school activities.

## **5.5 Recommendation for Further Studies**

Although the current study adds to the body of knowledge that already existed surrounding students' perceptions of parental involvement, there is still much that can be gained from further studies of this type focusing on high school students. The majority of the previous research focused on elementary and middle school age students. Broader studies using a larger population with greater diversity would validate the information provided in this study and the few previous studies that have been conducted. Similar studies need to be conducted in other geographical locations with a different type of population to determine whether the same perceptions exist.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A

Letter of Parent Consent

Argosy University.

Letter of Parent Consent

Date

Project Title: The high school students' perception of the importance of parental involvement as it relates to high school success.

Purpose: I am conducting a study of students' perception of parental involvement in the school for the purpose of improving the collaborative efforts among school, parents, and students for the benefit of all.

Methods and Procedures: I will be asking your student to complete a survey requesting information regarding their background and their feelings about parents being involved in the school setting. A sample of five students will be chosen from the surveys to be interviewed individually.

Time to Participate: The survey will take no more than 20 minutes. When completed it will be placed in a closed manila folder and stored on a locked cabinet for five years as required by the university. The interview will take 30 – 40 minutes to conduct.

Risks and/or Discomforts: There are no known risks of discomforts because of participation in the survey. There may be the risk of identity disclosure by participating in the interviews, but this will in no way effect the student's academic records. The identity disclosure will only occur if the student talks about the study to their peers.

Benefits: Information gathered will be used to improve collaboration among the school personnel, parents, and students.

**Confidentiality:** The surveys will not request a name or identifying characteristics of the student. All information on the survey will be coded and the surveys will be stored in a locked cabinet for five years as required by the university. Coded names will be used during the interview process to deter identification of the student. The transcription of the interview will only be read by the researcher and committee members, Kristina Yarborough, Dr. Richard Varrati, and Dr. Karen Hargiss, of the university overseeing the work of the researcher.

**Compensation:** The student will not receive any monetary or gift compensation for participation in the study.

**Opportunity to Ask Questions:** Your questions and concerns about the study may be addressed by contacting the researcher, kristinayarborough@ccs.k12.nc.us, 910-4248589; Dr. Richard Varrati, rvarrati@argosy.edu.

**Consent:** Your signature below signifies that you have read and understand this letter and give permission for your child to participate in the study.

I understand that this research study has been reviewed and Certified by the Institutional Review Board, Argosy University Online. For research-related problems or questions regarding participants' rights, I can contact the Institutional Board, Dr. Nancy Hoover at nhoover@argosy.edu. I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction. I have been given a copy of this consent form. By signing this document, I give my consent for my student to participate in the study.

Student Name (Please print)

Parent/guardian name Date

Investigator's Signature  
5301 Celebration Drive  
Hope Mills, North Carolina  
910-424-8589 kristinayarborough@ccs.k12.nc.us

Date

If giving consent for a Minor Child to participate, print child's name:

Relationship to Child (please identify the relationship)

Legal Guardian (appointed by)

*Note: All informed consent statements should be designed to meet the needs of each individual research project and / or sample group and are therefore subject to change as needed.*

Approval by parents does not sign away or negate the right of children to refuse to participate. Each child's assent form must contain the above elements, state that participation is voluntary, and permit the child to refuse to participate.

Argosy University Institutional Review Board Handbook – September, 2011

## Appendix B

### Student Survey

STUDENT SURVEY                      STUDENT NUMBER

- 1) Who do you live with?
- 2) What is your current grade in high school?
- 3) What is your age?
- 4) Are you male or female?

Male

Female

- 1) What kind of high school curriculum are you taking?

General

College Prep

Technical/Trade

Don't Know

Other:

- 2) Overall, what are your high school grades like?
- 3) Approximately how much time do you spend on homework each day?
- 4) Approximately how much time do you spend on homework each week?
- 5) Do you work for pay?

Yes

No

- 6) Approximately how many hours do you work in an average week?

7) Approximately how many hours per week do you participate in school related extracurricular activities?

8) Do you participate in extracurricular activities outside of school such as sports, music, or clubs?

Yes

No

9) Approximately how many hours per week do you participate in extracurricular activities outside of school?

10) Do your parents have any rules about what time you have to go to bed on school nights?

Yes

No

11) Do your parents have any rules about how late you can stay out with your friends?

Yes

No

12) Do your parents have any rules about doing your homework? For instance, do you have to finish your homework before you can watch TV?

Yes

No

13) How often do you ask your parents for help with homework?

14) How often do your parents include you in discussions about important decisions that need to be made?

15) How often would you say that you have a voice in making rules that concern you?

16) How often do you talk with your parents about things that happen at school?

<http://www.surveymshare.com/survey/create/category?category=academic&subcategory=K-12>

## **Appendix C**

### *Interview Questions*

1. How would you classify your ethnic background?
2. Would you classify your socioeconomic status as high income, middle income, or low income?
3. How are your parents involved in your school?
4. We hear so much about parental involvement in school. What is your definition of parental involvement?
5. In what ways do you want your parents/guardians involved in your schooling, both at school and/or at home?
6. In what ways do you wish your parents would be less involved in your schooling, both at school and/or at home?
7. Do you feel your parent's/guardian's involvement in your school or school activities has an effect on your success in school? In what ways?



## Introduction to the Book

Five students explain how they feel about their parents involvement in their education and whether it impacted the final outcome of their high school success. Is it the responsibility of the parents for their children to be successful in school or is it the responsibility of the student? The researchers ask questions and the students tell their aspects of the questions.

## Biography of the Author

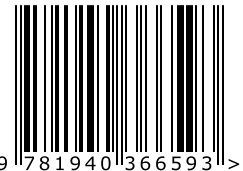


Kristina Laura Yarborough

Kristina L. Yarborough has taught high school for 26 years. She earned a Bachelor's degree in Home Economics Education from Purdue University, Masters degree in Human Development and Family Studies from University of North Carolina at Greensboro, and a doctorate in Instructional Leadership from Argosy University. She is married and the mother of four children and two grandchildren. She currently teaches Early Childhood Education courses online for the local community college.

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