

A GROUNDED THEORY STUDY INVESTIGATING HOW PARENTS'
ADOLESCENT EXPERIENCES INFLUENCE THEIR ATTITUDES AND
BEHAVIORS TOWARD THEIR CHILDREN'S MIDDLE SCHOOL EDUCATION

by

Brenda Kay Sutton Williams

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Education

Liberty University

April, 2013

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative grounded theory study was to explore ways in which parents' past school experiences as adolescents influence their attitudes and behaviors toward their children's education. Three research questions related to parents' past experiences, current attitudes, and participation guided the study. Hope County School system (pseudonym), a suburban school system in the southeastern United States, was the setting for the study. Participants included 12 middle school parents. Three instruments were used for data collection: interviews, surveys, and reflective booklets. Data analysis was conducted using the grounded theory process of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. From the results of data analysis, I generated a theoretical model of Identifying Influences. Stabilizing and Destabilizing influences, as well as Communicating influences, were identified as causal conditions that impact adolescents and their attitudes as adults. Findings related to strategies parents employ on a continuum of continuity and discontinuity were addressed. Results from this study contribute to the body of knowledge regarding school-family relationships. Implications for practice include using information from this study to more effectively communicate with parents and provide solid programs for students. The use of strategies such as peer review, pseudonyms, member checking, memoing, and an audit trail contributed to the trustworthiness of the study.

Descriptors: background, continuity, destabilizing, discontinuity, grounded theory, influence, intergenerational, middle school, parent participation, parents, qualitative, stabilizing

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Grover and Lou Sutton, who loved me unconditionally and who were proud of me, even when I did not excel. Mom was my model as a teacher, and she believed in my ability to teach, even when I was very young. Dad was my protector and hero. They were steadfast in their faith and in their love for me. I look forward to seeing them again one day.

Acknowledgements

My gratitude goes to the people who have traveled this journey with me and helped make it possible. I would like to thank my participants, who enthusiastically and willingly shared their stories. I also thank my dissertation committee, Dr. Holubz and Dr. Hickey, who both held me to a standard of excellence. They identified weaknesses, questioned thought processes, and demanded more when I was not sure there was more. I appreciate their willingness to serve on my committee.

Many thanks go to my committee Chair and design consultant, Dr. Lucinda Spaulding, who was willing to make my goals her own. Her knowledge and expertise that guided me from the inception of the idea for this study throughout the process to its conclusion have been invaluable. She has the gift of encouragement, and she has settled my heart many times during this process. I will always be grateful that God brought her into my life.

I would like to thank my graphic design artist, Larry Dale Williams, Jr. who took my rough model idea and made a design worthy of a dissertation. It has been a joy to watch his artwork grow from that of a toddler to the graphic design major he has become. I would also like to thank my transcriptionist, Kayla Williams, who put her life “on hold” in order to transcribe my interviews and allow me to complete the marathon that grounded theory coding involves. Melody, Kayla, Katrina, and Larry Dale cheered me along the way and expressed an unwavering confidence in my ability to run this race. Thank you all so much for your encouragement!

My solid pillar of strength during this journey has been my husband, Larry, who was “always there” for me. He never failed in his encouragement, comfort, patience, and

selflessness. He bore many long, lonely evenings, ran countless errands, always knew what to say (and what not to say), and never, ever complained. The finish line for this journey is as much his as it is mine. Thank you, Larry.

Above all, I am grateful to God who has always been with me and brought me through, no matter what the circumstances. He reminded me over and over that He had brought me this far for a reason. “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.” (Joshua 1:9, NIV)

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Middle school adolescents are at a stage in their lives in which they are developing attitudes that may continue into adulthood (Adler, 1935/1982; Bandura, 1989). When examining today's middle school students and their experiences in school, as well as the cycle of attitudes that can reproduce themselves in a new generation, (Bowlby, 1988), this fact is pertinent. In what ways do adolescents' school experiences affect their future attitudes toward school as adults? Moreover, in what ways do their attitudes and behaviors as adults affect their interactions with their children's education? The answers to these questions can provide insight for educators to better understand the dynamics of family relationships, parental influence, and parent communication, thus equipping them to establish improved communication and partnerships with families.

Background

Parents' influence on their children and the relationship between parents and schools are topics that have been extensively studied (Ali, 2011; Bhanot & Jovanovic, 2009; Cooper & Crosnoe, 2007; Duchesne, Ratelle, Poitras, & Drouin, 2009; Englund, Egeland, & Collins, 2008; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Ingram, Wolfe, & Lieberman, 2007; Kim, 2009; O'Connor, 2010; Patel & Stevens, 2010; Semke, Garbacz, Kwon, Sheridan, & Woods, 2010; Uddin, 2011; Westergard, 2007; Westergard & Galloway, 2010; Wooley, 2007). Bandura (1989) asserted that parents have considerable influence on their children and serve as models for their patterns of thought and behavior. In addition, the interactions between parents and educators impact the development of children (Bronfenbrenner, 1986) as illustrated in Bronfenbrenner's (1977) bioecological model. The importance of parent participation was emphasized in the No Child Left Behind Act

(NCLB) of 2001. Section 1118 of Title I, Part A of the law, which was dedicated to parental involvement, detailed ways in which schools must reach out to parents in order to receive Title I funding and to “improve student academic achievement and school performance” (No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2002). More recent legislation has also addressed parental involvement. In 2009, President Barak Obama signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), one component of which is the Race to the Top program. This educational reform supported investments in strategies to improve academic results and provided funds for which states may compete. Among eligibility requirements for these funds, Priority 6 stated that local education agencies (LEAs) must create learning conditions that include “Implementing strategies to effectively engage families and communities in supporting the academic success of their students” (*Race to the top executive summary*, 2009, p. 5).

Legislation regarding education often relies on educational research, much of which focuses on parent involvement. Epstein (2008), an extensive researcher and expert on educational partnerships, advocated establishing family and community involvement plans in order to provide a sturdy support system for young people. The framework Epstein developed comprises six types of parental involvement in schools as follows: (a) *Parenting* focuses on activities to increase teachers’ understanding of family contexts and goals and parents’ understanding of their adolescent children. (b) In *Communication*, schools develop activities to keep parents informed regarding school programs and children’s progress. (c) *Volunteering* involves training and scheduling parents to be involved in school programs by working with students and serving as liaisons in the community. (d) *Learning at home* refers to the partnership of schools and parents in

working with students to successfully master the curricula. (e) *Decision-making* is a type of involvement in which parents participate in decision-making regarding school policies and direction. (f) *Collaborating with the community* is the final type of parental involvement in Epstein's framework. Broadening the spectrum of involvement, activities in this type draw upon an array of community organizations and resources to strengthen school programs, while also connecting parents, school personnel, and students to contribute to the community (Epstein, 2008, pp.19-20).

Although parental involvement is widely deemed as essential, numerous factors affect the quality and extent of involvement. Research studies have examined the factors of race (Archer-Banks & Behar-Horenstein, 2008; Banerjee, Harrell, & Johnson, 2011; Howard & Reynolds, 2008; Trask-Tate & Cunningham, 2010) and cultural characteristics (Kuperminc, Darnell, & Alvarezjimenez, 2008; Mackety & Linder-VanBerschoot, 2008; Mena, 2011; Orozco, 2008) as related to parental involvement. Other studies relate to parental involvement and socioeconomic status (Archer-Banks & Behar-Horenstein, 2008; Cooper & Crosnoe, 2007; Englund et al., 2008; Ingram et al., 2007; Jeynes, 2007; Payne, 2001). Various other influences also impact the types and extent of parental involvement, as well as the influence and communication parents have with their children. For example, parent-child relationships have been shown to influence children in their education (Bhanot & Jovanovic, 2009; Duchesne et al., 2009; Semke et al., 2010; Uddin, 2011; Woolley & Bowen, 2007). In their study of high school dropouts, Englund et al. (2008) cited evidence that such relationships are beneficial to students' success in school.

The majority of the previously cited studies show that parents' involvement, whether in the school setting or at home, is important. Although various factors concerning parental involvement in children's education have been studied, few studies have examined the combination of human development, learning, and the interaction of contextual systems in which students and parents live as the current study did. In terms of human development, this study examined how early experiences impact later direction in individuals' lives. The aspect of learning related to children's observations of their parents and other individuals and how they learned from them. Specific contextual systems related both to family and school and expanded to peers, activities, organizations, and to the interactions among individuals in each of these contexts. Specifically, few studies have investigated how parents' past school experiences impact the attitudes and actions that make up their involvement and interactions with their children's education. Those that have examined this phenomenon focused on other grade levels or used other designs. This study investigated the process of how adolescent experiences influence later adult attitudes and interactions and the interrelation of these factors as related to middle school. An understanding of this phenomenon may provide educators and parents a better perception of parent participation. This study provides valuable knowledge that educators and other stakeholders can use in improving educational programs to (a) establish the appropriate amount and types of involvement for parents of middle school students, and (b) strengthen student programs in order to improve students' middle school experience.

Situation to Self

In quantitative research, one measure of rigor is objectivity, and efforts are made to ensure neutrality in the researcher (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2010). However, qualitative research takes a different approach. Corbin and Strauss (2008) asserted that researchers' biases and assumptions are ingrained within them and are impossible to extinguish. They believed that it is more beneficial for researchers to acknowledge biases and experiences that they bring with them into research studies and allow their experiences to enhance their understanding of the data. However, in order to avoid the intrusion of biases on the data, Corbin and Strauss encouraged researchers to constantly question and compare data and to reflect upon and record their thoughts and feelings during data collection and analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Creswell (2007) also noted that one challenge in grounded theory research is for the researcher to set theoretical ideas aside in order to allow a theory grounded in data to emerge through analysis. Therefore, rigor in grounded theory qualitative studies is built into the design of each study by implementing measures of trustworthiness. In addition, researchers begin by acknowledging experiences and assumptions they bring with them into the study as I do in the following paragraphs.

My interest in the proposed study began as a result of my experiences as a middle school teacher as I perceived parents' influences on their children. At times, I observed students who had aggressive or negative attitudes that seemed to go beyond those of the "typical" middle school student. I often wondered why those attitudes existed and where they originated. Many times, conversations with parents revealed that the students' attitudes mirrored those of their parents. They seemed to reflect the adage, "The apple

doesn't fall far from the tree." Unfortunately, students' negative attitudes often impacted their learning, as well as their entire middle school experience.

A second and more poignant motivation for the study relates to the way parents' past experiences appeared to impact their attitudes toward and participation with their children's education. Parents may then communicate their own attitudes about education to their children. In addition to my role as an educator, my role as the parent of four children influenced my motivation for the study. For my daughter, Renee (pseudonym), school was a painful experience. Although she was intellectually capable, she experienced difficulties in school. From the time she was in kindergarten, her teachers complained that she would not do her schoolwork. This trend of evading schoolwork continued throughout her school experience and even into college. Completion of homework assignments was excruciating for her. Work that should have taken 20 minutes was often completed only after several hours and many tears. As an adult, Renee became a foster mother. The first day that her foster daughter, Dorita (pseudonym), brought homework home to complete, Renee sat down and cried, along with Dorita. It appeared that Renee's experiences in school still impacted her attitude toward school as an adult and affected her participation with her child's education. The experience was a difficult one emotionally for both her and her daughter.

As I began to contemplate these events, I questioned my own situation and realized that my experiences also affected my participation in my children's education. My parents were supportive and encouraging; however, they did not realize that providing time for homework should be a priority. Therefore, I did not always make it a priority or have time to complete it. My parents were particularly encouraging and

expressed their pride, even when I did not excel. As I reflect on their approach, I realize how truly fortunate I was to have that unconditional love from my parents. I realized as a parent, however, that I probably would have excelled as a student if more emphasis had been placed on the importance of education. As a parent, I made education a priority for my own children, expecting them to do their best, making time for their schoolwork, and becoming actively involved, supporting their schools and communicating with their teachers. In a later conversation with my mother about my educational experiences, both as a student and a parent, she acknowledged that her parents had taken the same approach to her education as she took with mine. They encouraged her and appreciated her efforts in school but did not prioritize educational activities.

In all of these reflections upon my own experiences as a student, a parent, and a teacher, I noticed what seemed to be patterns in the ways parents experienced their own education and interacted with their children's education. As a result, my reflections created a desire to learn (a) how parents' experiences in school may carry over into their adult lives and attitudes, (b) how those attitudes may influence their participation in their own children's education, and (c) how their attitudes and participation may impact their children's school experiences.

Epistemological assumptions underlie this study. Creswell (2007) described epistemology as "how the researcher knows what she or he knows" (p. 16). Through personal interaction with participants, I attempted to understand the phenomenon of influence as it relates to parents' experiences in school and how they influence parents' current attitudes and interactions with their children's middle school education.

Paradigms used by qualitative researchers refer to the beliefs they bring with them to their research (Creswell, 2013). In this study, I used a post-positivist paradigm. This paradigm, as described by Creswell (2013), takes a scientific approach with an emphasis on data collection and cause and effect relationships, while still allowing for multiple perspectives of the participants. Such an approach fits the nature of inquiry for this study because I sought to discover the influence that parents' past experiences have on their current attitudes and actions and the influence of those attitudes and actions on children's experiences.

Problem Statement

Research indicates that parental involvement in education is positively associated with middle school students' achievement (Hill & Tyson, 2009), but that parent involvement decreases when children reach middle school (Dauber & Epstein, 2001; Dixon, 2008). Also, the vast majority of existing literature that reports on parental involvement research does not specifically address parents' own experiences in school, although a few studies have examined this topic at the kindergarten level (Barnett & Taylor, 2009; Miller, Dilworth-Bart, & Hane, 2011) and involving math with parents of second and sixth grade students (O'Toole & Abreu, 2005). One dissertation study examined parents' perceptions of their children's middle school in light of their own school experiences as one of the three research questions for that study. The author noted, however, that qualitative research would be a "more thorough" (Sanchez-Horn, 2005, p. 60) way of researching this aspect of the study (Sanchez-Horn, 2005). There is a need for research studies that investigate parent participation and lead to a better understanding of the amount and types of involvement that are appropriate for parents of

middle school students. By gaining this understanding, educators can develop better methods and strategies to reach out to parents in a positive manner.

In contrast to the abundance of research regarding race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, as well as of home and family contexts, research is scarce regarding parents' past experiences in school and how they influence participation in their children's education. Research has been conducted relating to young children entering school or in high school contexts. For example, Barnett and Taylor (2009) conducted a study related to parents' experiences in school and their engagement in transition activities with children who were entering kindergarten. They found that parents drew from their own experiences in school in preparing their children for kindergarten. However, the authors cited this phenomenon as a "largely unexplored area of research" (p. 146) and referred to intergenerational influences on parental school involvement as "a new area of inquiry" (p. 146). In a qualitative study by Miller et al. (2011), the researchers interviewed mothers of preschool children to investigate how the mothers' memories of their own school experiences subsequently influenced their actions as they prepared their children to begin school. Shaffer, Burt, Obradović, Herbers, and Masten (2009) noted that limited data exist on the impact of early parenting on children's behaviors as adults, but asserted that intergenerational influence is widely implicated. In addition to parental influences, other school experiences may impact children's lives into adulthood. Spera, Wentzel, and Matto (2009) recommended further research on parents' successes and failures in school and how their educational experiences influence their aspirations for their children's education. Adler (1931/1992) postulated that childhood experiences impact the later lives of individuals in his theory of individual psychology.

He believed that children ascribe their own meaning to life and that formative experiences in childhood influence individuals' approach to life as adults.

Adler's (1931/1992) theory and research at the elementary level indicated that parents' past experiences as children impact their behavior as adults. However, it was not clear how parents' school experiences when they were adolescents influence their attitudes and behaviors toward their children's education as adults. Therefore, the problem of this study was to address this gap and to better understand how parents' own experiences as adolescents in school influence their attitudes and behaviors toward their middle school children's education.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this grounded theory study was to explain how parents' past school experiences as adolescents influence their attitudes and behaviors toward their children's education. Bronfenbrenner (1986) noted that parents' education influences their concepts regarding both their children's and their own abilities. He stated, "A more complete understanding of the connection between parental schooling and family perceptions is clearly in the interest of both developmental science and of educational policy and practice" (Bronfenbrenner, 1986, p. 736).

Creswell (2007) explained that the objective in grounded theory research is "to generate a substantive theory" (p. 95), such as a model. The model developed from data in this study explains how parents' past experiences in school impacted participants' current attitudes and behaviors towards their children's education. This information provides educators with direction regarding areas in which to provide support for parents and students. Parents' experiences in school may be defined as positive or negative

experiences in the school or home context that directly related to their school experience. For purposes of this study, parents' experiences as adolescents were particularly pertinent.

Significance of the Study

The focus of this study was to explore how parents' past experiences as adolescents influence their attitudes and behaviors toward their middle school children's education. This study is significant because it provides insight into the dynamics of relationships that affect students' attitudes, perceptions of school, and achievement. There are three ways in which this study is significant. First, the study offers empirical significance. Results from this study may guide researchers in identifying variables for future quantitative studies to further investigate this phenomenon. Although Sanchez-Horn (2005) conducted a quantitative dissertation study that examined this phenomenon as one component of the study, no correlation was found. Findings from this study may guide researchers in a different direction for identifying variables to measure the phenomenon. Creswell (2013) noted that it is often difficult to measure interactions among people. Among the purposes he listed for qualitative research is the identification of variables that can be measured. This purpose is consistent with Corbin and Strauss' (2008) assertion that "qualitative research allows researchers to get at the inner experience of participants, to determine how meanings are formed through and in culture, and to discover rather than test variables" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 12).

Secondly, this study has theoretical significance. Its findings add to the body of knowledge on parent-school relationships. Components may be added to teacher education and professional development programs that encourage educators to consider

parents' backgrounds and contexts. In this way, this study may provide greater insight to those who are establishing programs to communicate effectively with parents.

The final significance of this study is its practical value for parents and educators. Results from this study may provide parents with a greater understanding of their own perceptions and biases and encourage them to relate to their children and school in a positive manner. Yamamoto and Holloway (2010) pointed out the need for studies "to learn more about whether and how parents reflect on the effects of their expectations on their children" (p. 208). Additionally, educators may be able to use the information obtained from this study to (a) incorporate into teacher education programs, (b) guide staff development on parent communication, and (c) incorporate into parent training programs. Henry, Cavanagh, and Oetting (2011) cited numerous factors that impact parents' investment in education, among which are parents' own experiences in school. This concept is significant because parental involvement can promote students' academic proficiency (Cooper & Crosnoe, 2007) and enhance school climate (Westergård, 2007). Walker, Shenker, and Hoover-Dempsey (2010) identified schools' responsiveness to families as one motivator for parent involvement. It is, therefore, essential for schools to promote parental involvement by creating a welcoming climate and understanding communication when interacting with families.

Research Questions

The following research questions were investigated in this study:

1. How do parents' adolescent experiences influence their attitudes toward school as they relates to their own middle school children?

Adler (1931/1992) believed that individuals interpret later experiences in life based on the perceptions that were established through their early experiences. Therefore, an examination of those experiences opens avenues to better understand parents.

2. How do parents' attitudes toward their children's education impact their interactions with their children's middle school personnel?

Experiences of parents that impact their relationships with teachers and other school personnel are important because positive parent-school relationships are essential.

According to Epstein (2007), positive partnership programs between parents and schools result in higher academic achievement for students. Payne (2001) posited that relationships are involved in the most vital part of learning and refers to students' support systems as "networks of relationships" (p. 145).

3. What strategies do parents employ as they participate in their children's education?

Grounded theory design involves examining not only the phenomenon, but also contexts, conditions, strategies, and their consequences related to the phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In describing grounded theory, Creswell (2013) stated that research questions center on understanding the process of the phenomenon as this question does. Parents' identification of strategies they have developed demonstrated the steps they have taken in this phenomenon.

Research Plan

This study was a qualitative study using a grounded theory design. A qualitative approach was appropriate because of the exploratory nature of the topic. Corbin and Strauss (2008) emphasized the complexity of the world, and stated that "events are the

result of multiple factors coming together and interacting in complex and often unanticipated ways” (p. 8). As a result, they explained, methodology must also be complex in order to understand experiences and situations (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Creswell (2013) outlined situations in which grounded theory is the most appropriate design for a qualitative study. He states that a grounded theory design is appropriate when theories are not present or when theories are present but do not specifically address the population or variables of interest. Although theories exist regarding contexts (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) and relationships (Bowlby, 1988; Epstein, 2001), a grounded theory was needed to explain the process of how parents’ past experiences in school influence their attitudes toward school as it relates to their children and participation in their children’s education. The body of literature that exists on parental involvement does not address the impact of parents’ past school experiences on their participation in their children’s education for middle school. Therefore, a qualitative approach was necessary in order to provide insight into the phenomenon for middle school. Participants had the opportunity to share their own experiences in a manner that can guide further research. Results of this study yield knowledge that allows readers to identify constructs or variables that can be further researched. A grounded theory design was appropriate because it provides the reader insight into the process of how individuals’ experiences in school affect their participation in their children’s education when they become parents. Instruments of data collection included parent interviews, surveys, and reflective booklets, as well as follow-up emails and/or phone calls.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

In describing the evolution of the middle school movement, Manning (2000) noted that middle schools developed to meet the “unique social, personal, and academic needs of young adolescents” (p. 192). Team teaching, interdisciplinary instruction, exploratory curriculum, and guidance programs were among elements considered developmentally appropriate for middle level learners. Over the past six decades, educators have clarified perspectives regarding middle schools, but the focus on effective schools that address the particular needs of young adolescents continues (Manning, 2000). One such perspective focuses on the importance of family involvement during the middle school years (Kreider, Caspe, Kennedy, & Weiss, 2007).

Parents’ participation in education is widely acknowledged as beneficial (Hill & Tyson, 2009), but there is a need for more research regarding parents’ participation in middle school. Research studies have primarily focused on contextual factors that influence parents’ participation (Archer-Banks & Behar-Horenstein, 2008; Kuperminc, Darnell, & Alvarezjimenez, 2008). Few have investigated the influence of parents’ past experiences in school on their children’s education, and those that have primarily dealt with parents of young children (Barnett & Taylor, 2009; Miller et al., 2011). The purpose of this study is to explain how parents’ past school experiences as adolescents influence their attitudes and behaviors toward their children’s education and how these attitudes and behaviors impact their children’s middle school experiences. Findings from this study add to the body of knowledge that education stakeholders can access in planning effective parent involvement programs.

This chapter begins with a conceptual framework of theories related to relationships and contexts that impact individuals and their learning, as well as those related to the interaction of school and home contexts. The focus of this study is positioned within this framework. In addition, this chapter presents an overview of existing literature related to parents' involvement in their children's education. Included are a discussion of the importance and types of parent involvement and an examination of factors that affect parent involvement. The discussion then moves to parents' past experiences and how their experiences influence interactions with their own children's education.

Conceptual Framework

In proposing a method for constructing conceptual frameworks, Jabareen (2009) also provided a rationale for using them. He noted that the majority of social phenomena are multidisciplinary in nature and thus, require a conceptual framework. He described conceptual frameworks as (a) based on concepts, rather than variables; (b) providing an interpretive, rather than causal approach; (c) providing understanding of concepts, rather than theoretical explanations; and as being (d) "indeterminist" (p. 51), rather than predictive in nature. A conceptual framework is optimal for this study because it provides a foundation for its complex components. Specifically, this study relates to individual processes, relational processes, and the interrelation of contexts. Jabareen explained, "Conceptual frameworks are not merely collections of concepts but, rather, constructs in which each concept plays an integral role" (p. 57). Components of the framework for this study include concepts that relate to each of these processes and relationships.

Adler's Individual Psychology

The first component of this study's conceptual framework is Adler's (1931/1992) theory of individual psychology, in which individuals create their own meaning of life, or "Life Style" (p. 22) as children. He believed that early experiences in life with family, teachers, and others help shape the interpretations through which individuals view and react to their circumstances. This attitude toward life causes different people to respond differently to similar events. Rather than meaning being determined by the situations one faces, individuals ascribe their own meanings to events and situations (Adler, 1931/1992, 1935/1982). The current study related to this aspect of Adler's theory, because individuals' experiences as children in school shape their interpretations of later experiences. Thus, parents' attitudes toward their children's education and the situations their children face were shaped by the interpretations of life they developed when they were young.

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory

Two aspects of Bandura's (2005) social cognitive theory serve as the second component of the framework: (a) the influence that parents have as they act as models for their children, and (b) the roles of school and educational experiences of children. First, there is the concept of observational learning, or modeling. In social cognitive theory, children observe other individuals' patterns of thinking and behaving, and they pattern their own thoughts and behaviors from those whom they have observed (Bandura, 2005). Bandura (1969) noted that parents influence their children by both the modeling process and by teaching them. Although Bandura (1989) acknowledged that other social influences, such as other people and media, eventually play a role in children's

development, it is clear that parents usually serve as the primary models for young children. Bandura (1989) noted, “Those who figure prominently in children’s lives serve as indispensable sources of knowledge that contribute to what and how children think about different matters” (pp. 12-13). Parents have significant influence over the attitudes of their children. Therefore, the attitudes and actions that parents communicate regarding education can influence their children’s attitudes.

The other aspect of Bandura’s (1989) theory that relates to this study is that school experiences can influence individuals’ direction in life. When referring to human development from a “lifespan perspective,” (p. 5), Bandura noted, “Many of these determinants include age-graded social influences that are provided by custom within familial, educational, and other institutional systems” (p. 5). Although Bandura does not believe that environmental influences are the sole determinant of the direction taken in people’s lives, he has asserted that they are a factor. Within the framework of this theory, one can assume that parents’ past experiences in school have played a role in the direction they take in their children’s education.

Bronfenbrenner’s Bioecological Model

The third component of the framework demonstrates not only educational or parental influences, but also the interactions of those influences. Bronfenbrenner’s (1977) bioecological model comprises several environmental settings that affect individuals’ development. The individual, in the center of the model, moves within several microsystems, or immediate environmental settings. For example, middle school adolescents’ microsystems would most likely consist of the home, school, and perhaps church or other organizations. The mesosystem involves the interrelations, or

interactions, of the various microsystems in the individual's life. The mesosystem for adolescents would include the interactions between parents and school personnel, particularly teachers. An exosystem includes social structures (e.g., neighborhoods, government institutions) that affect the individual but are not within the individual's immediate microsystem. Finally, the macrosystem refers to overarching cultural patterns that affect individuals within the society (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). For the purposes of this framework, the concepts of microsystems and the mesosystem are especially pertinent. Not only do individuals' interactions within a microsystem, but also the interactions that occur within the mesosystem serve to impact adolescents' development (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). This theory relates to the current study in two ways. First, the influence of the school and home contexts separately served to shape the lives of adolescents. Second, parents' interactions with school and participants' interactions with others within the mesosystem had a significant impact on adolescents' educational experiences. Third, Bronfenbrenner referred to parents' educational backgrounds as significant in terms of "causal pathways" (p. 736). He noted, "A more complete understanding of the connection between parental schooling and family perceptions is clearly in the interest of both developmental science and of educational policy and practice" (p. 736).

Epstein's Overlapping Spheres of Influence

The final component of the framework for this study is Epstein's (2001) theory of overlapping spheres of influence. Similarities exist between Bronfenbrenner's (1977) bioecological systems model and Epstein's theory. Although each model portrays the influence of the home and school on the individual, Epstein's theory focuses specifically

on home, school, and community partnerships. Each of these spheres preserves areas that are independent of the others, but greater overlap among the spheres represents increased cooperation and communication to benefit the child. Within and between each sphere are interactions among those who are influential in children's lives, with the child in the center (Epstein, 2001). This theory completes the conceptual framework for this study, as the goal of the study related to increased positive interactions among parents, their children, and educators in order to positively impact adolescents' education.

Although a grounded theory approach was used to create theory using empirical data (Creswell, 2013), a conceptual framework was beneficial in establishing the focus of the study. Corbin and Strauss (2008) noted that qualitative researchers use a theoretical framework as "a guiding approach to the research" (p. 42). The conceptual framework outlined previously was useful in providing guidance for the study's data collection, as research and interview questions related to the various components of the framework. Analysis of data also revealed relationships that strengthen theoretical components of the framework.

Related Literature

An examination of literature related to parent involvement in education provides an understanding of its importance and of the factors that shape parent involvement. The literature reveals (a) the benefits of parent involvement, (b) types of involvement, (c) contexts that influence involvement, and (d) changes relating to grade level. It also describes parental influences related to parenting styles, perceptions, and relationships. Finally, the literature contains a discussion of how parents' past experiences influence

their actions related to children's education, and it points to the need for further research on the topic for middle school.

Parent Involvement

No Child Left Behind. Section 1118 of Title 1, Part A of NCLB illustrates the emphasis placed on parent involvement by the United States government. The law refers to parent involvement as a means to "improve student academic achievement and school performance" (NCLB, 2002). The law further illustrated this emphasis as it requires states and school districts to be accountable to parents by providing report cards on school performance. It also makes provisions for parents to choose high performing schools if their children currently attend chronically low performing ones (No Child Left Behind: A parents' guide, 2003).

Benefits of involvement. Decades of research have shown that parent involvement in education benefits students. Englund et al. (2008) conducted a longitudinal study of individuals ($N = 179$) whose mothers were classified as low socioeconomic status. They found that among students who were expected to graduate, those who actually did graduate had a higher level of parent involvement in their education than those who were expected to graduate, but who dropped out of school. Another study involving at-risk youth ($N = 7,764$) also showed that students who had supportive adults had higher levels of school engagement. This is significant because higher school engagement is a predictor of school success (Wooley & Bowen, 2007). Additionally, parent involvement may positively impact school climate (Westergård, 2007).

In addition to other benefits, parent involvement is also associated with student achievement (Altschul, 2011; Cooper & Crosnoe, 2007; Dixon, 2008; Hayes, 2012; Jeynes, 2007, 2012; Stewart, 2007). In a meta-analysis of 52 studies on parent involvement in education, Jeynes (2007) found an association between higher student achievement and overall parent involvement, as well as for most components of parent involvement. For studies in which controls were less rigorous, the overall effect size was .53 ($p < .001$); for those in which rigorous controls were used, the overall effect size was .38 ($p < .05$). Results from studies included in this meta-analysis involving over 300,000 students indicate that parent involvement positively affects student achievement (Jeynes, 2007). Results from a more recent meta-analysis of research on parent involvement programs in urban schools also indicated positive academic outcomes (Jeynes, 2012). Additionally, Hill and Tyson (2009) found in their meta-analysis of 32 samples that parent involvement is positively associated with middle school students' academic achievement ($r = .18$), although research has revealed that some areas of achievement have a greater impact than others (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Ingram, Wolfe, & Lieberman, 2007).

Types of involvement. Although research has revealed that parent involvement is critical in student success, recent researchers have noted the need for examining not only parent involvement in general, but also which types of parent involvement are most effective in positively impacting children's education (Cripps & Zyromski, 2009; Harris & Goodall, 2008; Hill & Tyson, 2009). Jeynes (2012) conducted a meta-analysis of 51 parent involvement programs in urban schools ($N =$ approximately 13,000) to determine (a) if such programs benefit students, and (b) which types of programs are most

beneficial. Results indicated that parent involvement was associated with “high educational outcomes” (p. 729) and that academic achievement was higher with parent involvement programs than without them. Of the 51 studies, effect sizes (ranging from 1.91 to -.21) in 49 studies were in a positive direction. Jeynes (2012) noted that voluntary parent involvement is more effective than school-based programs. However, results of the meta-analysis clearly indicate that there is also a strong relationship between school-initiated parent involvement programs and academic achievement. The effect size for overall parent involvement programs was .30 ($p < .01$); for pre-elementary and elementary schools, the effect size was .29 ($p < .01$), and for secondary students the effect size was .35 ($p < .05$; Jeynes, 2012). In addition to the overall positive association of general parent involvement programs in the meta-analysis, the strongest results were for shared reading programs and emphasized partnership programs that encouraged collaboration between parents and teachers (Jeynes, 2012). In Epstein’s (2001) framework, parent involvement is placed within the context of school programs involving schools, families, and communities. The framework encompassed a wide spectrum of parent involvement, including (a) parenting, (b) communication, (c) volunteering, (d) learning at home, (e) decision-making, and (f) collaborating with the community (Epstein, 2001).

Not only are school-based parent involvement programs vital, but parents may also be involved with their children’s education outside of formal programs. For example, parents may be involved in their children’s schoolwork at home, even if teachers are not aware of it (Hayes, 2012; Kim, 2009). Research findings reveal mixed results in regard to parents’ interaction with their children’s schoolwork at home (Hill &

Tyson, 2009; Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010), but findings overall suggest that parents' involvement at home is positively related to student achievement (Harris & Goodall, 2008; Hill & Tyson, 2009). Jeynes (2007) found that parent involvement is more effective when it is voluntarily initiated. Home involvement may also include parents engaging their children in other learning activities at home or in the community (Hill & Tyson, 2009). All of these relate to the current study because participants interacted with their children's education in various ways, based on their own experiences.

Factors That Influence Parent Involvement

Factors that influence the types and extent of parents' involvement with their children do not occur in isolation. Rather, numerous factors related to context, environment, and background interact to influence individual parents' actions. Bronfenbrenner and Evans (2000) proposed that processes of "reciprocal interaction" (p. 117) between individuals and their direct environment lead to outcomes of competence or dysfunction over the course of one's life. Nevertheless, it is helpful to examine specific factors categorically in order to gain a greater understanding of each. Of the factors that influence parents' involvement in their children's education, family context plays an integral part, including (a) educational levels of parents, (b) socioeconomic status, (c) cultural/racial/ethnicity factors, and (d) self-efficacy of parents. Not only does family context impact parent involvement, but school and grade level also impact the level and types of parent involvement. Finally, factors specific to parents, such as gender differences, parenting styles, expectations for their children, relationships with their children, and their own past experiences all impact involvement with their children's education.

Effects of family context. The extent and ways in which parents are involved in their children's education are often related to family contexts. Family relationships, socioeconomic status, culture/ethnicity, and race of families may enhance or impede parents' ability to participate actively in their children's education.

Educational levels of parents. One contextual factor that may impact academic outcomes is the educational level of parents. In their review of the literature, Conger and Donnellan (2007) noted that parents with higher educational levels (a) prioritized education, (b) invested in materials and activities to promote academic achievement, and (c) established a home environment conducive to learning and language development (Conger & Donnellan, 2007). Parents with higher educational levels are also more positive toward home-based involvement with children's education (Abel, 2012), demonstrate more positive parenting behaviors (Neppl, Conger, Scaramella, & Ontai, 2009), and are more involved with their children (Newland et al., 2013). Spera et al. (2009) conducted a study with parents ($N = 13,577$) of middle and high school students regarding aspirations for their children's educational attainment. Using a one-way ANOVA, they found that as parent education levels increased, parents' aspirations for their children's educational attainment also increased; likewise, as parents' aspirations increased, their children's academic achievement increased (Spera et al., 2009). In contrast, parents' low educational levels may give them a greater desire to encourage their children's success, so they may have more opportunities and better lives economically than those afforded their parents (Durand, 2011).

Socioeconomic status. A major factor in parent involvement is socioeconomic status. In their review of the literature, Conger and Donnellan (2007) noted that

socioeconomic levels of parents may affect parenting styles, which research has shown to impact educational outcomes. Parents from lower socioeconomic groups were more likely to use an authoritarian and harsh style of parenting. This may be, in part, due to the added stress parents experience related to insufficient income. Another dynamic of socioeconomic levels is that families with higher levels of financial resources are able to provide more educational opportunities and resources for their children (Conger & Donnelan, 2007). Many times, parents in economically disadvantaged families may be less involved in their children's education because they work long hours or multiple jobs, or because they feel less confident in their ability to be involved (Cooper & Crosnoe, 2007; Harris & Goodall, 2008; Ingram et al., 2007; Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010). However, research suggests that the need for parent involvement may be heightened for low-income students. In a study of 489 child/caregiver dyads, Cooper and Crosnoe (2007) found that academic orientation increased as parent involvement increased for disadvantaged youth, although the opposite was true for non-disadvantaged youth. Other research suggests that it is not necessary for parent involvement to be site-based in order to be effective. In a study of Epstein's (1995) six types of involvement in high-achieving, low-income schools, Ingram et al. (2007) found that only parenting and learning at home were prevalent. Furthermore, Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2007) discovered that other variables such as interpersonal relationships were more significant than socioeconomic status.

Culture/ethnicity and race. Not only do socioeconomic levels, but families' ethnicity and race may also play a role in parents' involvement in school. Past research indicates that minority families often face issues such as (a) low socioeconomic status,

(b) lower education levels, (c) cultural differences in raising children, (d) absence of social networks, (e) language barriers, and (f) jobs that are physically demanding (Jeynes, 2010; Kim, 2009). Such barriers can be daunting to parents and to educators.

Although minority parents may be as interested in their children's education as other parents, their involvement may not be as visible in the school setting (Hayes, 2012; Kim, 2009). Participants ($N = 9$) in a focus group study of African-American families by Archer-Banks and Behar-Horenstein (2008) expressed concern that school personnel may perceive a lack of involvement as a lack of caring about their children's education and shared a desire to become more involved. However, they cited a range of activities they consider involvement. Some included attending athletic or other extracurricular activities and being actively involved in Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs), but others mentioned less conspicuous activities, such as acquiring tutors for their children, helping their children with homework, or simply being supportive of their children's efforts (Archer-Banks & Behar-Horenstein, 2008). In a study of African American high school adolescent achievement, Hayes (2012) found that only home-based involvement predicted achievement outcomes, as reported by parents in the regression study ($N = 145$).

In addition to racial characteristics, ethnic differences may inhibit parent involvement. Participants in one study shared that miscommunication occurred because of cultural differences and biases (Eberly, Joshi, & Konzal, 2007). In Good's (2010) qualitative study of immigrant Hispanic families, parent ($n = 8$) and teacher ($n = 5$) participants alike expressed concern regarding communication barriers, not only those related to language acquisition, but also those resulting from cultural differences. Parents

shared that their relationships with teachers were different in their home country, a factor that led to distrust of educators in this country. In addition, the focus within the family setting is more on relationships than on academic achievement, and parents depend on teachers to be the experts in educating children (Durand, 2011; Marschall, 2006). However, Altschul (2011) found that Mexican Americans are often engaged in discussions about education with their children, a form of involvement that is not obvious at the school level. Similar findings regarding cultural expectations emerged in Mapp's (2003) qualitative study. Participants who were immigrants explained that the types of involvement that are expected in the United States would be regarded as disrespectful to educators in their home countries (Mapp, 2003).

In addition to cultural factors, economic factors also have a bearing on Latino parent participation. One participant in Good's (2010) study also pointed out that many Mexican immigrants' current priority is economic due to pressing financial needs, rather than educational achievement of their children, although participants expressed their desire to bridge the achievement gap. Although Latino parents experience barriers to participation that many others do not, the barriers are not insurmountable. Using ordinary least squares regression to analyze existing data, Marschall (2006) found that increased representation of Latinos on school councils in the Chicago school system was associated with increased teacher awareness of cultural issues and increased efforts to establish relationships with parents; these, in turn, were associated with higher levels of school-based Latino parent involvement. Results suggested that these practices impacted educational outcomes for Latino students, as a higher percentage (14.1% reading; 24.1% math) of Latino students met and exceeded standards in reading and math (Marschall,

2006). In contrast, Altschul (2011) did not find parent involvement in formal school organizations to be a significant factor of academic achievement; instead, other forms of involvement, primarily those that are home-based, were positively related to test scores. The difference in findings for the two studies may be related either to the unique design of the Chicago school system or to the different designs of the two studies. Altschul's study focused on parent involvement activities with eighth grade students and test scores in eighth and 10th grades, but the Chicago study involved all grade levels. However, the finding of importance in both studies is that parent involvement positively impacted academic outcomes for students. In light of poverty levels and dropout rates among Latinos, this is a noteworthy finding because better educational levels among Latinos can lead to better jobs in the future (Altschul, 2011).

These studies relate to the current study because they show that efforts to understand parents and their backgrounds may lead to positive outcomes in parent involvement and student achievement. The concept that culture plays a significant role in parent-school interactions is also consistent with Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model, which notes that an individual's macrosystem consists of the overall patterns of culture that influence individuals' lives (Eberly, Joshi, Konzal, & Galen, 2010).

Self-efficacy. The barriers felt by parents from low socioeconomic and minority culture groups may affect parents' sense of self-efficacy when interacting with school personnel (Ingram et al., 2007). A sense of self-efficacy involves the belief that one's actions can affect outcomes (Green et al., 2007). For example, language barriers may inhibit parents' initiative in communication (Harris & Goodall, 2008). In addition, parents who have lower educational levels may feel insecure, inhibited, or inferior when

communicating with teachers, who have a college education (Harris & Goodall, 2008; Kim, 2009). Immigrant parents in particular, and those in low socioeconomic groups may be deficient in self-efficacy because they feel that they do not have the resources to help their children as they progress through school, especially as they move into the higher grade levels (Durand, 2011; Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010). Stress is another factor that can impede parents' sense of self-efficacy in supporting their children's education (Semke et al., 2010). Inadequate feelings of parents may carry over into their attitudes toward school. For instance, parents who work in jobs that do not require a high level of education may have negative attitudes toward school (Harris & Goodall, 2008) that can impact their children. Young people in these families may not perceive the value of education and may not visualize future opportunities for themselves. Parents who do not feel hopeful regarding their children's opportunities for higher education or who are not knowledgeable about the school system may not have an interest in becoming involved in their children's education (Cooper & Crosnoe, 2007).

Conversely, parents who have a sense of efficacy are more likely to involve themselves in activities in which they feel they can make a contribution (Green et al., 2007). Shah (2009) found that Latino parents who observed other Latinos in positions of influence, such as teachers, principals, and school council members, identified with them, felt empowered, and increased their school involvement. Barnett and Taylor (2009) noted that parents' self-efficacy may be a product of their own experiences in school. A strong sense of self-efficacy rooted in parents' own experiences may lead parents to positively intervene in their children's education, thus instilling in them the confidence

they need (Barnett & Taylor, 2009). This concept directly relates to the primary focus of the current study.

Parent involvement by school level. Research studies show that once children leave elementary school, parent involvement levels decrease (Dixon, 2008; Green et al., 2007; Hill & Tyson, 2009). In a National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) report on parent involvement for the 2006-2007 school year, based on participation in parent-teacher organizations and based on parent attendance at parent-teacher conferences and other events, middle school levels of involvement were lower than those of elementary schools (Herrold & O'Donnell, 2008). Jeynes' (2012) study of urban parent involvement programs also revealed that elementary school parent involvement initiatives greatly outnumbered those at the secondary school level. Parent involvement may decrease not only between school levels, but also between grade levels within schools. Patel and Stevens (2010) found that parent involvement levels dropped from sixth grade to eighth grade. In middle school, adolescents are changing, and schools are structured differently from elementary schools. Therefore, parent involvement in middle school will naturally be of a different nature than it is in elementary school (Duchesne et al., 2009; Hill & Tyson, 2009). Even so, parents who appropriately interact with their children's education in middle and high school can positively impact student outcomes (Green et al., 2007). Not only does parent involvement impact student achievement, but it may also promote positive relationships between students and teachers (O'Connor, 2010). The current study was an effort to understand parents' interactions with their children's education in order to promote those that influence positive outcomes.

Parental Influences

In addition to the activities that are typically construed as parent involvement, parents influence their children in numerous other ways. Their styles of parenting, their attitudes, the expectations they communicate, and family relationships help shape children's experiences.

Gender differences. Parents' involvement in their children's education may differ based on gender, both of the parents and their children. Bhanot and Jovanovic (2009) examined the connection between parent behaviors and adolescents' science achievement beliefs. Not only did parents differ in their interactions with their children based on the children's gender, but fathers also interacted differently than mothers in many of their interactions with their children (Bhanot & Jovanovic, 2009).

Parenting styles. Styles of parenting impact adolescents in terms of self-esteem, sense of self-efficacy, social adjustment, and academics (Cripps & Zyromski, 2009; Jaynes, 2007). Adolescents whose parents employ an authoritative/democratic style, characterized by warmth, firmness, and consistency are better adjusted and more intrinsically motivated to learn, although a causal direction cannot be ascertained (Cripps & Zyromski, 2009; Uddin, 2011; Urdan, Solek, & Schoenfelder, 2007). Swanson, Valiente, Lemery-Chalfant, and O'Brien (2011) conducted a study on ego resilience (i.e., the ability to adjust to change and cope with stress) and engagement coping (i.e., self-regulation of emotions and solution-seeking) as mediators between parenting styles and (a) academic achievement, (b) social competence, and (c) physical health. Using the revised Child Rearing Practices Report (CRPR; Block, 1965) they identified supportive parenting and controlling parenting styles in participants ($N = 240$). Findings of the study

revealed a significant positive association between supportive parenting and ego resilience and between supportive parenting and engagement coping, each of which was also significantly and positively associated with academic achievement of early adolescents (Swanson et al., 2011).

Perceptions and expectations. Regardless of which style of parenting is used, parents communicate their perceptions of their children's abilities and their expectations of success or failure to their children (Urdu et al., 2007). This is noteworthy, because parents' expectations are factors in various educational outcomes, including student attitudes and behaviors that lead to success (Jeynes, 2010; Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010), as well as students' educational aspirations (Nichols, Kotchick, & Barry, 2010). Bhanot and Jovanovic (2009) found a significant link between parents' evaluations of their children's science abilities and adolescents' own ability perceptions. Consistent with their parents' expectations, boys in the study had higher perceptions of their own ability than did girls, although in practice, there was no difference in actual ability levels (Bhanot & Jovanovic, 2009). Spera et al. (2009) found that children's academic achievement was a predictor of parents' aspirations for their children's education. However, they pointed out that it is not possible to ascertain causality and suggested that perhaps the influences of parents' expectations and their children's academic successes are bidirectional (Spera et al., 2009).

As in parent involvement in general, cultural background impacts parents' communication of expectations to their children. These cultural influences are consistent with Bronfenbrenner's (1977) bioecological model of human development. Bronfenbrenner identified macrosystems as "carriers of information and ideology that,

both explicitly and implicitly, endow meaning and motivation to particular agencies, social networks, roles, activities, and their interrelations” (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, p. 515). Differences in cultures that emphasize sociocentric (Durand, 2011) or collectivist values and those that applaud individualism may influence the methods in which parents communicate expectations to their children (Newland, et al., 2013).

Numerous studies have examined cultural factors. Nichols et al. (2010) investigated the association between multiple factors of influence and the educational aspirations of socioeconomically disadvantaged African American students in alternative schools ($N = 130$). Findings revealed that students’ perceptions of their parents’ involvement and academic expectations for their children were significant predictors of the students’ educational aspirations. Yamamoto and Holloway (2010) conducted a synthesis of the literature on 33 research articles and two meta-analyses assessing parents’ expectations and students’ academic achievement. They found that the level and communication of expectations varied, depending on the ethnic/racial composition of the family. For example, seven out of eight studies found that Asian American parents held higher expectations for their children’s academic performance than other ethnic groups. Among African American, Latino, and European American groups, however, the distinctions were not as clear. The researchers ascribed the inconsistent findings to variability in methods, designs, and composition of participant groups in the different studies (Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010).

One reason the level of expectations is a key factor is that parents’ expectations can impact student achievement. Of the eight studies Yamamoto and Holloway (2010) reviewed of European American families, all of them revealed positive associations “or

significant pathways” (p. 200) between parents’ expectations and children’s academic achievement, but none of the studies of Latino families suggested such a connection. This finding regarding Latinos, however, is not consistent with that of Carranza, You, Chhuon, and Hudley’s (2009) study on Mexican American families. They found that in high school, students’ ($N = 298$) perceptions of their parents’ educational expectations, rather than active communication, directly impacted their academic achievement. This finding most likely reflects a manifestation of culture because other research suggests that Latino families view the family’s role as supporting social and moral development, rather than focusing on direct communication regarding academic achievement (Durand, 2011; Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010). Results from other studies are consistent with this view. Plunkett and Bamaca-Gomez (2003) conducted a study on the relationship between parental behaviors and academic outcomes for immigrant families in which both parents were born in Mexico. Two of the behaviors they examined were monitoring of children’s activities and supportive behaviors. The researchers’ correlational analysis between parental monitoring/supportive behaviors and adolescents’ ($N = 273$) academic motivation, and between parental monitoring/support and educational aspirations revealed that both behaviors were significantly and positively correlated to student motivation and educational aspirations (Plunkett and Bamaca-Gomez’s 2003). A study by Henry, Plunkett, and Sands (2011) that focused on the impact of Latino parent behaviors and adolescents’ ($N = 594$) academic motivation in different family structures reinforced these findings. They found that parent monitoring, as demonstrated by parents’ supervision and knowledge of their adolescent children’s friends and activities,

was dominant in its impact on student motivation compared to other variables (Henry, Plunkett, et al., 2011).

There are also inconsistencies in findings among studies of African American families. Yamamoto and Holloway (2010) discovered that a greater gap exists between parents' expectations and student academic performance for African Americans than for European Americans. However, another study of African American parents ($N = 145$) of high school students revealed that the most significant factor in student achievement was active communication between parents and adolescents regarding their education (Hayes, 2012).

Yamamoto and Holloway (2010) suggested that cultural differences in parents' (a) beliefs regarding the impact of effort vs. ability on academic achievement, (b) miscommunication and/or mistrust of information regarding their children's progress, and (c) beliefs regarding causes of academic achievement, play a vital role in the development and communication of their expectations. Although cultural differences may influence parents' approaches to education, parents of various ethnic backgrounds hold educational aspirations for their children (Spera et al., 2009). Spera et al. found that over 85% of Caucasian, African American, and Hispanic parents desired for their children to earn a college degree and that among parents of Asian ethnicity, over 90% held such aspirations. Two areas of cultural discrepancy were (a) the difference between minority parents' aspirations and actual college attendance for ethnic minorities, and (b) the fact that minority parents with low education levels held higher aspirations for their children compared to Caucasian parents with low education levels (Spera et al., 2009).

These findings may suggest the value ethnic minority parents place on the potential of educational attainment.

Not only do parents' expectations impact their children's attitudes, but the literature also reveals that children's behavior can affect their parents' expectations of their future performance as well. In a study using longitudinal data, Rutchick, Smyth, Lopoo, and Dusek (2009) used regression analysis and found a 4.9% decrease in expectations for children's educational attainment for each standard deviation above the mean in observed behavior problems ($z = -3.24, p = .001$).

Parent-child relationships. Parent-child relationships also impact adolescents in school. Duchesne et al. (2009) found that adolescents who had secure attachments with their parents, especially their mothers, were less anxious when facing the transition to middle school. These relationships also may have lasting effects. Encouraging, positive support from parents in the home is associated with higher academic success (Ingram et al., 2007; Melby, Conger, Fang, Wickrama, & Conger, 2008; Swanson et al., 2011). In a correlational study of seventh to ninth-grade adolescents ($N = 300$) in Bangladesh, Uddin (2011) found that parental warmth and acceptance were significantly related to academic achievement. Conversely, a deficiency in warmth from mothers was associated with poor academic achievement (Ali, 2011). Research also shows that early adolescents who have positive parent-child relationships are more likely to graduate (Englund et al., 2008).

One salient point of note is that adolescents themselves may play an important role in deciding how much parents are involved in school activities. In an ethnographic qualitative study of an eighth-grade poetry program designed to increase family involvement in literacy, Wiseman (2011) found that students ($N = 22$ student

participants) often moderate parent involvement. Students whose relationships with their families were conducive to sharing personal information encouraged their families to attend, but others who felt uncomfortable sharing personal experiences did not. The nature of the activity and family relationships influenced students' choices of whether or not to inform and invite their parents. Another factor in students' decisions was the protective nature of some students toward their parents. Student participants who felt that their parents' attendance at the event would pose a hardship for the parents did not encourage them to attend (Wiseman, 2011).

Effects of parents' past school experiences. According to Adler's (1931/1992) individual psychology theory, each individual responds to new experiences in light of his or her own "scheme of apperception" (p. 23). Events are interpreted in light of the meaning that each attributed to life as a young child. Thus, individuals' responses to similar experiences may vary due to different interpretations. Both qualitative and quantitative research studies have shown that relationships exist between parents' experiences as students in school and their participation in their children's education (Barnett & Taylor, 2009; Henry, Cavanagh, et al., 2011; Miller et al., 2011). Sanchez-Horn conducted a dissertation study ($N = 291$) to examine differences in parents' perceptions of their children's middle school based on race, socioeconomic status, and level of parent's education. One research question of the study also measured the relationship between parents' perceptions of their own school experiences and perceptions of their children's school using the three moderator variables mentioned earlier. The quantitative study was conducted at one middle school in Florida using survey instruments. Using data collected from surveys, the researcher used multiple

regression data analysis. Data analysis did not result in significant findings for any of the research questions, although interaction effects among variables, as measured by the multiple regression analysis, revealed significant relationships between predictor and dependent variables. The author noted that for that type of study, the researcher was unable to ask respondents why they chose to answer questions in the manner they did as a limitation of the study. Among recommendations for future research, the researcher suggested a qualitative study, noting:

The use of interviews (qualitative research) along with surveys would be a more thorough way of conducting this type of research. Interviews would help provide explanations as to what parents' expectations of their child's school are as well as yield richer descriptions of their past experiences. (Sanchez-Horn, 2005, p. 60)

The current qualitative study using grounded theory design examined participants' experiences in school and their influence on participants' attitudes toward and interactions with their children's education. Through surveys, reflective booklets, and interviews, participants shared their experiences using their own words. One aspect of the literature relates to intergenerational influences and school experiences.

Intergenerational influences. Although it is logical to assume that parents' past experiences impact the ways in which they relate to their children's education, research is limited regarding what foundational beliefs lead parents to interact as they do (Barnett & Taylor, 2009). Existing research reveals that intergenerational influences may be at work in the approaches parents use in their children's education. Such influences have been studied in many areas of society. Studies show that parents either follow a path of continuity or discontinuity related to their experiences with their own parents (Barnett &

Taylor, 2009; Bowlby, 1988). Conger, Belsky, and Capaldi (2009), in discussing possible moderators of continuity and discontinuity in parenting, noted, “Highly neurotic or emotionally unstable parents might well emulate the worst qualities of the parenting they experienced as children, whereas agreeable and conscientious parents may draw on the best experiences they had as children” (p. 1282), and that “they merit consideration in future research” (p. 1282).

Continuity. Theories of continuity and discontinuity have been applied to numerous fields of study. Atchley (1989) discussed continuity theory in relation to adults’ adaptations to aging through maintaining structures related to past experiences. The theory explains that individuals use their apperceptions of their past to envisage their futures and thus make life decisions accordingly. Although Atchley presented the theory in terms of aging, the concept of decision-making in light of “how the present is linked with both the past and the anticipated future” (p. 185) may be applied to other situations. As parents recollect their own school experiences, a supportive, encouraging approach taken by their own parents may indicate that they have internalized those experiences positively. This most likely will lead them to mirror such an approach with their own children. Unfortunately, the opposite may also be true. Parents may also reproduce the same negative approaches used by their own parents (Barnett & Taylor, 2009; O’Toole & Abreu, 2005). In a prospective, intergenerational study of fathers’ ($N = 102$) constructive parenting, Kerr, Capaldi, Pears, and Owen (2009) found an association ($\beta = .10, p < .05$) between generation one (G1) constructive parenting in late childhood and generation two (G2) constructive parenting in early and middle childhood. Of note was the cumulative and indirect nature of the findings for G2 constructive parenting in early childhood.

Specifically, G1 constructive parenting was associated with G2 positive adjustment and lower levels of antisocial behavior as adolescents, which contributed to positive parenting and other behaviors as adults. The same study evidenced continuity between G1 and G2 and between G2 and G3 problem behavior (Kerr et al., 2009).

Discontinuity. In contrast to a continuity approach, parents may choose to follow a different path than that taken by their own parents, particularly if it was a negative one. Parents may desire to establish an educational environment for their own children that will afford them better opportunities than they themselves had (O'Toole & Abreu, 2005).

Little research has been conducted on the effects of parents' experiences on their own approaches to their children's education. However, Barnett and Taylor (2009) conducted such a study investigating parents whose children were entering kindergarten. They questioned parents regarding recollections of their own school experiences and how those recollections shaped preparations for their children entering kindergarten. In their study, mothers who had positive experiences in school employed more transitional activities in preparing their children for school, suggesting an intergenerational trend (Barnett & Taylor, 2009).

A qualitative study by Miller et al. (2011) also examined parents' ($N = 40$) preparations for their children entering school. The study, conducted as part of a larger quantitative/qualitative study, used a thematic approach in analysis. Four themes emerged from their study, the most significant being intergenerational influences. Mothers recalled the preparations made for them as they entered school and the kinds of support they experienced that guided them as they prepared their own children for school. Participants recognized and described how their participation with their children's

education was a direct result of their own parents' interactions with them as children. Again, patterns of continuity and discontinuity emerged, depending on whether their parents' interactions with them had been effective or ineffective. The authors emphasized the need to learn parents' "educational histories" (p. 162) in order to better understand students and their home contexts (Miller et al., 2011). These research studies relate to the current study, because grounded theory qualitative research specifically investigates processes, and the current study was an investigation of parenting processes. Neppl et al. (2009) suggested the need for future studies to "identify specific processes or mechanisms" (p. 1254) that would increase positive parenting or would reduce the continuation of negative parenting between generations. They noted that such findings would assist in the development of programs to encourage positive parenting (Neppl et al., 2009).

School experiences. Although the influences of parents' own parents in their education were pervasive in these studies, other school experiences also impact individuals. Experiences in children's lives are complex, making it difficult to separate experiences that involved parents from those that did not. It is important, however, to understand that parents may have had experiences in school that were not related to their parents, but that significantly shaped their views of education. For example, adults who recall negative experiences, such as substandard schools in low-income areas or those who did not perform well in school, may internalize such experiences and find it difficult to encourage their own children (Barnett & Taylor, 2009). Yamamoto and Holloway (2010) also noted that parents' own school experiences and perceptions of how their

cultural or ethnic groups were treated by educators influenced how well the parents accepted teachers' assessments of their children's progress in school.

O'Toole and Abreu (2005) found that parents' past school experiences in math played a dominant role in their interactions with their children's math work. For example, participants who had not been successful in math as children expressed the difficulties they had in engaging their children in math activities. It was also evident from the interviews that children had learned to identify with their parents in their dislike for and their sense of inefficacy in math. Although some parents expressed a desire for their children to succeed where they had not, the parents did not always have the capacity for providing the expertise their children needed (O'Toole & Abreu, 2005). Positive academic experiences for adolescents may also impact individuals as adults. Neppl et al. (2009) found that adolescents' academic achievement predicted their educational attainment as adults, as well as their positive parenting behaviors to their children. Findings from these studies highlight the need for educators to better understand factors that influence parents in their interactions with their children's education.

Summary

Educational research highlights the importance of parental involvement in children's education (Bhanot & Jovanovic, 2009; Duchesne et al., 2009; Semke et al., 2010; Uddin, 2011; Woolley & Bowen, 2007). Studies suggest that various factors influence the ways and extent of parents' involvement (Archer-Banks & Behar-Horenstein, 2008; Bhanot & Jovanovic, 2009; Kuperminc et al., 2008). There is strong evidence that parents' past school experiences impact their interactions with their children's education (Miller et al., 2007; O'Toole & Abreu, 2005). However, literature

does not reveal how parents' experiences as adolescents in school impact their attitudes and behaviors toward their children's education in middle school. In summary, educational research reveals that (a) parental involvement in education is important; (b) various factors impact involvement; and (c) parents' school experiences influence their interactions with their children's education, but there is a gap in the literature regarding how parents' overall experiences as adolescents in middle/early high school influence their attitudes and interactions with their middle school children's education. Therefore, this study focused on this gap in the literature by investigating the influence of parents' middle/early high school experiences on their attitudes and interactions with their children's education

Theoretical Value of Study

Strauss and Corbin (1990) referred to "theoretical sensitivity" (p. 41), or researchers' awareness of how data conceptualize into theories. This sensitivity added to the value of the current study in two ways. First, the findings from this study confirmed and strengthened the theories that make up the conceptual framework for this study. Themes that emerged from this study demonstrated ways in which families and educators can work together to improve education, thus enriching the current theories. Second, data from this study served in the creation of a new paradigm to show how the educational experiences of adolescents impact not only the direction of their own lives, but may also impact the lives of their future children through their later attitudes and influences as parents.

Practical Value of Study

Not only does the current study add to the body of literature theoretically, but it also provides practical knowledge for the field. A greater understanding of how parents' past school experiences influence their attitudes and behaviors toward their children's education will illuminate programs related to parent involvement. Three specific areas that can benefit from this study are (a) teacher education programs, (b) professional development of teachers related to communication with parents, and (c) parent education programs.

Teacher education programs. Teachers and parents both play a significant role in the lives of young people (Ali, 2011). It is important for those entering the field of teaching to become familiar with all aspects of teaching. Instructional strategies are but one element of teaching. Teacher education programs need to include classes that provide teacher candidates with knowledge and skills that will aid them in successfully interacting with students' families. Epstein and Sanders (2006) noted the scarcity of class time spent on parent involvement in teacher education programs and pointed out that most time devoted to the subject was specific to early childhood education or special education. They surveyed 161 schools, colleges, and departments of education (SCDE) regarding programs and practices that addressed school/home/community partnerships. Results indicated a serious discrepancy between institutional leaders' beliefs regarding the importance of teachers' competence in establishing partnerships and the preparedness of their graduates in this area (Epstein & Sanders, 2006). A greater focus on communication and partnerships between educators and families is needed in teacher education programs.

Professional development for teachers. The theory developed from this study may be used to provide teachers with a better understanding of parents and why they interact with their children, the teachers, and other school personnel as they do. If teachers can discern the kinds of background experiences that prompt parents in their interactions, they may be able to communicate with parents in more appropriate ways, thus creating more positive relationships with them. Symeou, Roussounidou, and Michaelides (2012) conducted a study to assess the impact of a professional in-service training course on teachers' ($N = 111$) effectiveness in communicating with parents in parent-teacher conferences. The study, conducted in Cyprus by the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, included five sessions that focused on teachers' counseling and communication skills. Results indicated that the training sessions increased teachers' perceptions about the value of such skills in communicating with parents (Symeou et al., 2012).

Parent education. Not only do teachers need to understand how parents' backgrounds influence their interactions with their children's education, but it is essential for parents to recognize the phenomenon as well. The theory developed in this study can be used in parent education programs to help parents realize that (a) their interactions with their children and school personnel may reveal the experiences they had in school themselves, and (b) their current actions may impact their children and the generations to come. In this way, parent education programs may promote positive actions and responses and a better understanding of how parents can support their children's education.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how parents' experiences as adolescents influence their attitudes and behaviors toward their children's education. The qualitative approach of this study allowed participants to share their experiences in their own words. I employed a grounded theory design because it is appropriate to explain processes and create a "framework for action" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 22). I addressed three research questions regarding (a) the influence of parents' past experiences on their current attitudes, (b) strategies that parents employ as a result of their past experiences, and (c) ways parents interact with their children's school personnel. In this chapter, I discuss (a) participants, (b) setting, (c) procedures, (d) my own role as researcher in the study, (e) methods of data collection, (f) methods of data analysis, (g) trustworthiness, and (h) ethical considerations.

Design

This is a qualitative study with a grounded theory design. The body of literature does not address the impact of parents' past school experiences on their participation in their children's education for middle school. Therefore, a qualitative approach was necessary in order to provide insight into the phenomenon for middle school. Barnett and Taylor (2009) conducted a quantitative study related to this phenomenon, but alluded to the need for qualitative research. They noted the potential of interviewing parents to provide insight into the intergenerational aspect of school-family relationships (Barnett & Taylor, 2009). Miller et al. (2011) used a qualitative approach in examining the recollections of mothers regarding their schooling and how the recalled experiences impacted their preparations for school of their young children. Westergård and Galloway

(2010) and Mapp (2003) also used a qualitative approach to explore parental perceptions of their involvement with their children's schools. In addition, Tung (2006) chose a qualitative approach in conducting a case study of reasons for parent participation at the Boston Arts Academy. Clark (2011) also chose a qualitative approach, conducting a case study of family engagement with four Latino families. Therefore, a qualitative approach for this study was appropriate, because it allowed the opportunity for parents to share their own voices about aspects of the phenomenon that may not be considered in a quantitative study. This qualitative study also provided data that can guide further research.

A grounded theory design is appropriate when theories are not present or when theories are present but they do not specifically address the population or variables of interest (Creswell, 2013). Although theories exist related to parent-school relationships, none of them deal specifically with the phenomenon presented in the current study. The systematic approach of Strauss and Corbin (1990) is suited for studies in which the researcher seeks to develop a theory to explain processes and interactions in a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). In the current study, a systematic grounded theory approach was appropriate because this study focused on the process of how parents' past experiences as adolescents in school influenced their current attitudes toward and participation in their children's education. I chose this approach rather than a more interpretive approach because it fit the purpose of developing a theory to explain a process. The rigor of the approach strengthens the value of this study in identifying concepts for further studies. I also chose this approach because as a novice researcher I

was personally more confident using a more scientific approach with clearly delineated guidelines.

In discussing the purpose of systematic grounded theory guidelines/procedures, Corbin and Strauss (1990) emphasized both the necessity of maintaining the rigor of scientific research and adhering to appropriate qualitative research characteristics. They explained that “Grounded theorists share a conviction with many other qualitative researchers that the usual canons of ‘good science’ should be retained, but require *redefinition* in order to fit the realities of qualitative research” (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 5). In systematic grounded theory design, data collection involves the use of interviews, observations, and other documents and sources. Analysis begins immediately through identification of concepts that require further investigation. The researcher continues data collection, not only with the questions that have been prepared for interviews in advance, but also with issues that have arisen in the data that require further investigation. Thus, data collection and analysis are ongoing and concurrent, a process known as the “constant comparative method” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 104). Through a process of open coding, the researcher conceptualizes the data, groups concepts into categories, and continues sampling based on the need to further investigate the identified concepts and categories (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

In axial coding, the researcher evaluates categories by identifying their (a) properties and dimensions, (b) interactions and actions, and (c) consequences (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). The researcher also identifies contexts and processes that impact individuals and events (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). As data collection and analysis continue, the researcher continually writes memos and examines the data for patterns and

relationships between concepts. Throughout this process, the researcher constantly compares new data to existing concepts and categories to determine if the patterns hold true (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

As the process of grounded theory data analysis continues, the researcher is able to develop theories based on hypotheses about these relationships. It becomes necessary in theory-building to identify one category as the core phenomenon around which the relationships between categories and sub-categories are identified. This is the process of selective coding (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Grounded theory analysis concludes as the researcher makes use of diagrams in order to visually represent relationships between categories in a phenomenon (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). By using this process, the researcher is able to create a theoretical model grounded in data. Corbin and Strauss explained that the use of diagrams is a process that begins with simple visualizations of concepts and grows more complex as researchers constantly compare concepts with data. The end result is a grounded theory model (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Research Questions

This study examined the following research questions:

1. How do parents' adolescent experiences influence their attitudes toward school as it relates to their own middle school children?
2. How do parents' attitudes toward their children's education impact their interactions with their children's middle school personnel?
3. What strategies do parents employ as they participate in their middle school children's education?

Participants

In choosing participants for this study, I utilized sampling typologies delineated by Creswell (2013) followed by theoretical sampling as described by Corbin and Strauss (2008). Corbin and Strauss acknowledge that initial decisions about sampling relate to the groups of people and data the researcher wishes to study. In order to obtain maximum variation for this study, I used the criteria of (a) site, (b) ethnicity, (c) socioeconomic status, and (d) gender. The purpose of this type of sampling, according to Creswell (2013), is to document variation in participants and identify patterns they have in common.

I initially employed three typologies described by Creswell: convenience sampling, purposive criterion sampling, and maximum variation. I began with a convenience sample, as I chose participants from the school system in which I teach. Out of the eight middle schools in the district, six participated in the study. I did not choose to include the school in which I teach, and another school did not participate, because the principal did not respond to invitations. The two schools that did not participate were Title I schools. One of the six schools that did participate, Middle School D was also a Title I school. Six schools participated in making available the initial interest questionnaire, but there were no respondents from one of the schools. This limited actual participation to five schools.

I also selected participants using purposive criterion sampling. The criterion for participants was that they were parents of middle school students in the school system in which the study took place.

Creswell indicates that disbursement of participants in a grounded theory study provides contextual information to use in developing categories for axial coding. I attempted to use a multicultural group of participants. In addition to the nine White participants, the study also included one African American, one Native American/American Indian, and one White participant from Germany. The ethnic makeup of participants closely resembled the ethnic makeup of the county in which the study took place. Criteria for variation also included gender. Miller et al. (2011) note that many studies involving parents focus on reports from mothers. However, findings from their study pointed to the need to include fathers in parent involvement research as well. Therefore, I chose to involve both men and women to participate in this study. Ten participants were mothers, and two of the participants in this study were fathers.

Specific demographic information obtained through survey completion was related to age, ethnicity, education level, and income level. The average income level for participants was higher than average income for the county. See Table 1 to view a summary of participant demographic data.

Table 1

Participant Demographic Information

Participant	Child's School	Age	Ethnicity Level	Education Level	Income
Monique	A	41	White	Some college	\$76,000 to \$100,000
Melissa	A	52	White	Some college	Over \$100,000
Anna	B	48	White	College graduate	Over \$100,000
Wendy	A	42	White	Some college	Over \$100,000
Gretchen	A	49	White	Graduate degree	\$51,000 to \$75,000
William	A	61	White	College graduate	Over \$100,000
Wanda	E	42	African American	Associate degree	\$51,000 to \$75,000
Gabriella	C	35	Hispanic	Did not finish high school	\$36,000 to \$50,000
Keith	D	42	White	H.S. graduate	\$25,000 to \$35,000
Ginny	B	44	White	Graduate degree	Over \$100,000
Marlis	C	40	White (German)	Some college	\$76,000 to \$100,000
Bly	C	40	Native American	College graduate	\$36,000 to \$50,000

As the study progressed, I also employed theoretical sampling as explained by Strauss and Corbin (1990). In theoretical sampling, concepts that have been identified in analysis of the data guide the researcher in further sampling. Rather than focusing on participant characteristics, the researcher focuses on locating participants who can provide insights to the theory and then focuses on asking questions that provide insight

into the categories being examined (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). In this way, it is the concepts, rather than individuals, that guide data collection. The research study evolves as new concepts emerge (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Of necessity, the question arose as to the number of participants needed for this study. Strauss and Corbin (1990) emphasize that sampling should continue until saturation of categories and variation within categories has been reached, but they do not provide specific guidelines as to the number of participants or interviews. Creswell (2007) suggested that 20 to 30 interviews are typical in order to saturate categories in a grounded theory design. Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) noted that “Although the idea of saturation is helpful at the conceptual level, it provides little practical guidance for estimating sample sizes, prior to data collection, necessary for conducting quality research” (p. 59). They used data from a large study in which 60 young women in Nigeria and Ghana were interviewed related to AIDS prevention. As the researchers developed procedures for their study, they also investigated how many interviews were needed to obtain theoretical saturation. They created an audit trail to document code creations and revisions and analyzed them mathematically. Results showed that saturation was achieved after an average of 12 interviews, although they noted that complexity of data and consistency of interview questions influence saturation (Guest et al., 2006). I initially attempted to enlist approximately 10 to 30 participants. As I collected and analyzed data, I continued interviewing until I obtained sufficient saturation to ground my theory. Corbin and Strauss (2008) described saturation as “the point in analysis when all categories are well developed in terms of properties, dimensions, and variations” (p. 263). They noted that saturation involves more than simply realizing that

new themes are no longer emerging. Rather, they note, categories should be well developed in terms of properties, dimensions, and relationships to other categories. They explain that when researchers have explored categories in depth, then saturation is reached, although they acknowledge that knowing when saturation is reached is “complex” (p. 148). They elaborate, “In reality, a researcher could go on collecting data forever, adding new properties and dimensions to categories,” (p. 149) but state that ultimately the researcher must make a determination that categories are saturated in light of the study that is underway (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Early in the data collection process for this study, patterns began to emerge. As I continued data collection, additional themes surfaced that actually became dimensions and properties of categories, thus adding to the development of categories. As exceptions arose, I collected more data and compared new findings to existing data to determine meanings. Finally, it was clear that, although it would be possible to add more data such as variations in situations and experiences, the categories in the study were well developed.

Setting

The setting for this study was the Hope County School system (pseudonym), a suburban school district on the outskirts of a city of approximately 196,000 in the southeastern United States. U.S. Census Bureau 2010 estimates of demographic information for the overall county population was 73.8% White, 14.9% African-American, 5% Latino/Hispanic, 3.8% Asian, 2.8% Bi-racial, and .5% Other minority groups. The average household income was \$66,333 ("State and County QuickFacts," n.d.). There were eight middle schools in the county, three of which were Title I schools. In addition, there was one alternative school. Total student enrollment in the district was

approximately 24,000 students, and the system employed approximately 3,000 faculty and staff members. The authorizing body for the system was the Board of Education, consisting of five members. Administrative positions in the county included a Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent, and three Assistant Superintendents. The assistant positions related to a Department of Student Support, Department of Student Learning, and Department of Student Learning/Special Services. Various other positions required for the functioning of the school system were included as well (District Website, 2012).

One reason for the selection of this setting was convenience. I had access to participants because principals agreed for me to recruit participants from their schools. However, convenience alone is an insufficient rationale for selection. This setting was also appropriate because there was enough variation within the county to obtain a representative sample. The school system had very affluent schools, those that had diversity within the schools, and Title I schools. In addition, there was a sufficient level of cultural diversity in the system so that a variety of racial/ethnic groups in the sample was reflective of those groups in the school system.

Procedures

Initially, I applied for and received Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for this study, (see Appendix A) as outlined on Liberty University's website. The first step in gaining access to participants was to obtain approval from the district superintendent. For this, I submitted an overview of my research plan in a letter explaining that I would also submit my application to the IRB. In the letter, I requested permission to conduct the study in the district (see Appendix B). In my initial email to principals, I provided a

set of guidelines that specified the variation of parents needed for the study. Guidelines included the need for diversity in (a) socioeconomic status, (b) race and ethnicity, (c) gender, and (d) positive/negative school orientation. Positive school orientation referred to parents whose interactions with school personnel had been generally positive and whose support of their children in school was evident. This support could be based on visits to the school, conversations with school personnel, and/or involvement in school functions. Negative school orientation referred to parents whose interactions with school personnel had been characterized by discontent or whose consistent support of their children appeared to be lacking. After I received approval from principals, I met with four of the principals briefly and reviewed the purpose of the study and the criteria I sought in participants. I also made available to principals a very brief questionnaire that they could have parents complete as they came into contact with them (see Appendix C). The questionnaire asked if parents would be willing to participate in a research study that would aid schools in understanding how to better communicate with families. Two of the principals were unavailable at the time I took the questionnaires to their schools, so I left them with the school secretaries. I reviewed completed questionnaires and contacted potential participants by telephone.

Before I gathered any data, I asked potential participants to read and sign the participant consent form (see Appendix D). Once I received the consent form from participants, I sent them the participant survey (see Appendix E) and the reflective booklet (see Appendix F) to complete. For participants who chose to correspond by email, I sent the electronic version of the booklet, which was a table in Microsoft Word that enabled participants to type information directly into the forms (see Appendix G).

Responses to survey questions provided demographic information and a general overview of parents' perceptions of their children's schools. In addition, the survey included questions that revealed whether parents' past experiences in school were generally positive or negative. The sample size was to be from 10 to 30 participants, depending upon how long it took to reach theoretical saturation. After potential participants began to respond, it appeared necessary to request more participants. One reason was that most of the respondents who had returned consent forms were from the same school and were very similar in demographic profile. As a result, I submitted a change in protocol request to the IRB requesting up to 40 participants and approval to expand convenience sampling by seeking participants through conversations with friends and acquaintances. After participation was established, I also conducted interviews with participants, which I audio recorded and had transcribed. Interviews with parents were conducted in a mutually agreed upon location.

The Researcher's Role

As the researcher for this qualitative inquiry, I acted as the human instrument for data collection and analysis. I am a seventh-grade social studies teacher at a Title I school in the participating school district. This year marks my 19th year of teaching in Title I middle schools in the participating county. Early in life, I was exposed to excellent teaching through my mother's Sunday School class. For many years, my mother was also a kindergarten teacher. She would occasionally invite me to teach her class and would provide pointers to better teaching. I earned my undergraduate degree with a major in Bible and a minor in Christian education at a small Bible college in Tennessee. Later, I earned my M.Ed. in Middle Grades Education from a state university

in the southeastern United States and my Ed.S. in Teaching and Learning from a large private university in the eastern United States. I am a National Board Certified Teacher in Social Studies.

Several considerations impacted my views of the data and research surroundings. First, I hold a biblical worldview. I believe God loves all individuals and that Jesus died for each one. Therefore, each individual's experience matters to God. Second, I believe that students should be given every reasonable advantage that will allow them to succeed. I believe that a better understanding of how parents' past experiences as students carry over into their adult attitudes and behaviors may provide valuable insight for educators and parents.

In regard to my role as researcher, I was able to establish a professional relationship with participants, but one in which they felt comfortable in sharing their experiences with me. Although I taught in the school system in which the study was conducted, I selected participants from the other schools in the system, rather than my own. These safeguards helped control for any biases that I may have had as researcher coming into the study. As I interacted with the participants and the data, I acted as the human instrument in analyzing the data. In this capacity, I examined the data and interpreted it according to the message I believed each participant was trying to convey.

Data Collection

An essential component of qualitative research, as stated by Creswell (2013), is rigorous data collection in which the researcher uses multiple forms of data. For the purposes of this study, I used three primary forms of data collection: parent surveys, reflective booklets, and interviews. I also followed up the interviews by calling, meeting

in person, or sending emails to parent participants. In this way, I was able to share transcripts with participants, ask questions about data that needed clarification, and allow participants to share further information upon which they had reflected since our initial interview. Throughout the process, I used memoing as a means of promoting theoretical sensitivity, organizing thoughts, and interacting with the data.

Surveys

The first purpose of the participant survey (see Appendix E) was to gain demographic information about parents. Additionally, these surveys, along with interviews, provided data regarding parents' attitudes and interactions with their children's education. Through participants' answers to questions 15 and 16, I was able to gather information regarding individuals' overall attitudes toward their school experiences and how they influenced participants' attitudes toward their children's education. In order to make certain that the instrument was valid and reliable, I had a panel of middle school teachers review the tool.

Reflective Booklets

The second data source was a reflective booklet that contained prompts designed to elicit participants' memories of their experiences as adolescents in school. Although the general format of the booklet encouraged participants to reflect and write for a few minutes each day regarding their middle school experiences, it was possible to complete the surveys all at one sitting if participants elected to do so. For two reasons, I chose to have participants complete both the booklets and the surveys before conducting their interviews. First, I felt that working with the questions and the prompts would sensitize participants to reflect on their school experiences, thus producing richer and more

comprehensive data in the subsequent interviews. Second, by obtaining these data sources prior to interviews, I was able to review the documents and reference specific items while interviewing participants.

Parent Interviews

Parent interviews provided data that informed the study regarding (a) parents' attitudes towards their children's schools, (b) parents' experiences as students, and (c) parents' perceptions regarding the influence their past experiences had on their current attitudes and actions. As interviews served as the central point of data collection, it was essential to choose the most appropriate interview format for this qualitative, grounded theory study. Patton (1990) described four interview approaches and shared the strengths and weaknesses of each. In the informal conversational interview, questions naturally flow without being predetermined. This approach allows for openness and relevance, but numerous problems can arise from its insufficient organization. In the interview guide approach, the researcher may use a list of topics to address, but does not have specific wording of questions in advance. In this approach, the researcher is free to probe and ask in-depth questions within the topics on the guide. However, the researcher is not allowed to explore new topics that arise. In the standardized open-ended interview approach, questions are asked in specific wording and sequence, with no variation. The strength of this approach is that it aids in data analysis and comparability, as well as reducing bias by the researcher (Patton, 1990). However, it does not allow for the exploration of new concepts that are essential to grounded theory. Patton described a scenario that is more closely aligned with grounded theory:

It is also possible to combine an interview guide approach with a standardized open-ended approach. Thus a number of basic questions may be worded precisely in a predetermined fashion, while permitting the interviewer more flexibility in probing and more decision-making flexibility in determining when it is appropriate to explore certain subjects in greater depth or even to undertake whole new areas of inquiry that were not originally included in the interview instrument. It is even possible to adopt a standardized open-ended interview format in the early part of an interview and then leave the interviewer free to pursue any subjects of interest during the latter parts of the interview. (p. 287)

After examining the various approaches, I chose the approach introduced in the latter part of Patton's discussion, because it is consistent with the guidelines offered by Corbin and Strauss (2008). The ideal they propose for true theoretical sampling involves developing a preliminary questionnaire, which is discarded once data begins to unfold. However, they acknowledge that this is not always possible due to requirements of human research committees (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

For this study, I developed an interview protocol that has a variety of probes, beginning with general, non-invasive questions. I gradually moved toward questions that asked about specific school experiences of participants. I used a broad perspective related to adolescent experiences, consistent with Bronfenbrenner's (1977) theory. Thus, questions addressed not only the school context, but also home and other contexts that contributed to participants' overall experiences as adolescents in school. Questions were open-ended to allow participants maximum opportunity to share their experiences. Also, when participants mentioned topics that seemed pertinent to the study, I followed them,

consistent with grounded theory. The use of this interview procedure ensured that I gathered the same type of data from all participants, and it also allowed flexibility in exploring salient topics. All interviews were conducted at the public library in the county where the research took place, except for two; one of which was conducted in a private room of the participant's restaurant at her request, and the other, which was conducted in my home due to its more convenient location for the participant. I audio recorded each interview using a digital recorder. See Table 2 for Parent Interview questions.

Table 2

Parent Interview Questions

Description/Factual Questions Regarding Child's School

1. Will you please describe for me what your child's school is like? When you go there, what do you see and hear? What are people doing and saying? What do you notice?
2. Please tell me what are some facts someone moving into the area would want to know about (name of school)?
3. If you were evaluating your child's school, what kind of rating would you give it? Please explain the reasons behind your evaluation.

Questions about Parents' School Experiences as Adolescents

4. Please describe for me what middle school was like for you. Also, please tell about your early high school experiences.
5. Please describe the most positive aspects of your middle school/early high school experience.
6. What do you feel were negative aspects of your middle and early high school experience? Please describe them.
7. During your middle/early high school years, what kinds of attitudes and expectations did your parents have about your education? How did they communicate their attitudes and expectations to you?

8. In what ways were your parents involved in your education? Please describe all the ways they were involved, at home, school, or in other ways.
 9. What experience(s) in middle school and early high school made the most lasting impression on you, either positive or negative? How did this event impact your overall school experience?
-

Questions about Parents' Attitudes and Interactions with Child's Education

10. How do you feel your own school experiences in middle and early high school contributed to your feelings about your child's education?
 11. How do your feelings about education influence the ways you communicate with your child about school? How do your feelings affect the ways you communicate with your child's teachers and other school personnel?
 12. In what ways are you involved with your child's education, at the school, at home, or in other ways?
-

Patton (1990) described six types of interview questions and discussed the time frame of questions. He noted that it is preferable to begin with present tense, descriptive questions, as they are straightforward and easy to answer. Thus, my purpose for beginning with the description/factual questions regarding the child's school was to (a) build rapport with parents by asking non-threatening questions, and (b) gain insight into the parents' perceptions of their children's school. Responses to Questions 1 and 2 revealed whether the parent noticed positive or negative aspects of the school and

whether the parent had been interested enough in the child's school to find out information about it. Question 3 is more direct and asks for the parent's opinion of the school. Answers to this question revealed whether the parent had an overall positive or negative attitude toward school, or whether there were specific issues or qualities that contributed to the parent's opinion.

Questions 4 through 9 were designed to aid parents in recalling their own adolescent school experiences. In discussing how individuals create meaning from their experiences, Adler (1956) postulated:

Environment only gives him certain impressions. These . . . impressions, and the manner in which he 'experiences' them – that is to say, the interpretation he makes of these experiences – are the bricks which he uses in his own 'creative' way in building up his attitude toward life. It is his individual way of using these bricks, or in other words his attitude toward life, which determines this relationship to the outside world. (p. 206)

Questions related to parents' school experiences provided an understanding of how parents developed their attitudes about education based on their own school experiences. Questions 4, 5, and 6 related primarily to the school context. Questions 7 and 8 asked about participants' own parents and their attitudes, expectations, and involvement in participants' education. Research shows that intergenerational influences often play a role in parents' behaviors (Barnett & Taylor, 2009; Mapp, 2003; Neppel et al., 2009; O'Toole & Abreu, 2005). These findings are consistent with Bandura's (2005) social cognitive theory. Answers to these questions revealed intergenerational influences in

approaches to education. Question 9 encompasses the overall experience regardless of context.

The last three questions relate to parents' attitudes and interactions with their children's education. Question 10 directly relates to the way parents may have formed attitudes based on their own experiences, as theorized by Adler (1956). Questions 11 and 12 elucidated the process of how parents' attitudes influenced their behaviors. Answers to these questions also aided in understanding how parents interact with their children within the microsystem of home and with others in the mesosystem that includes home and school (Bronfenbrenner, 1977).

Data Analysis

Although Corbin subsequently moved toward a more interpretive approach of data analysis, I used the more systematic grounded theory approach that Corbin and Strauss originally established (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) because it is more in line with a scientific perspective. Unlike other forms of qualitative research, data analysis in grounded theory begins as soon as data collection has started. Once interviews are transcribed, data analysis procedures involve open coding, axial coding, and selective coding of the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Transcription of Interviews

I began data analysis with transcriptions of interviews. Each interview was transcribed by an individual who signed a confidentiality agreement and who works at a psychology group office and understands the value of confidentiality. Once the transcriptionist finished transcribing each interview, we went back through each document, listening to the recording again to verify the transcriptionist's accuracy. I

completed this process for the first two recordings, and the transcriptionist completed it for each subsequent recording. Once I received each of these transcripts, I also compared excerpts of recordings to sections of transcripts to verify the accuracy of each document.

Open Coding

Using Strauss and Corbin's (1990) procedures for analysis, I coded the transcripts using open coding, which is a process of creating concepts, or codes, from descriptive data. The first step in open coding involves conceptualization of data. Conceptual labels are abstract concepts generated by the researcher through (a) working with the data and asking questions, (b) using codes related to the literature, and (c) choosing "in vivo" codes, which are actual words and phrases participants use (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). As I read through each manuscript, I highlighted or underlined pertinent sections and wrote conceptual labels. I also wrote margin notes regarding observations and questions about the data. Once I had gone through each transcript writing codes and notes, I entered the codes into a data table, along with quotes, properties, and dimensions. I coded the surveys and booklets in much the same way, although the standard format of those documents made coding of them more uniform for most participants, particularly the survey. Once I finished the open coding process for all transcripts and other data sources, I had a total of 129 codes. Constantly comparing new data with concepts that have been identified allows them to be grouped together into categories of information (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). It was necessary to group the concepts into categories in order to manage the data. I combined similar concepts, and others became properties or dimensions of categories. Some minor codes were discarded. By following this process, I then had 20 possible categories. Once again, I grouped data until I was able to identify major

categories. Concepts that appeared to be relevant from analysis of data were integrated into the existing set of questions for the next interview (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

Axial Coding

In grounded theory research, coding phases often overlap (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). During the process of open coding, I made comparisons of new data to existing codes and looked for patterns in the data. This began the process of axial coding. When open coding was complete, I organized the data from each participant around categories. For each main category that I had identified in the open coding process, I created a table that included in vivo codes from participants, as well as subcategories related to the category. Strauss and Corbin's (1990) procedures for axial coding specify that the analyst must relate subcategories to categories through a paradigm model that establishes relationships. The analyst identifies the categories in terms of (a) causal conditions, (b) phenomenon, (c) context, (d) intervening conditions, (e) action/interaction strategies, and (f) consequences (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). It is important in grounded theory research to constantly compare the analysis to the data, a method developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Therefore, after identifying the significant categories, I again examined the data to determine the location of each in the paradigm model or to discard them.

Selective Coding

The third stage of analysis in grounded theory is selective coding. Selective coding involves the integration of concepts and categories identified in earlier data analysis stages. In this stage, I identified one core category around which other categories were related according to the paradigm model (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Other categories were arranged as subcategories. I also asked questions and wrote

statements of hypotheses related to the paradigm model, revisiting the data to confirm or refute my hypotheses. This process elicited the identification of contextual conditions, intervening conditions, and strategies. In this phase, I also generated a theoretical model of the process represented by the phenomenon. This involved creating a visual model that illustrates the interrelation of categories in the theory (Creswell, 2013).

Memoing

Memoing is an essential component of the data analysis process in grounded theory research. Memos contain codes, ideas about the emerging theory, and procedural notes that aid in theoretical sampling (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Memoing begins with the first data analysis session and continues throughout the research study (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Throughout the data collection and analysis process, I wrote memos, which included (a) ideas and thoughts I had regarding the emerging data and theory, (b) observations regarding participants and interviews, (c) questions about the data, (d) diagrams regarding categories and processes, (e) codes and categories, (f) tables of information for the data, and (g) notes regarding procedures and operations (see Appendix H).

Synthesis of Data

Qualitative research using grounded theory design involves multiple forms of data collection (Creswell, 2013), which must be synthesized in order to create a theoretical model. Corbin and Strauss (2008) pointed out that the coding process for other types of data is the same as the process used for interviews. Therefore, I used the same coding process for parent surveys and reflective booklets that I use for interviews. In demonstrating methodology for grounded theory analysis, Corbin and Strauss (2008)

explained the process of interviewing participants with different perspectives. After obtaining data from participants with differing perspectives, researchers compare the data to previous data, beginning at the conceptual level. New data that fit existing concepts are added to the same conceptual labels, but the researchers ask questions that enable them to expand concepts to include new properties and dimensions. In addition, the researchers look for new concepts to code (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). This was the method I used as I synthesized the data from various participants.

Trustworthiness

Qualitative research involves an attempt to understand the complexities of human experience as they relate to various phenomena. Unlike quantitative studies in which rigor is ensured through a paradigm of validity, reliability, and objectivity, qualitative studies holistically examine multiple realities. Thus, qualitative research employs a parallel paradigm to ensure (a) credibility, rather than internal validity; (b) transferability, rather than external validity; (c) dependability, rather than reliability; and (d) confirmability, rather than objectivity (Schwandt, et al., 2007). Using these criteria, safeguards must be in place to ensure the trustworthiness of the study. I employed several methods to accomplish this goal.

Thick, Rich Description

In order to provide transferability to readers, I included “thick descriptive data,” (Schwandt et al., 2007, p. 19), in which I included details to inform readers about the context of the study, participants, and their experiences. These descriptions allow readers to determine to what extent the findings may apply to other situations (Creswell, 2013; Schwandt et al., 2007). Participants in this study were from a suburb in the Southeastern

United States. They varied in terms of background experiences, education level, income level, age, and gender. Comparing descriptions of these participants and their backgrounds to other individuals and situations may guide readers in terms of transferability.

Peer Review

I asked a peer reviewer, who was a middle school teacher with a doctorate degree in education and who was a member of the dissertation committee, to examine the coding documents in order to evaluate methods of data collection and interpretations. I shared transcripts of interviews, notes, and open coding tables, and we discussed the coding process. The peer reviewer and I both kept written records of the review sessions, as suggested by Creswell (2013). This process provided greater reliability and integrity in the study because the peer reviewer examined the components of the study objectively and challenged areas that needed refining.

Member Checking

It is essential to allow participants to review information from qualitative research in order to accurately represent their experiences with the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). In this procedure, I shared an overview of transcripts, themes, interpretations, and the theoretical model that I generated with participants either through email, by mail, or in person (see Appendix K). I asked participants to appraise the information for accuracy and completeness and to confirm and/or make clarifications where needed. Several participants responded and indicated agreement with the material. There were no participants who expressed disagreement. In addition to overviews, I invited one participant to conduct a more in-depth member check, in which she read the description

of herself as a participant, all excerpts that related to her interview, examined the model, and reviewed the explanation of the model. I verbally questioned her regarding the authenticity of my findings, and she confirmed them and emphasized their accuracy.

Reflexivity

Any researcher's worldview and experiences influence interpretations. It is important for readers to know what factors impact the study (Creswell, 2013). Within this manuscript, I addressed the biases and assumptions I hold that may have influenced the study. Readers may want to read the research report in light of these biases and assumptions.

Triangulation of Data Collection

Triangulation of data increases credibility of qualitative research by using different sources and methods of data collection (Schwandt, Lincoln, & Guba, 2007). In this study, the use of multiple forms of data collection –surveys, reflective booklets, interviews, follow-up emails, and additional phone interviews –provided the variation needed to increase the trustworthiness of the data.

The primary forms of data collection were the surveys, booklets, and interviews. The surveys concisely revealed (a) participants' relationships with school personnel; (b) the frequency, type, and nature of interactions with school personnel; (c) types of school-based activities in which participants were involved; (d) types of home-based educational activities in which participants were involved; (e) participants' overall view of the nature of their middle school experiences, and (f) participants' thoughts regarding the influence of experiences on their feelings about their children's education. Reflective booklets focused strictly on participants' experiences as adolescents in school, although

participants were asked to indicate with a star items that they wanted to keep the same or have different for their children, or that influenced their attitudes toward or interactions with their children's teachers. Instructions also directed participants to note any actions they took in response to these items. The interviews addressed all areas of inquiry, including participants' (a) opinions of their children's school, (b) experiences as adolescents in school, (c) attitudes and interactions with their children and with school personnel based on attitudes, and (d) questions that referred back to the surveys and booklets. Each of these sources overlapped the others in some ways, thus verifying information, and each provided information the others did not address, although the interview protocol allowed me to ask about items that I felt needed more clarification.

In addition to the primary data sources, I sent follow-up emails encouraging participants to share any further information they may have recalled since our interviews. Follow-up emails also allowed me to ask questions about items that needed clarification. I also conducted an additional phone interview for one participant and gained further information from a participant who contacted me.

Audit Trail and Memoing

Throughout the process of data collection and analysis, I kept records through the use of an audit trail (see Appendix I). I created a table of information for each participant that detailed activities relating to participant recruitment, data collection, and data analysis. I noted dates for activities such as (a) administration of surveys and booklets, (b) receipt of data, (c) interviews, (d) transcriptions of interviews, and (e) coding activities. In addition, I kept records regarding phone conversations and meetings with participants. Another aspect of the audit trail was a list of codes and categories that were

generated by the data. This list showed revisions of codes and the use of colors and symbols I used in developing categories, subcategories, and dimensions of categories. Finally, the audit trail included entries regarding development of the theory in my memos. The combination of these strategies promotes maximum transferability for this study.

Ethical Considerations

In conducting any research, it is essential to follow ethical standards to ensure respect and fairness to all participants. Personal information included in this study could present an embarrassment for parent participants and/or their children. In order to preserve confidentiality, I used pseudonyms for all participants, as well as for any setting that might reveal identities. I also followed informed consent procedures in order to eliminate any misunderstanding potential participants may have had. I also had the transcriptionist sign a confidentiality agreement (see Appendix L). Finally, I stored data in a locked safe, and I protected electronic data with passwords.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

The purpose of this qualitative grounded theory research study was to explore how parents' past experiences as adolescents in middle and early high school influence their attitudes and behaviors toward their own middle school children's education. The study examined the following research questions:

1. How do parents' adolescent experiences influence their attitudes toward school as it relates to their own middle school children?
2. How do parents' attitudes toward their children's education impact their interactions with their children's middle school personnel?
3. What strategies do parents employ as they participate in their children's education?

In this chapter, I describe participant characteristics and findings from the data as they relate to the research questions. The explanation of results includes my theoretical model.

Participants

There were 12 participants in this study. All participants were parents of middle school students from five schools in the selected school district. Five participants were from Middle School A, two were from Middle School B, three were from Middle School C, one was from Middle School D, and one was from Middle School E. Ten of the participants in the study were mothers and two were fathers. Ethnicity of participants included (a) nine White participants, one of whom was Native German; (b) one African American; (c) one Hispanic participant; and (d) one Native American/American Indian. Participants ranged in age from 35 to 61, with an average age of 44.6. One participant

was in the \$25,000 to \$35,000 bracket, two were in the \$36,000 to \$50,000 bracket, two were in the \$51,000 to \$74,000 bracket, two were in the \$75,000 to \$100,000 bracket, and five participants made over \$100,000 per year.

Monique

Most of Monique's involvement with her child's educational activities was at home, although she indicated that she attends all the school functions listed on the survey except school dances. Later, she indicated that she would also attend a school dance if her son wanted her to attend. Monique also circled all of the items listed for home involvement with the child's education except outside tutoring. After interviewing Monique, it is clear why this particular category would not be one she would choose for her child, because her school experiences as an adolescent gave her a desire to always be prepared to help her children with academic questions.

Monique's child attends Middle School A. Communication between Monique and her son's teachers is infrequent (once or twice a year, as indicated on the survey) and is usually initiated by the parent. Forms of communication that she circled on the survey were phone calls, notes, and email. In categorizing her relationship with her child's teachers, she circled "Positive." Monique's middle school/early high school experiences were characterized by very active involvement in her church and in music-related activities at school, particularly orchestra. Monique circled "Mostly negative experiences" to describe her own experiences in middle and early high school. It is clear from Monique's interview that music and her faith in God are still two areas of importance in her life.

Melissa

Although involved at both home and school with her child's education, much of Melissa's involvement centers on school-based activities. Due to her active involvement at the school, she is in close contact with her child's teachers. Communication is two-way and includes phone calls and notes, although much of it is face-to-face interaction. She circled "Friendly," "Helpful," and "Caring" to describe her relationship with her child's teachers. However, Melissa made it clear that she will not hesitate to confront teachers whenever she feels it is necessary.

Melissa grew up and attended school in a large megalopolis in the Northeast and noted that her school experiences were "Mostly positive experiences." Although her parents were largely uninvolved in her daily life, she described school as being "fun" and was very involved with friends and activities.

Anna

Anna noted that she participates in several ways with her son's education. She provides homework help, discusses learning, monitors her son's grades online, and checks teachers' websites. On the survey, Anna circled all categories related to involvement in school-based activities. She also obtains outside tutoring for her son. Communication between Anna and her son's teachers is usually initiated by Anna or her husband and takes the form of emails or in-person contact. Anna noted all positive and no negative categories on the survey related to her relationship with her son's teachers.

As Anna was growing up, her parents were very involved in her life and education and were very supportive of her; however, she felt that communication with her parents was deficient. She was a "good student" who "never got into trouble" and

was involved with school activities, friends, dating, and church youth activities. She circled “Mostly positive” to describe her own adolescent experiences in school.

Wendy

Wendy earned an Associate’s degree in Management in college and is only a few classes short of having earned a four-year degree. She is a successful sales representative. She and her husband are both very involved with her child’s education both at home and at school. She circled all categories of home involvement, although she noted that her husband is the one who reads with her child. In addition to home and school involvement, she also has procured a tutor who comes to her house, and her son is involved in Boy Scouts.

Wendy usually initiates communication with her child’s teachers through email and person-to-person contact. She noted that “All teachers are very different!” She circled all the positive categories, but also circled “Negative,” “Frustrating,” and “Unfriendly” to describe her relationship with her child’s teachers. Her own adolescent experiences included much instability until she went to live with her mother and stepfather. Wendy circled “Mostly negative experiences” to describe her own middle and early high school experiences.

Gretchen

Gretchen works at three different jobs, and her husband is disabled. She and her husband have five children, one of whom attends Middle School A. Gretchen helps with homework, provides a homework/study area for her child, and monitors her child’s grades online. She attends Open House, parent nights, sporting events, and parent

conferences at her child's school. She has also volunteered in ways in which she could support the school from home while she attends to the needs of her family.

Gretchen's communication with teachers is generally initiated by her or her husband, although she did not specify ways in which they communicate. She marked "Friendly," "Helpful," and "Positive" to describe her relationship with her child's teachers. Gretchen attended a private school in the Northeastern United States. She came from a large family and grew up in a supportive environment at home, school, and in the community. She noted that her middle/early high school experiences were "Mostly positive experiences."

William

William is the father of two children, one of whom attends middle school. He works as a physics and mechanical engineer. William provides homework help, monitors his child's book bag and assignments, monitors grades online, and checks teachers' websites. In school-based involvement, William attends Open House, parent nights, concerts, and parent conferences. In addition, he has gone into the classroom to make presentations in math and English, emphasizing the relevance of those classes to everyday life. Aside from school involvement, William is also involved with his son in Boy Scouts.

William's son is a special-needs child, so communication with his son's teachers often centers on his son's unique needs as a student. Communication usually is initiated by the teacher and most often is conducted through email, although William also meets with his son's teachers. He circled all of the positive categories to describe his relationship with his son's teachers and expressed that the teachers have been very

helpful with his son. William grew up in a supportive home, but did not enjoy having to relocate each year as a result of promotions his father earned in his career. However, he circled “Mostly positive experiences” to describe his middle school/early high school years.

Wanda

Wanda earned an Associate’s degree in college and would like to go back and earn another college degree. Most of Wanda’s involvement with her child’s education is at home, providing a homework/study area, discussing learning, going over her child’s book bag and assignments, monitoring grades online, and checking teachers’ websites. However, she also attends Open House, parent nights and parent conferences at the school. Communication with her child’s teachers takes various forms, including phone calls, notes, email, and person-to-person contact, and is usually initiated by the teacher. Wanda circled all of the positive categories to describe her relationship with her son’s teachers, and also described their caring and helpful approach.

Wanda’s own experiences as an adolescent were difficult, and she circled “Mostly negative experiences” to describe those years. She grew up and attended school in a large megalopolis in the Northeast. Although her mother provided well for her and her sister and she had the support of her grandparents, she experienced sexual abuse from several family members over a period of time. These experiences, along with being bullied and teased at school, left her with emotional scars that impacted her as an adolescent and continue to present a challenge for her to overcome as an adult. Wanda’s emotional challenges at times impact her ability to support her child as she would like, and she has been recently hospitalized with suicide attempts. However, her greatest

desire is to protect her children and to provide them with a better life than she experienced.

Gabriella

Gabriella has two children who attend middle school and a child in high school. She and her husband are part owners in a Mexican restaurant. She is involved with her children at home by providing homework help, discussing learning, going over her children's book bags and assignments, monitoring grades online, and checking teachers' websites. Gabriella's involvement at school includes attending Open House, parent nights, sporting events, and parent conferences. She initiates communication with her children's teachers once or twice a week through phone calls, notes, email, and person-to-person contact. She circled "Friendly" and "Positive" as categories to describe her relationship with her child's teachers and was complimentary in her description of them and her children's school. However, she also described her frustration at the prejudice her children have experienced from classmates and the perceived discrimination she feels has occurred at the school. Gabriella described her own middle school experiences as "the most beautiful days of my life," and circled "Mostly positive experiences" on her survey. Although her mother was in her life, she was raised primarily by her grandmother. Gabriella and her family came to the United States 13 years ago.

Keith

Keith is the father of three children, one of whom attends middle school. Keith served in the U.S. Navy and had planned to make it a career; however, he decided not to re-enlist. Keith works at a manual labor job and feels that he has no upward mobility in his career.

Keith is involved with his children's education through homework help, providing a homework/study area, discussing learning, and monitoring grades online. He attends Open House, parent nights, dances, and concerts at his child's school. Once or twice a year, Keith communicates with his child's teachers through phone calls, notes, email, or person-to-person contact. Usually, he or his wife initiates communication with teachers. He circled all positive terms on the survey to indicate his relationship with his child's teachers. Although Keith experienced the challenges of poverty and bullying as an adolescent, his parents, friends, and church were supportive and positive influences in his life. He circled "Mostly positive experiences" to describe his adolescent experiences in school.

Ginny

Ginny has a M.Ed. degree and works in a professional position at a medical facility. She is involved with her child at home through providing homework help, providing a homework/study area, discussing learning, monitoring grades online, and checking teachers' websites. She attends Open House, sporting events, parent conferences, and other school presentations. Communication with her child's teachers is usually initiated by Ginny or her husband through email once or twice a year. She circled "Friendly," "Helpful," and "Positive" as descriptions of her relationship with her child's teachers.

Ginny was involved in the band during middle and high school, and she described her parents as "Band Parents." Although they were uninvolved in academics, they were very involved with the band. She faced challenges of a limited social life and a home

context that often involved conflict, but described her middle school/early high school years as “Mostly positive experiences.”

Marlis

Marlis, who works as a real estate agent, immigrated to the United States from Germany. She helps her child with homework, discusses learning, reviews assignments, monitors grades online, and checks teachers’ websites. In terms of school-based involvement, Marlis indicated all areas on the survey. Communication with her child’s teachers is usually through email once or twice a year and is initiated by the teacher. Marlis indicated all of the positive terms on the survey as descriptions of her relationship with her child’s teachers.

Marlis grew up and attended school in Germany. She noted several cultural differences between the German and American school systems and noted the adjustments she has had to make regarding these differences. One such difference is the level of involvement expected of parents in the United States compared to that in Germany. She noted that parents in Germany are not expected to be as involved as they are in American schools. However, even in light of such differences, she notes that her parents were less involved in her education than most German parents. Due to her parents’ work schedules, Marlis lived with her grandmother, who was Hungarian, during the week. Her grandmother did not know how to be involved in her education. Marlis was involved in school sports, which afforded her unique opportunities. She noted “Mostly positive experiences” to describe her adolescent school years, but expressed that she would have probably performed better academically had she had more reinforcement.

Bly

Bly is a Native American mother of three children. Her second child attends middle school. Although Bly has degrees both as a paralegal and as a L.P.N., she is now disabled. In terms of involvement, she noted all categories on both home and school involvement. In addition, she sends her children to an outside educational agency to accelerate their learning. Communication between Bly and her children's teachers is two-way, as she has encouraged teachers to contact her. Frequency of communication is once or twice a week and involves phone calls, notes, emails, and person-to-person contact. Bly indicated all positive areas on the survey to describe her relationship with her children's teachers. In addition to involvement with her own children, Bly makes every effort to develop a strong relationship with her children's friends in order to encourage and guide them as well.

Bly did not circle either category for negative or positive experiences in middle and early high school, but did provide rich descriptions of her experiences in all three data sources. She was an only child who lived with her mother. She repeatedly made references to the fact that her mother was "never home." Her adolescent life was a paradox of distinctive opportunities, such as modeling, being in commercials, serving on a community teen fashion organization, cheerleading, and having many friends, and the loneliness she felt. She described having "three lives," as her grandparents raised her as a small child, she visited with her father, stepmother, and step-siblings in the summer, and lived with her mother during most of the year. Her life with her mother impacted her greatly, but she stated that she drew from all aspects of her life to create her own family.

Data Analysis

Data Sources

Three sources of data, a participant survey, a reflective booklet, and interviews, were used as data collection tools in this study. After interviews were transcribed, I used the grounded theory method of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding to analyze the data. I generated a theoretical model from the data that illustrates the process of the phenomenon by showing a central category and subcategories related to it. During the coding process, I identified the following significant categories:

- Absence
- Abuse
- Academics
- Activities
- “Always there”
- Bullying
- Communication
- Cultural differences
- Desire for a better life
- Destabilizing influences
- Expectations
- Involvement
- Life lessons
- Loneliness
- Providing

- Self-image
- Self-reliance
- Social life
- Stabilizing influences
- Teachers/school context

After identifying the significant categories, I again examined the data to determine the location of each in the paradigm model or to discard them.

Theoretical Model

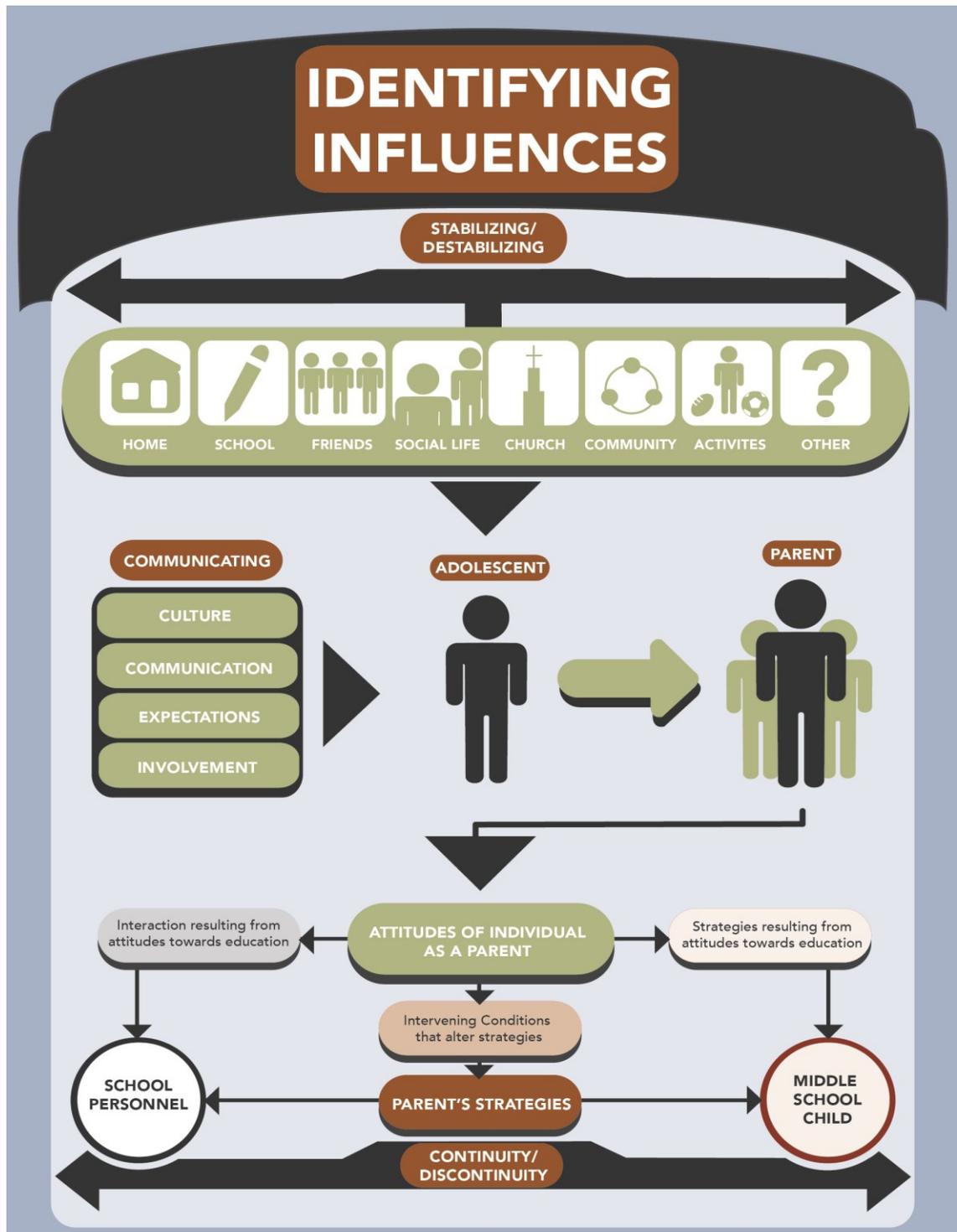


Figure 1. Stabilizing and Destabilizing Influences, as well as Communicating Influences impact the adolescent. These, along with strategies and their consequences, influence individuals' attitudes toward education which, in turn, influence interactions with school personnel and strategies with children. Interactions and strategies can be placed on a continuum of continuity and discontinuity.

Explanation of Theoretical Model

The core category around which this study's theory is built is Influence. Three main categories, each with several subcategories, form the causal conditions for influence on the participants when they were adolescents. The effects of these conditions, the strategies employed by participants in response to them, and the outcomes of those strategies influenced participants' attitudes toward education as adults. Figure 1, which provides a visual model of the theory generated from findings in this study, is titled "Identifying Influences." At the top of the model a continuum illustrates that causal influences may vary in combination and degree from stabilizing to destabilizing influences. The icons represent various causal influences, or contexts, that together impact adolescents' lives. This phenomenon is represented by the arrow that flows from the causal conditions to the adolescent. In response to particular causal conditions, adolescents employ strategies. In addition to stabilizing and destabilizing influences, causal conditions also include communicating influences, which are experiences and situations that specifically serve to communicate. The combination of causal conditions, strategies employed by individuals, and the outcomes of strategies combine to influence individuals as parents, shown on Figure 1 by the arrow that points from the adolescent to the parent. One aspect of individuals' lives as parents is their attitudes toward education for their children. These attitudes influence parents' interactions with their children's school personnel and strategies they use with their children, represented by the arrows that flow to the circles at the bottom of the model. However, intervening circumstances may occur that alter the strategies parents might have employed. The oval below "Attitudes of Individual as a Parent" represents the intervening conditions. The lines

flowing through and from “Intervening Conditions” and moving toward the two circles represent the altered strategies and interactions. Interactions with school personnel and strategies parents use with their children can be placed on a continuum of continuity or discontinuity with parents’ own experiences as adolescents in school.

Stabilizing Experiences/Situations

The first main category for causal conditions in this model is Stabilizing Experiences/Situations. These are conditions that created a sense of security, contentment, and/or comfort for the participant. Subcategories for this main category are “Always There,” Providing, Positive School Contexts, Social Life, and Activities.

“Always there.” The presence of people and entities in participants’ lives was evident in their interviews. Family, friends, community, and church influenced participants’ sense of security, contentment, and comfort.

Parents. Monique commented regarding her parents that “They were always there. I was never at home by myself, um, so I think just knowing that they were there even if they may not have been helping me, you know, was comfort.” She noted that her mom busied herself with household chores, but expressed that “It’s still a comfort to know that you’re not in the house by yourself Just knowing that she was physically there, you know, was comforting.” On Gretchen’s survey, she wrote, “My parents were always there” and on her booklet, she wrote that her “Mom always had dinner ready every night.” As I interviewed her, she described that “Somebody was always there They were just always there for you and . . . were there if you needed a question, or just providing everyday things.” Wendy, whose early middle school years were extremely tumultuous, described the difference it made in her life whenever she moved in with her

mom and her stepfather: “They came and got me, I think I was in 7th grade and went to Germany . . . and everything changed over there.” She continued, “When I moved in with my parents, they, they, I don’t think we had a lot of money, but we were a normal family.” Gretchen summed up her parents’ presence by stating, “They were there . . . in good times and bad, and they tended your functions and provided what you need.”

Keith also expressed the sentiment by sharing:

Well, the biggest help was my parents. Making sure I did my stuff, making sure I was fed and clothed and loved, and of course my friends, that I could just hang out with, that’s the biggest things really. Family and friends ‘cause I knew they cared about me.

Grandparents. For some participants, the most significant people were their grandparents. Gabriella’s mother was very young, so the primary figure in Gabriella’s life was her grandmother. She shared that, “My grandma, she always was there for me through everything.” She continued, “She would always ask who I’m going with, where I was going, when I was coming home, and so on.” Although Wanda lived with her mother and sister, her grandparents’ presence and involvement in her life were significant. She shared that her grandparents were “there for my sister and me” and that “they played a big part in our lives.” Speaking of her grandfather, she expressed that, “My grandfather was my father. He did everything for me and my sister” and that he “kept us grounded.” In regard to her grandmother, she noted that, “My grandma went to our graduations. My grandmother came to parent night.” She detailed numerous ways her grandparents were involved in her life in activities and on a daily basis, and shared,

“That part as guiding us and, and keeping us with the positive words, that was my grandparents.” “When it came to certain things, it was always my grandparents.”

Friends. As Keith noted, friends were also important individuals in participants’ lives. Wanda experienced difficult life situations as an adolescent, which made an early high school friend vitally important. Once again, the concept of being there was manifest, as Wanda said of her friend, “I knew she was always there for me.” Gabriella’s middle school experience was vastly different from Wanda’s, but the importance of friendship was even more evident as she painted a picture of an idyllic middle school life. In her reflective booklet, she wrote, “We were all very close! When something bad happened we were always there for one another.” In her interview, she shared touching, rich stories of acceptance, sharing, altruism, and compassion among her friends. The emotion was evident as her eyes welled with tears and she described her middle school years as “the most beautiful days of my childhood, of my experience in school; middle school was the one of the most beautiful days of my life.”

Bly spent much of her time in her friends’ homes, because she did not want to go home alone. One of her favorite places was the home of a friend with a large family. As she said, “I loved it over there.” During most of the year, Bly lived with her mother, who was most often absent, but Bly’s experiences in her friend’s home made a lasting impression on her regarding family life. She acknowledged it by saying, “I think their family, the way I seen their family, you know, made me see what a family was supposed to be.” Their lifestyle, along with the family life she experienced in her father and stepmother’s home during summer visits, made a huge impact on her designs for her own family.

In one case, friendship provided not only companionship, but it also provided reciprocal benefits for the participant and her friend. Living in a home with very strict parents, Monique was quite limited in regard to outside experiences, while her friend enjoyed more freedom. Monique assessed, “I think even in my mindset . . . I probably did live vicariously through her.” The friendship, however, was beneficial to both. As Monique described it, “I was the grounding that she needed and she was that vicarious lifestyle that I needed and we just meshed, and we were just the best of friends.”

Community. When Wendy moved to Germany with her mother and stepfather, they lived on a military base with a close, caring community. She described it this way:

Your English teacher may walk up and talk to your mother after school . . . they know everything about you, so they wanted to, to make sure that I did, uh, my work and didn't get in trouble like a lot of the girls were doing, uh, 'cause you know, young military guys, they were always... young girls were getting in lots of trouble, growing up too fast and they just wanted to make sure I wasn't one of them.

Gretchen described as similar experience:

We had a very good community surrounding us, so no matter what . . . everybody was always checking in, you know. If you got in trouble for something, you got the eye. If you didn't get it from your parents you got the eyeball from somebody else you knew and we knew these people for years.

Gretchen also reminisced, “I have to say we had the best people around us supporting us in school besides the teachers and that's important that somehow, uh, people made a difference.”

Church. A significant organization in the category of “Always there” was the church. During the time that Wendy was going through some of her worst experiences, she joined a church group that met on Wednesday nights. While she was there, she met a family who took her in to live with them. Wendy explained that “They kind of took care of me and almost adopted me legally.” Keith also described the protective influence that the church had in his life. As he verbalized it, the church “helped me through” and kept him from “going over the edge.” He recognized that he and many of his peers faced negative influences, but stated that:

Being around the people that had the belief in God that I had helped me keep me grounded and saying there’s better things to do than to waste your life like that.

You can have fun without having to drink or do drugs.

Wanda also shared that church was an important part of her life when she explained that “My grandfather been a deacon as long as I can ever remember and he took me and my sister to church. . . . We didn’t miss a day of church.” Monique also shared that same type of consistency in her experiences as she wrote in her booklet that she “Always attended church (Sun. morning, night – Wed. night) – always seemed to be at some church function.”

Providing. Closely related to the category of “Always There” is that of providing. Although her mother was rarely there for Wanda in other ways, her strength was in providing for her children. Wanda expressed, “You know, my mother’s not in no pictures, but she was there, she worked, she fed us and cooked for us.” She continued, “I give my Mom credit because she was there, she kept us in the house, she kept food on the table, she helped us with clean clothes, we had, like we have health insurance, life

insurance, like she did her part.” She seemed to understand and shared, “She was a . . . giver. That’s how she showed her love for us.” Keith also noted that his parents “fed and clothed” him and his siblings. Wendy noted the contrast between her life with her father and the one she experienced with her mother and stepfather in not only support, but also in providing, when she stated that “We didn’t do without anything.” Gretchen described a warm home where her parents “provided everything we needed They just provided you with everything they possibly could.”

Social life. Another essential area of stabilizing experiences/situations was the social life participants experienced as adolescents. Anna shared that the most positive aspect of middle school life for her “Probably would be . . . the social instead of the academic [laughter], you know, and you tend to think back to middle school and high school, you think back to your friends.” It was evident that her life was full of social situations such as “going to the football games and basketball games, the team school spirit you know, that kind of stuff I think about.” She also remembered social situations in which her family and other families enjoyed spending time together. Bly’s most positive memory was also “just hanging out with my friends and stuff like that,” and Marlis remembered, “I had a, people I hung out with and we did a lot of things together and kind of stuck together.” She shared that, as students who used the public transportation system, she and her friends would stop at a café for breakfast before school. Although they were often late for school, she commented, “Everybody stuck together so nobody ever got in trouble, so I mean, that was kind of a nice thing.” Gabriella described many social activities with her friends, such as playing games, walking to and from school together, and trips to the zoo, fair, and other places of

interest, saying that in “Mexico, there’s a lot of things to do.” Gretchen explained that “I ended just knowing a lot of people you know, just ‘cause I was out and about, always doing something, always at the park and the pool within my town too . . . so you had to know a lot of people.” Keith described playing video games, basketball, and bb guns with his friends. “It was fun,” he commented.

Activities. Some participants were limited in social activities in which they were allowed to participate, but found social fulfillment in organized activities.

Band. Monique’s notation in her reflective booklet emphasized the importance of school activities for many students as she wrote, “Most activities centered around school/band,” and she noted, “Every activity I was involved in had to do with music.” She was immersed in orchestra, chorus, and band, and she shared, “The only real fond memory that I have of middle school . . . was being in orchestra and, and being to express myself through the violin.” As a quiet, shy student who was not allowed to have friends over or go to movies or school dances, it was an important avenue for expression, acceptance, and friendship. She shared, “It helped bring me out of my shell a little bit. . . I truly felt like I wasn’t the same person playing that instrument; I was somebody different.” Monique had indicated “Mostly negative experiences” for middle school on her survey, but in regard to her music activities, she said they “made me happy.” She described, “School wasn’t that fun place that I wanted to be, but knowing that I had orchestra . . . in middle school and then chorus for high school . . . made those years bearable.” Ginny expressed similar sentiments regarding band. In response to both the interview question about the most positive aspect of middle school and the one about which aspect left the most lasting impression, her answer related to band. She stated, “I

was in the marching band too up and into high school, so that was, you know, something to do on a Friday night and, you know, fun group of people to do it with.” She also discussed the protective and stabilizing nature of band, saying, “I think, um, as far as being a quiet and shy child anyway, um, I maybe would have been open to other influences, you know . . . more negative influences or just gotten lost in the crowd.” She shared, “I felt like if I had not had that I would have probably been lost.”

Sports. Another activity that provided stabilizing influences was sports. Wanda reminisced, “We did track though, me and my sister both did track. We did double Dutch, you know, we jumped rope, we contest with jumping rope We did that all through middle school, me and my sister both and won trophies.” She was going through difficult circumstances in middle school, and sports provided an avenue of escape for her. She shared, “To do all those fun things kinda made . . . life seem like it was great. Melissa, who had no real companionship in her parents, also referred to the positive aspects of sports: “You did your sports, you know, that was your extra activity. And if you weren’t playing . . . a lot of time you were the spectator . . . so I think there was a little bit um, camaraderie.” Marlis found that sports opened up doors of opportunity for her. She noted, “I had the opportunity with the school team to travel a lot and experience that side” and explained, “The wall was still up in Germany and I had the chance, a 16 year old, go to Eastern Germany and play there with the school, and it’s more the surroundings that make the school than rather the, the academic side.” Anna’s sports involvement “on the . . . letter girl team” gave her opportunities for “meeting some new . . . people, different kinds of people.”

Community organizations. William found his niche in participation with Boy Scouts. He noted, “We had to do a lot of things together as, as groups and you know we were out camping and doing stuff.” An added benefit of Boy Scouts for him was that it supplied relevance to content he was learning in school. He shared, “I think it was very positive... it helped me tie things together and use things . . . I think the Boy Scouts really helped tie everything together better.” Wanda’s grandfather enrolled her and her sister in Girl Scouts. Scouting was one of the activities that helped distract her from her difficult experiences. Gretchen also enjoyed a variety of community activities at the local community center.

Positive school context. A positive context of school in terms of academics and teachers provided an overwhelming influence on participants. As participants shared the memories that impacted their experiences, the majority of them referred to teachers and classes in some way.

Teachers. Participants remembered various characteristics of their middle school teachers, including their caring manner and approach to instruction. Ginny described the influence of her band teacher in this way:

He was one of those big father/grandfather type figures and he was hard, hard on us, but um, you know, very caring too and very uh, regimented and, you know, we did what we were supposed to do. I think it was a very good experience for me.

In regard to her teachers, Gabriella remembered that, “They always tried to teach me the best that they could” and acknowledged, “I remember certain teachers throughout my year who influenced me.” She particularly remembered teachers’ willingness to bring

out the best in their students. She explained that many of the students “had talent,” but did not have the opportunity to go to school beyond middle school. Despite this knowledge, she said of her teachers, “They know you’re good, so they try to help you even if they know that maybe whenever middle school ends, you will go to your daddy and help him with something.” Wendy shared happy memories of teachers who “would come up and give me a big hug, or, ‘Hey, how was your day?’” She particularly remembered the efforts of her math teacher:

He would spend a lot of time with the, a bunch of us students that wanted to understand but clearly didn’t. He would have study groups during his lunch hour It was me and several other male and female students and I just remember, um, him making us work a little bit harder and taking the extra time to spend with us. That made us feel, I think, better about ourself, and so it was easier ‘cause there . . . was a lot more interaction.

The impact Wendy’s teacher had on her was more far-reaching than the academic help he provided. She explained, “He made us have a lot more self-esteem for who we were, and so we went out, we . . . maybe made better choices, so life experiences he taught us.”

Another participant who obtained extra help from teachers was Bly. Other situations in her life had caused her not to trust adults, but she wrote, “Yes, teachers helped me a lot. I did it in a way that students didn’t know I was needing them [teachers] but the teachers knew and went along with it. That helped me to trust adults.” Positive relationships with adults were important for her, and she noted, “I loved all my teachers. I loved school.” Keith also appreciated his teachers and described them as “friendly – they cared about you learning but they also didn’t force feed it into you, you know, they

did it in a nice fun way.” He also remembered the way teachers treated their students, and shared, “The teachers . . . treated us like people, you know, they treated us kindly.” Marlis, who attended middle school in Germany, referred to one teacher as a “Great person. She taught with an ease, so we did not even realized we learned something. She was a little bit of a Hippie too. She understood us.” Gretchen described her science teacher as “A brilliant woman” and stated, “As I was going for my master’s, the uh, ‘Sense of one’s own learning,’ my science teacher for 7th and 8th grade, was the epitome of that.” She shared, “I never had a problem of not wanting to go to school so, the general atmosphere was always positive. We had good people, we had good teachers.” Anna remembered teachers who she felt were approachable and stated, “I remembered we had a couple teachers that were really cool and they, you know, were the teachers that you’d . . . see ‘em at a ballgame, you wouldn’t mind going and talking to or something like that.” When asked who helped her most during middle school, Gabriella’s reply was:

Teachers, teachers, teachers, because they know who you are. They know you can get there. They know you will know better, you know better. They know you going to be something you know, they know you going to like, for your grades, maybe for you potential, for your positive attitude, I don’t know, but they know.

Classes. Two aspects of classes that participants described as positive were high expectations and active learning. Marlis contrasted the expectations that she had observed in America with those she experienced in Germany. She referred to multiple choice tests and stated, “In Germany that’s not the case. You have to, if you have to explain the moon phase . . . you have to actually have to explain what the moon phase is.”

Gretchen also noted the rigor by which she learned writing at the Catholic middle school she attended. Once she began attending a public high school, she realized the higher standard to which she had been held. She explained:

You could see the difference. Even with the very smart people, we knew things that were required We weren't allowed to write that way, and we could rip apart a sentence and put it back together again. We diagrammed sentences. They didn't, and that really made a big difference.

Active learning experiences also influenced participants. Melissa shared, "Art was great . . . You could do whatever as long as you expressed it, showed, knew your colors, did whatever. That to me was very, um, rewarding as well." In core classes, relevance of the learning made an impression on her. "To be able to do things and see other people's um, ideas and things like that when it was actually something that was, um, true to life more than anything else" gave significance to her learning. Monique found satisfaction in her orchestra class and enjoyed a sense of fulfillment and expression there. The overall experience was extremely important to her, but one event particularly stood out in her mind. She described, "In middle school, um, I was nominated in seventh grade for "Most Talented," so that made me feel good."

Destabilizing Experiences/Situations

The second main category of causal conditions was Destabilizing Experiences/Situations. These were influences that resulted in a sense of insecurity, unhappiness, and/or discontent. Among these influences were absence, abuse, loneliness, bullying, negative self-image, and negative school contexts.

Absence. Destabilizing situations for participants often involved the absence of

people or entities that provided security, rather than the presence of other factors. The absence of parents, stability, activities, and social life impacted participants' lives as adolescents.

Parents. The absence of parents varied for participants, but clearly impacted their experiences. Melissa expressed that "My parents were non-existent. I came and went, did whatever. Got myself up, got myself home, did basically whatever." Later, she mentioned that "Looking back now I really wish there were more activities and more parent involvement because the parents I did meet were, were great." She also remarked that "I kind of wish I had the option of if my parents were there or could have been, not that I would have probably really involved them. But the choice would have been nice." Wendy, who lived with her father during the first part of her middle school years also noted that "when I was with him, he, there was no consistency, he was never there." Wanda also described her father's absence as follows:

My father didn't play a role 'cause my . . . grandmother told my father . . . and he would come back and forth, back and forth, but it wasn't consistent." "She said, 'I'd rather you stay away, because when you're not here she's asking, 'Where's my Daddy? . . . Where's my Daddy?' So I'd rather you just go away if you're not going to be consistent.' So, and that's what he did. He went away.

Although Wanda lived with her mother, Wanda also explained that "She worked hard and long days. She was never at our school events, partents day [*sic*], or graduation" and that "my mother's not in no pictures." Bly, an only child, also made numerous references to the absence of her parents. They were divorced and she lived with her mother, but she explained that "My mom never came home." In terms of her activities, she wrote, "My

mom never came to my game. My dad lived in Fla.” She sought interaction with other adults, noting that “My mom was never home, so I had guides councils [*sic*], teachers, and some friends’ parents” or in activities, because “being involded [*sic*] in school was best for me or I’d went home alone all the time.” She never would have chosen to skip school and stay home as other students did, she explained, although she commented that “if she would put me on restriction, she wasn’t at home anyway so it really wouldn’t have mattered. I mean, she wasn’t home. She was never home.”

Stability. Some participants’ parents were present, but they experienced a lack of stability in other ways. Although William had very supportive parents, moving from place to place due to his father’s promotions at work was difficult. As he described it, “Well, moving 3 times in 3 years was a pain in the butt ‘cause I knew, when I was in 6th grade, I knew all the kids. We’d gone through school all together and then to have to go to a new school and then the following year go to another new school was like, ‘Geez you know, can we settle down here so I can make some friends?’ So that was difficult.” He emphasized that “I had to make new friends twice in two years - I think that was difficult.” Not only had William made several moves as an adolescent, but he also shared his wife’s experiences: “My wife was one of those, they, her parents moved every 2 or 3 years with the military, and she’s like, ‘I never had any friends in school, ‘cause I knew we were going to leave.’” On the survey, Wendy also noted “Moving” as one of the areas that impacted her regarding her own children. She described constant moves from state to state and from household to household. She explained, “My parents, um, actually divorced when I was in middle school . . . and I went there, um, but I lived with my

Dad” and continued “...and there was a lot of just unstable, not normal.” At one point, she and her father lived with other family members:

My dad took us from here in middle school, don’t remember the grade, to Phoenix City, Alabama, and I ended up living with him and my uncle and my aunt who were all crazy, drinking people . . . my crazy people, they are crazy, um, just yelling all the time and not happy and they don’t do things together, and I just didn’t enjoy it.

Not only did the absence of stability cause unhappiness for Wendy, but she also recognized the impact it had on her education:

We didn’t go to school half the time, um, didn’t do our homework, didn’t learn a lot of the basic foundation things that we should have, um, so when we moved forward or moved, we were starting all over and didn’t have the knowledge we should have.

Moving was not the only source for absence of stability in participants’ lives. Ginny described middle school as “Challenging” on her reflective booklet, and added, “My parents fought a lot.” She explained, “For a while, um, you know, all I could remember was their arguing and, um, it wasn’t awful. It wasn’t, you know, um, abusive or anything like that, but it was somewhat of a constant.”

For Bly, the absence of stability involved more than the absence of her mother at home. When she discussed her mother’s involvement in her life, she explained:

I was in modeling in school, and see that’s, that, that is what type of mother she was; now when I was modeling, she was involved in that because it was in bars.

She had me in bars in bikinis and she was getting drunk. Yeah, so that's what kind of Mom she was.

Material goods. Another area of absence was that of material goods. Although Keith described his home life as secure and loving, he also referenced, "When you eat Spam every day, 'cause that's all you have . . ." and also made references to his paucity of games, toys, technology, and name-brand clothing, stating, "I never didn't really have a lot of that stuff though. I was, we didn't have that money." Bly explained that she and her mother shared clothes, because her mother said there was not enough money for them to buy clothes for both of them. Melissa also was a middle school student who "needed things." She explained:

Uh, different kinds of kids as far as rich and poor - you had everything there. You know, you still had your free lunches, you know . . . your kids still needed things. I was one of those kids for a while. I didn't, I wasn't a big shopper. And then in middle school I went on a big spree and it was actually funny because I didn't think anything about it; I could care less.

You know it was, I had clean clothes, could do whatever I wanted, no big deal, and then the one year that I did come back with all kinds of clothes, different things, boy it was noticed! 'Where'd you go?' 'What did you do?' and it's like, 'I don't know - I just went shopping.' But it was a big thing, and to me it was like yeah, yeah, whatever. But it was funny because there was a difference.

In referencing the same incident on her reflective booklet, Melissa revealed more of the impact she felt. "It did make me feel good and blend in. If I had not been a strong person I could see how that would affect your learning. Kids can be cruel," she wrote.

Wendy simply stated, “Um, ‘cause we just didn’t have a lot of money then. That was a big thing for me, you know.”

Activities and social life. When there was an absence of activities or social life, it also impacted participants’ experiences. Monique was limited both in terms of having friends over and in going out. She wrote, “My father did not like us to have friends over & didn’t allow me to go over to friends’ houses much.” In her interview, she stated, “I wasn’t allowed to go to movies, I wasn’t allowed to go to school dances, and kids would, you know, they would tease and criticize about that.” Ginny experienced similar circumstances and explained, “My dad was um, ex-military. He’s very strict, . . . so, um, as far as me being allowed to do things, it was not often that, you know, I just could ask to do something and be able to do it.” In some cases, participants were involved in activities on a limited basis. Melissa mentioned attending sports activities, but did not participate “because of lack of transportation.” Bly did participate in cheerleading on a partial basis, but explained, “If I couldn’t get myself there I wasn’t able to go If I wasn’t cheering I couldn’t go; I didn’t go to a baseball game, didn’t go to a basketball game.”

Abuse. The category of destabilizing experiences/situations that appeared to have the most severe impact was that of sexual abuse. Due to her mother’s work schedule, Wanda and her sister often spent the night across the street at her grandparents’ home. She explained that “When I was young, you know, two of my uncles, you know, molest me” and that “My mother’s sister, she also molest me.” The abuse occurred over a period of time, but Wanda said, “That didn’t come out until I was 24 and pregnant with my first child. You know, I guess I blocked it all out.” At the time of her interview, she

remembered the events in detail, but she explained that she had blocked it from her consciousness during the time the abuse was occurring. However, its effects were devastating to her life. She described her feelings, saying, “I was ashamed. I felt nasty and dirty.” Later in the interview, she again shared, “I was very shameful of growing up, you know, um, shameful and shy and not very outspoken” and she expressed, “It was a dark time for me.” Her grandparents were unaware of the abuse and acted in a very supportive role in the lives of Wanda and her sister, who also suffered the abuse. They made sure the girls were involved in sports, church, and community activities. However, Wanda always felt a cloud of unhappiness in her life. She noted that “I was a quiet student, and I was really reserved you know. . . . I have always been that way, probably because of all that I’ve been through.” She had few friends outside of her sister and cousin. She referred to herself often in the interview as “the quiet one” and explained, “In school, from what I can remember, I never joined anything, you know.” Even in her activities, she focused on the activity itself, and did not connect with other people. She recounted, “I can remember running track, you know. I didn’t talk to none of the girls. I just ran.” This experience impacted her life tremendously, and she reflected, “I think that was . . . my biggest trial as a young, in middle school.”

“Empty, alone.” The absence of important people, activities, and support elicited the feeling of loneliness in some participants. Monique stated, “I was kind of an introvert. I didn’t have many friends.” She further detailed, “I felt a lot of times alone and, you know, like I wasn’t fitting in with the crowd.” Wanda had feelings that she did not seem to understand, but she understood the loneliness. She expressed, “I was feeling some type of way as a kid, you know, so it was really, really, um, it was lonely.”

Although Bly had several friends, she made more references to loneliness than any other participant. She remembered, “I was a lonely child” and described, “It was bad, you know, it was, at that time, it was lonely, it was depressing.” As she recalled her home, she noted that “It was just so quiet, that’s what I was always like. I couldn’t stand being the only child” and explained why she often stayed at her friends’ homes:

If I was at their house, then we would kinda study together, just so I wouldn’t be at the house, you know, there a lot ‘cause it was just me. I mean, I didn’t have any brothers or sisters . . . and I don’t care if you have 20 kids, when you get alone, you may want alone time for a little bit, but don’t want to be alone all the time.

Even at school, Bly felt the loneliness and explained, “The drama and no family support beat me down” and felt that, as a result, she had “Trust issues.” The girl who others perceived when they saw Bly was unlike her true self, and she wrote, “I was a freshman and everybody knew me but outside ppl through [*sic*] great, in the inside empty, alone.” She summarized her life of loneliness by simply writing, “I was my family.”

Bullying. Several participants mentioned the experiences they had with being bullied in middle school, and they varied in their responses and in the impact they felt regarding the bullying. Keith stated that there was “The occasional bully, but like I said earlier, I just ignored them, you know. They start bullying, you ignore them, they stop ‘cause they’re not getting the attention that they want.” Others, however, felt the bullying more keenly. Ginny recalled, “I cannot remember for the life of me why she didn’t like me . . . but I was scared of her.” She further detailed, “We had an incident where, uh, for whatever reason she was just, um, going to, quote ‘Kick my butt’ and, um,

you know, it, I, I remember feeling a little worried I remembered that being a conflict that was, um, you know, uncomfortable.” Although there was no incident of a fight, she reflected, “I remember the threat of it.” Participants referenced bullying events in their written documents as well. Ginny named the classmate from whom she felt the threat, writing, “Hated riding the bus, partly b/c of her,” and Wanda listed, “Bulled [*sic*]; picked on; teased” on her survey. Sometimes, the bullying referenced a particular characteristic about the victim. For example, some participants were bullied because of their clothing. Melissa alluded to this problem when she mentioned an incident about clothes and noted, “Kids can be cruel.” Wanda also endured being bullied about clothing. She explained that her mother “Bought what she wanted and she dressed me and my sister like twins. So we got picked on because of that too.” Describing the effects of these interactions, she noted, “I would be in the corner crying and upset.” Monique experienced being teased about clothing as well. She explained:

We were never able to keep up with the popular kids, never to have the fashionable stuff and so at that time, you know, if you went to school, probably like it is today, you’d be made fun of for your hair or your, if you didn’t wear the same kind of jeans or whatever.

Other bullying issues were related to physical characteristics. Speaking of her friend, she told that “she also was somebody who people picked on cause she was about 400 pounds.” Wanda herself endured bullying about physical characteristics as well, and related, “I had another friend who tor, she tormented me you know, um, because I was tall. I’ve always been tall.”

“Uncomfortable in my own skin.” Responding to the interview question about the most negative aspect of middle school, Monique replied, “Um, I think going into middle school would be a self-image.” She also wrote on her reflective booklet, “Didn’t like my hair & clothes very much.” Ginny also felt the same type of discomfort and stated, “That’s what, you know, probably jumps out at me is just that whole confidence level, not, you know, not being there at that time.” She further explained, “I think probably my first reaction about thinking about middle school was just being uncomfortable, and I don’t know if it was part of being uncomfortable in my own skin ‘cause I think it’s that time of life anyway.” Reflecting back on her middle school years, Marlis pragmatically referred to her experience as a tall girl as “More of the experience of growing up,” but shared some anecdotes regarding her experiences. However, she wrote in her reflective booklet, “I was a little odd, because I was so tall” and “I always have a little bit of a hard time in school for the fact that I was always the ‘tall’ kid. I was 5’9” by the age of 13/14.” Wendy was more descriptive of her feelings. She noted, “I did not like school when I was in middle school, uh, ugly little girl, didn’t like it, disconnected.”

Negative school contexts. A final category under Destabilizing Experiences/Situations is that of negative school contexts. The participants in this study shared various unpleasant situations including academic difficulties, disagreeable interactions with teachers and students, and pressures they felt.

Academics. Some participants disliked certain subjects or found them difficult. For example, Wendy quipped, “I was just not a smart chicky in math.” One particularly difficult situation for participants was the inability to obtain help. Monique listed on her

survey that her parents were supportive, but were not there to help her “understand and grasp objectives and concepts.” When she had homework, she explained, “I couldn’t go to my parents and ask them to help me or sit down and try to, you know, if I didn’t get it all in class from my teacher, I didn’t feel like I could go to my parents because they didn’t really understand.” When she would ask her mom for help, “She would look at things to try to help us and then be like, ‘I don’t know what this [is]. I don’t know what they’re asking. I don’t know how to instruct you or teach you.’” Anna also shared that her parents “cared but didn’t how [*sic*] to help.” She speculated that “I was a good student and never got into trouble, so I think they felt I didn’t need them.” Bly was another participant whose parent was unable to help. She elaborated:

Whenever she was at home, you know, she didn’t never ask if I had anything to do or, and then even when I was younger she never understood. “Oh, I don’t know how to do that,” you know, and never tried to, you know, never got me help or whatever.

Bly also wrote that she “Had ADHD and was never medicined. I had to just focuse.”

Some participants reflected that academic encouragement was missing. Marlis explained, “I’m smart person, but I never lived to the potential . . . if somebody would checked on me or would’ve been little bit more on top of me, I probably did, done something else.” She speculated, “Probably I would’ve gone in a different direction or would’ve gotten all my education right after school and not later on in life.”

Teachers. Although participants mentioned positive characteristics of teachers more than negative ones, those with whom they had negative interactions clearly left an

impression on their minds, diminished their enjoyment of learning, and sometimes impacted their academic progress. Keith remembered:

There's one teacher, me and her had a hate-hate relationship. I didn't, I passed her class with a C. I really don't know how, but I never did my homework in there 'cause I couldn't stand her and she really couldn't stand me.

There was a clear distinction in Monique's mind between enjoyable teachers and those with whom she could not relate. She explained:

I had a couple of . . . science teachers, one in middle school and one in high school, that I hated their class. I mean, it just was not fun, and I just didn't feel like I had a connection with them. I didn't feel like they enjoyed what they taught and it just came across in their classroom.

Anna also described teachers whose classes were uncomfortable for her: "We had some that were really mean, strict, you couldn't talk in class, didn't really, weren't interested in helping you if you had questions." Monique, who already was unable to go to her parents for academic help, remembered some teachers who did not seem helpful as well: "I don't think they were as helpful as they could have been. It was, the material was taught and you were expected to get it the first time." When she went to them for help, "It was like you were an interruption." She continued, "They didn't understand, you know, why you might have been struggling with it, or why I was struggling with it." Wendy's comments about teachers overall were positive, but in her booklet, she still referred to teachers who "Did not ever go the extra mile" and who seemed "Too busy w/their own problems in school environment!" The two classes she found difficult were Spanish and Math, but there was a stark contrast between the teachers who taught those

two classes. She described the math teacher as being caring and helpful, but felt that “The Spanish teacher was uh, not very nice.” She remembered that “he would only talk to you in Spanish, and he would just always kind of pick on people specifically, right in front of everybody.” Both teachers expected her to respond in front of the class, but their approaches were different, and Wendy’s reactions were different as well. Speaking of the math teacher, she noted, “He would always make us go up to the board, and I hated going up in front of the board,” but shared, “I think he helped me.” Her sentiments about her Spanish teacher were not positive ones. When asked what experiences in middle and early high school made the most lasting impression on her, she answered, “High school – that Spanish teacher embarrassing me was very, it just really ticked me off and stayed with me.”

Pressures. Surprisingly, the ability to be successful academically was not always a positive experience. In her booklet, Anna wrote, “Really pushed myself/was always anxious.” She earned good grades, but explained:

It started out being kind of easy and then you make A’s and then, all the sudden, you’re just expected to make A’s and though, even though you’re taking harder and harder classes . . . I just felt anxiety sometimes.

Bly also felt negative pressures from a situation one would often consider positive. She was well-known as a model at the mall and in television commercials. She also had a boyfriend and was a cheerleader, but she commented, “It was miserable for me. Like, you would think that was a good thing, uh, that was horrible for me . . . I don’t know, they were just, a jealous thing or something.”

Communicating Experiences/Situations

The third major category of causal conditions was Communicating Experiences/Situations. Although some components were positive and others negative, these served primarily to communicate to adolescents in a way that influenced their attitudes toward education as adults. Communicating influences included the impact of culture, communication, expectations, and involvement.

Culture. Some experiences and situations shaped participants' lives, but their effects served primarily to communicate beliefs and attitudes. Participants' cultural context was one such area. This study took place in the United States, and most of the participants grew up and went to school here. However, two of the participants experienced different cultures as they were growing up. Gabriella grew up in Mexico, and Marlis was from Germany. Each of them contrasted the school contexts they had observed in their children's schools with those of their own cultures. Marlis expressed, "I do agree certain things; I don't agree certain things." One illustration of cultural differences involved her parents' involvement. She explained, "It sounds really bad, but it's actually not, because it's not uncommon in Germany. My Mom never really went to parent-teacher conference." Gabriella remembered Mexico and reminisced, "It was very nice." She shared her feelings by saying:

So always dream about to go there and they can go to the school over there. That way we can know the difference about the school. Yeah. But I'm not saying that here is bad you know, I'm not saying that.

Communication. Communication with significant adults in their lives provided direction for participants and conveyed to them the individuals' interest in their lives.

The frequency and level of communication varied for participants. Wanda appreciated her mother's providing for her, but commented that, "The only thing that we was lacking, I felt, lacking from my mother is the communication." For others, the communication was very casual, not reaching below the surface of everyday life. When asked about communication with her parents, Marlis responded, "You know, the usual 'How was school?' 'Oh, it was good' . . . 'Ok, um, you have practice tonight,' but that's, that was the most." Melissa's experience was similar. She stated that she did not remember taking any papers home from school, except report cards. When asked about report card conversations with her parents, she replied, "Nothing, really. 'Good job, I knew you could do it,' and that was about it," but noted that "There was no worry about that; I stayed to task." Anna also noted the lack of communication. She stated, "I didn't talk that much . . . and my parents didn't ask that much." Gretchen, however, experienced a more involved communication with her parents. Not only did her parents communicate with their children, but they taught their children to communicate as well. Gretchen explained:

Um, you just kinda did what both your parents told you to do. They listened, but they also did more of the talking too, and uh, there really wasn't a choice... you did, you know you followed through. If there was a problem though, they would listen and you gotta believe that again, um, but you also need to communicate that.

Wendy remembered her family "Just yelling all the time" when she lived with her father, but she shared how her parents communicated with her when she lived with her mother and stepfather:

Ask me how my day went, what was the, you know, the goods and the bads of the day, what's something I'm thankful for, what's something I wish I could do over, and make me think about it, so they were just very involved.

The communication contributed to Wendy's assessment that, "I think we were just very close." She expressed her feelings about these interactions with her parents when she stated, "That's always been very important for me, 'cause early I didn't have it so when I did I was like, 'Oooh,' so yeah."

Expectations. Most participants were aware of their parents' expectations regarding their learning, behavior, and education in general. Some expectations were verbally communicated. Others were communicated by actions of the parents, and still others were perceived by the children. Often, a combination of these factors communicated parents' expectations to their children.

Doing one's best. Several parents communicated their expectation that their children do their best. Keith shared, "They wanted me to do the best that I could do and they told me that, and if I didn't do the best that I could do, I got myself in trouble." Monique also reflected, "They always stressed to do our best." Some parents detailed for their children how doing one's best related to their grades. Anna noted:

They expected us to do our best, and if they felt like we were studying and doing our best and we got C's, then that was ok, but if we got C's because we weren't turning in homework and they didn't see us studying, and all of sudden we had a test, we did bad, that was not acceptable.

Keith heard the same message from his parents. He explained:

If the best I could do was a C, they had no problem with it. But they knew I could do the A's and B's, so, you know, I'd get grounded if I didn't do it right, if I didn't get what I could have gotten.

“That was our job.” Parents also conveyed to their children that school was their job and they expected them to do it. Anna noted her parents' words, “‘You're expected to be at school, and when you're at school you know, that's your job.’ They didn't expect a whole lot . . . as long as we were maintaining our good grades and doing our work, that was our job.” Wendy shared, “Um, well, after I lived with my parents it was very different. They expected me to do my work.” Gretchen expressed, “We were expected to do the work, not give the teachers a hard time, make it simple.” William shared, “They wanted to know, you know, ‘What's your homework? What do you need to be doing?’” Ginny also noted, “I was just expected to do the homework and, and it was done.” Monique emphasized, “Their expectation was . . . ‘Make sure you get your homework done,’ so they did make sure. They didn't always check it . . . but they would . . . make sure that I was doing some type of work.”

Academic excellence. Not only did parents convey expectations to do one's best and complete the work, but some parents also set a standard of academic excellence for their children. Gretchen recalled, “Oh, you went to school, you didn't give 'em a hard time and you, it was, ‘Why don't you have A's?’” Wanda's grandparents were the communicators in her family. She elaborated, “My grandmother's the one who pushed me you know, she was there . . . she say, ‘You have to go to school, you have to learn, you got to get A's and B's.’” Ginny could not recall the manner in which she learned her parents' expectations, but she clearly perceived them. She expressed:

I never knew any differently. I was just an A student. I don't remember when that started, that this was what was expected of me, but I knew it was expected of me and I know that there were consequences if I didn't do well on a report card.

For some participants, the expectation of academic excellence involved the desire not to disappoint their parents. Anna elaborated:

I think it's more looking back that I realized that they didn't really put the pressure on me. I think at the time I felt like I would disappoint them if I didn't. I don't think they ever spoke that. I just felt like they were so proud of me for making such good grades that, "Are they not going to be proud if I don't?" kind of thing.

Ginny's parents had verbally communicated their expectations to her regarding her grades. She acknowledged her own desire to achieve academic success, but she also did not want to disappoint her parents. She expressed:

Maybe it was part of me and being more competitive than I ever realized that I wanted to get good grades, and I don't know if it was 'cause I wanted that or I just knew that I didn't want to disappoint them.

College. Participants understood their parents' expectations, not only for their academic progress in school, but also for their future education. Several of their parents expected them to go to college. Anna noted, "Neither one of them were straight A students, you know, but I knew they wanted me to go to college." Gretchen also shared, "They wanted us to go to college That was up there for everybody, 'You're going to college.'" William's parents envisioned college in his future as well. He pointed out, "They had high expectations. Both my parents were college graduates and they expected

me to go to college too. There was no doubt about that.” Wanda’s grandmother emphasized that Wanda must go to college, and she made sure Wanda had the opportunity. Her grandmother told her, “After high school you got to go away to college,” and Wanda explained, “That’s why my grandma paid for me to go to college.” Gabriella’s grandmother was also the significant parent figure in her life, and Gabriella referred to her as “Mom.” She shared that in Mexico, many people had talents, but were unable to reach their potential because they could not afford school and were therefore limited in educational opportunities. Her grandmother visualized a better life for her. Although Gabriella did not use the word “college,” her grandmother was concerned about her future. Gabriella shared, “My Mom really worry about to me to have education you know, to, to learn about this, to be a good, a very good - I don’t know, whatever I want to be.”

Teachers. Parents and grandparents were not the only people who communicated expectations to participants. They remembered teachers’ expectations as well. Anna reflected, “I think it was good . . . learning how to work under, you know, what do they want, what did they expect? What were the expectations, and then you had to be different in each class.” Gretchen recalled specific teachers and shared, “Sister Evelyn [pseudonym] for science – left notes and the epitome of coming to the sense of your own learning. She put up the notes, put out the labs, followed the format, but we did the work and figuring out.” In relation to writing, she shared:

My goodness, did we write! We wrote a lot and we wrote a lot through all of our subjects, you know, and you had to write it you remember how many trees you killed with all the paper and being perfect. Uh, they didn’t accept it.

There was no typing, there were no computers. You weren't allowed to erase. You had to present the best paper possible, that you could do to them.

Behavior. Not only were academic expectations communicated to participants, but also their parents' expectations regarding behavior. Monique shared, "They expected us to be honest . . . and we did. We had the trust and respect with them to be honest and say, 'Yes, I did my homework' or 'No, I didn't.'" Wendy noted, "They were very calm when they talked to me, so it was easy to understand what they expected and what would happen. It, it was very clear, um, what would happen if I didn't follow the rules." Gretchen's parents were very direct. She stated, "They just expected you to go to school and act right." She added, "If they got a call from school . . . they weren't going back up to, say, 'My baby' this, 'My baby' that. It was, 'You better act right' and that was it, you know, there was no nonsense." Keith elucidated, "We didn't have all these meetings like they do nowadays. It was, if there's a problem, they got a phone call from the office and then when I got home it got explained."

Negative expectations. In some cases, the example of the parents, absence of communication, or indifference conveyed the expectations of parents to their children. In referring to her biological father, Wendy noted:

He was . . . uneducated. . . . My father's father, they both drank a lot, um, can fix anything on a car you know, that kind of, background, so, um, and he just kind of stuck and didn't think education was important I guess.

She further noted, "I don't think I've ever seen my father read a book, um, write a letter."

Monique explained:

I guess the expectations were lower. . . . I don't think either one of them understood algebra, so once I got into algebra classes, I think they thought a "C" was ok, because they didn't think they could have done any better than that.

Wanda's grandparents communicated with her about education, but when asked about her parents, she replied, "No, never. My mother or my father, never." Bly's experience with parents' expectations was either missing, indifferent, or negative. She commented, "Ahh, I don't want say my Mom wanted me to fail, but she did nothing to help me succeed." She further explained, "My father didn't live here, so he had no idea, and my Mom was 'You're gonna graduate, you can do it in 18 years or you can do it in 22.'" Other comments reflected her mother's nonchalant attitude as well: "She was, 'Well, when you fail, don't come call, calling back to me,'" Bly noted, and continued, "It's like, 'If you pass, you pass' and, you know, whatever."

Involvement. Involvement of parents with their children's education was another way they communicated to participants. Gabriella noted, "Oh, she's at school every day, I mean, yes, they'll, the thing is that it's a small town so all her teachers were her friends. So she knows right away if something happened." Keith also explained, "Well, if I had anything after school they'd take me up there and um, they made sure I did my homework until I start hiding it from them." He stated that he was not involved in a lot of extracurricular activities, but shared that "I was in ROTC and I was in drill team, so they took me up to that, but otherwise . . . they mainly just tried to keep on me to make sure I did my stuff." Ginny, who was involved in the band, explained, "They were 'Band parents,' you know? They volunteered in the concession stands. They went on trips you know, away games and, and helped with that sort of thing and my Dad as much as my

Mom.” Marlis explained that in Germany, parents are not expected to be involved as much as they are in the United States, but admitted that her parents were uninvolved, even by German standards. She noted, “I would say that I can’t remember anything that they ever went to school for anything, or said anything for me.” Bly said of her mother, “I don’t think she ever even signed one of my report cards.” Gretchen’s portrait of her parents’ involvement illustrates supportive parents with a large family. She described:

“Well, we had PTA. My mom, you know, did what she did. She came, anything that was a school function, one of them were there you know, it didn’t matter. My father didn’t always go to everything ‘cause of his time and hours or was home checking the others.”

William’s father also had a work schedule that prevented his involvement, as William explained, “I don’t remember them being involved at... school very much. Uh, Dad was doing a lot of traveling so he would often be gone for 2 or 3 days.” However, he was involved in William’s life in other ways. He shared, “They were involved a lot at home about watching what we were doing” and “My brother and I were both involved with the Boy Scouts. Dad was a, uh, was a scoutmaster for a while. So uh, he was involved in that way.” Anna explained that her mom had been a Room Mother in elementary school and had helped with homework when she was younger. As she progressed through her classes, it became more difficult for her mother, but Anna described that her mother “Would offer, ‘If you need help . . . we’ll find you a tutor; we’ll find help if I can’t help you.’” Regarding her dad, she remembered, “If you had to build something or put something together . . . I remember him helping with some projects and . . . always coming to our extracurricular activities. . . . He was self-employed so he

would take off to, to be there.” Overall, she said of her parents, “So they were very involved in what we were doing, school wise, extracurricular, church.”

Impact on Participants as Adolescents

Causal conditions may be placed on the continuum shown on the figure from stabilizing influences to destabilizing influences. Communicating influences are placed in the middle of the continuum to signify that they serve primarily to communicate. The causal conditions in this model impacted the lives of participants as adolescents, as illustrated by the adolescent symbol on Figure 2. Stabilizing experiences and situations provided a sense of security, contentment, and comfort, but destabilizing experiences and situations led to a sense of insecurity, unhappiness, and discomfort. In most cases, and to varying degrees, there was a combination of stabilizing and destabilizing factors, resulting in varying degrees of adjustment for adolescents. In response to particular experiences and situations, some participants engaged strategies to address them. In other cases, the strategies of other individuals were involved.

Response to absence. The data showed that participants whose experiences involved primarily stabilizing influences tended to enjoy school and life in general. Those who experienced destabilizing influences expressed unhappiness with their situations. In grounded theory research, however, it is essential to look not only for patterns, but also for instances in which the data do not fit the pattern (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Melissa’s experiences and outcomes did not seem to fit the pattern of all the other participants at the time I analyzed her data. In her interview, she did not mention any individual who provided emotional or other support. She had described her parents saying, “My parents were non-existent. I came and went, did whatever. Got myself up,

got myself home, did basically whatever” and had shared that she was a child in need. However, she described school as “fun.” She also had many friends, enjoyed learning, and graduated early. She shared, “I didn’t ever care to skip school. I just needed to get it done and get it over with. And I actually did graduate early. So it was like, ‘I’m outta here; I’m done.’” I decided to conduct an additional phone interview with Melissa in order to discover what made the difference for her. I explained that, although her situation as an adolescent fell primarily into the destabilizing category, her outcomes reflected those of someone whose situation and experiences were stabilizing, and I asked her why she felt this was the case. She confirmed the conclusion that I had tentatively drawn – that her experiences had contributed to a sense of self-reliance. Melissa expressed that she had not allowed her circumstances to “ruin” her. She said of her adversity, “It just made me stronger.” In her words, she was “stubborn” and was not going to let it “get her.” After the second interview with Melissa, I interviewed two other participants who had experiences similar to hers.

Melissa, Marlis, and Bly in particular experienced the paradox of having parents who were present, but were largely absent from their lives. In each case, the participant developed a sense of self-reliance. While Marlis was in her middle school years, she lived with her grandmother during the week, due to her parents’ work schedule. She explained that her grandmother was from “A second World War generation and she’s from Hungary” and that “She didn’t know really what to do with me with the school, so I had to, to do that basically myself because my, my folks were already working.” She wrote in her reflective booklet, “My parents were not involved with school and couldn’t help me with homework.” She shared, “Not saying that I always did it, but . . . it was on

me.” Marlis developed a sense of self-reliance, which she described, “I was and still am very independent. I rode to school by bike. Took the public bus on bad days, got myself to practice and back.” The self-reliance Marlis developed involved a sense of acceptance. She explained, “My parents never got involved and that was fine. I dealt with it. I always believed and my parent made me believe that I had a good head on my shoulders. No hard feelings.”

Bly’s experience involved a mother who not only conveyed negative expectations, but who was also absent most of the time. She described, “If I was gonna eat, I had to cook it. If I wanted clean clothes, I had to wash ‘em, you know, and I wasn’t ever told to do this or do that or whatever, so you know, it was like if it got, you know, I had to do it.” She added, “I was, always kind of had to figure it out for myself.” Rather than a sense of acceptance, Bly developed a sense of determination. She indicated, “I will do, I will get to what I want to get to. I won’t let anything stop me.” Bly’s mother showed an indifferent and caustic attitude toward Bly’s success in school. Bly responded, “So therefore I was going to graduate when I was supposed to graduate, with honors I can say I did it because it’s what I wanted to do, you know, I was bound and determined.” It was clear that Bly’s actions and determination were in response to her mother’s attitude and actions. She asserted:

I think to show her that . . . I was gonna do, it, it, I guess it was, it was a rebellion thing, you know, of her by putting me down . . . just made me like, I’m not gonna be like this.

Bly’s loneliness as an adolescent caused her to spend most of her time at school or at friends’ houses. As a result, she developed a sense of what true family life should

be. She mentioned her friends' moms several times in her survey, booklet, and interview, and she noted that being at her friend's house helped her see what a family should be. She noticed the contrast between her life and theirs and stated, "I was gonna have no kids or I was going to have a bunch of kids." Thinking of her goals, she shared, "I seen, and I, and it probably did help that I did have other friends that did have families, and that's what I wanted." The consequences of these strategies later influenced the attitudes toward parent involvement and education these participants held as adults.

Response to abuse. The abuse Wanda experienced clouded her life. She labeled it a "dark time" and identified strategies she used in an attempt to make her feel better. Every opportunity she had to go somewhere, she took it. In a sense, she was "running away." She explained:

I did it so I wouldn't be home, you know, I, I didn't know why I didn't want to be home. I knew I was, I would go anywhere. My granddaddy said, "Let's go here," I was the first one in the car, you know, so I was running away from being home, especially, um, when my other uncle was around. . . . I didn't like being around him.

Another way Wanda dealt with her struggles was dating. Speaking of her boyfriend, she expressed, "He was a basketball player. He was somebody, so me being with him made me feel like somebody, which it, honestly I really still didn't in the inside you know." Buying nice clothes was another strategy Wanda used. She noted, "I think that then, that's why I was always dressing up, so no one can tell what was going on in the inside." She had been teased about her clothes earlier, so when she was 15, she began working. She described, "In high school that's what I was known for – my clothes. I

wore Bali's and . . . Liz Claiborne everything." She remarked that it was exciting to her when her peers would talk about her expensive clothing and her teachers would mimic her style, but admitted that it only covered up the struggles she felt. She acknowledged, "That was what my shine was, is to be a fashion bug. I wore the top style; I wore the latest clothes that was out, you know, so no one saw my frown." Although the clothing strategy carried over into her adulthood, the outcomes of these strategies only brought temporary relief.

Response to instability. Sometimes, strategies that others employed were necessary to address the needs of participants. During the period when Wendy lived with her father, she had no one to take care of her. She shared, "Early middle school I had to take care of myself, so I learned how to do that really quick." However, the self-reliance she developed was insufficient to overcome the enormous impact of instability in her life. She needed someone to rescue her. Interventions came first from a family she met at a church she joined, and then from her mother and stepfather. She shared, "I joined a church Wednesday night group and . . . I ended up living with that family for years, up until my parents came and got me." After her mother and stepfather took her to live with them, she experienced stability in her life. She described the outcome, referring to school:

So, didn't really care about it until I moved in with my mother and my step-father, um, which is where I remember everything, and then I guess I started paying attention more to the teachers and school and myself and my friends and liked it a lot.

Impact on Individuals' Attitudes as Adults

The first research question for this study related to the influence of parents' adolescent experiences on their attitudes toward school relating to their own middle school children. The combination of causal conditions, strategies participants employed, and outcomes of those strategies served to impact participants' attitudes toward education for their children. These attitudes included, but were not limited to, the academic aspect of school. They also included supporting factors, such as activities, community involvement, and support at home. Attitudes that participants developed were most often expressed through the strategies they employed in their interactions with their children's education.

The second research question this study addressed was, "How do parents' attitudes toward their children's education impact their interactions with their children's middle school personnel?" and the third was, "What strategies do parents employ as they participate in their children's education?" The data revealed that strategies participants employed fell into two general categories: continuity and discontinuity. The concepts of continuity and discontinuity were discussed by Atchley (1989) in terms of adults and aging. They refer to individuals looking to their past to inform present decisions regarding future outcomes. Stabilizing experiences and situations overall produced pleasant outcomes. Conversely, destabilizing experiences and situations produced unpleasant outcomes for participants. Participants valued the experiences and situations that produced pleasant effects in their own lives and wanted to provide the same or similar experiences and situations for their children. In terms of adverse experiences and situations, participants also valued some of those experiences due to the outcomes they

produced. For example, Wendy acknowledged, “Unfortunately, I went through some hard times, but I learned lessons that it, maybe I wouldn’t have learned otherwise, so it helped me become me I think.” The participants who experienced difficulties drew from their experiences to pass along positive aspects of their situations to their children, but none wanted to reproduce those experiences for their children. Thus, in regard to experiences and situations that produced unpleasant outcomes, participants primarily followed a path of discontinuity in their strategies. Just as participants’ experiences as adolescents typically involved a combination of effects and could be placed on a continuum of stabilizing and destabilizing experiences/situations, as adults their strategies in interacting with their children were also a combination of factors and could be placed on a continuum of continuity and discontinuity. The motivation behind parents’ strategies for all participants was a better life for their children than the one they experienced. As Keith shared of his parents, “He wanted more for his kids.”

Parents’ interactions with school personnel. In every case, including those in which participants’ parents were involved in their lives and education, participants were more involved with the school than their parents were. All of the participants indicated that they attended Open House at their child’s school, and all parents except one indicated that they attended parent nights. Other school-based involvement, such as attending sporting events, dances, and concerts varied to some degree, according to the child’s interests. Involvement and the types of interactions with school personnel varied by participant. All participants indicated on the survey that they attended parent conferences, although some had not gone to a conference this school year and one indicated “As needed.” Frequency of parent conferences was based on need for most

participants, although William attended regularly scheduled conferences due to his son's Individual Education Program (IEP).

Some parents' interactions with school personnel were based primarily on an as-needed basis. For example, when asked the interview question "How do your feelings about education influence the ways you communicate with your child's school?"

Monique indicated that she did not have a lot of communication with the school, although she described one event in which she met with the teacher. After an initial negative interaction, they came to an understanding. Monique's statement expressed the way in which her attitudes toward education prompted her to act, "I had to be an involved parent. . . . I feel like it's important, you know, and education is important."

Melissa's parents were never involved in her education, except to sign her report cards. Although Melissa had developed a strong sense of self-reliance in middle school, she stated that she would be "darned" before she would let her children go through what she went through, and that there was going to be someone there for her children. She had no qualms about confronting teachers to advocate for her children. She admitted that she didn't know if she was doing the best thing or not, that it may be better if her children fought their own battles as she had to, but her decision was to be there for them.

Melissa's interactions with school personnel followed a path of discontinuity from her own experiences. She focused on "awareness" as the primary reason for her involvement and wrote, "I volunteer a lot so I see the staff and talk in general or as needed." In response to the survey question about the greatest benefit of her involvement, she wrote, "Being aware of his needs and the people involved in his education." On the survey, she indicated that she was constantly volunteering at the school and wrote, "All three grade

levels I know most all of the teachers personally or in some capacity.” She also shared, “I think parent involvement makes a difference. To be there for your children. To know their friends, teachers, likes, dislikes. I am at the schools all the time volunteering, sports, office, PTO-PTSO, dances, field trips, fundraisers, etc.”

Anna’s interactions with school personnel included both strategies of continuity and discontinuity. Her parents were very supportive of the school, of teachers, and their expectations. They expected Anna and her siblings to follow school rules, and reinforced consequences of unacceptable behavior at school when their children arrived home.

Anna shared, “I try to be, and my parents were the same way, if you get in trouble at school you’re in trouble at home because their rules are their rules and when you’re there you follow their rules.” However, in regard to communication, Anna chose a path of discontinuity. Anna and her parents rarely communicated. In contrast, Anna established a strong practice of communication, not only with her children, but also with school personnel. She maintained communication with her child’s teachers, but also encouraged self-reliance and responsibility in her child to go to the teacher and communicate as well. Anna was also involved with PTO, the school council, and was in charge of dances at her child’s school. She explained, “It’s not the academic side that is visible, but yet you’re, you still have some kind of influence on, or at least you know what’s going on.”

Wendy’s interactions with school personnel seemed to be a complex mixture of support and dissatisfaction. Her own experiences in school contrasted between very positive interactions with teachers who were loving and supportive, and negative ones with a teacher in whose class she felt humiliated. There was also a contrast in the observations Wendy had regarding teachers at her son’s school. She used words and

phrases such as “disconnected,” “rushed,” “always yelling,” “unhappy, mean look,” “no interactions,” “picking on . . . the kids,” “busy,” “don’t have time for you,” “don’t even smile,” and “angry” when referring to teachers. She also stated, “I don’t like . . . the way they teach” and “I think everything’s just kind of falling apart.” She and her husband had employed a private tutor who came to her home to teach math “because he’s not getting it in the classroom.” In contrast to all these sentiments, Wendy remarked that she communicates with teachers, volunteers, serves as the academic booster, provides parties, and helps with duty-free lunches. She noted, “I try to relate to them just on a personal level and I think all of his teachers really like me.” She also acknowledged, “I really like a lot of the people there. They’re, they’re nice” and “Some teachers are very sweet and really care about the students.” Referring to standards and expectations for teachers in today’s education, she explained her mixed feelings, saying, “I try to be understanding of where they are, and I know it’s not all their fault.”

Gretchen grew up in a large family within a close community. Her parents were very supportive of education and the school. Gretchen’s experiences in school were on the stabilizing end of the continuum. Gretchen described her interactions with school personnel in positive terms, such as “the most wonderful atmosphere” and “always positive teachers.” She noted, “They just communicate what needs to be communicated in a, in good fashion.” She explained that if any problem arose with her child, “It’s handled in the right way, and if you don’t feel it is, you can talk about it and they don’t . . . push you off their list, and if there’s a problem then they’ll listen.” Similar to her parents, who balanced responsibilities with work and a large family to support the school, Gretchen explained, “I always found a way to do something. I’ll send it in . . . and then

anything I could do at home. I counted box tops for a while . . . you know, I always found a way to be involved.”

William’s experiences in middle school were positive, with the exception of frequent relocations. He did not remember his parents being actively involved in school and stated that his father frequently traveled with his job. In addition, he attended three different schools during middle school years. However, his parents closely monitored the subjects he took and followed the guidance of the school in his classes. Moving during this period of his life had been difficult for William, and he chose a path of discontinuity in regard to relocation. On his survey, he wrote, “Did not want to relocate so that they had change schools & friends,” and in his interview, he stated:

I had opportunities um, with the company I’m with, to relocate several times and each time I’ve gone, nope... I’m not going to do that. . . . They’ve said, ‘Hey... we’ll give you this big chunk of money if you’ll leave and I could, I could’ve picked that money up and said, ‘Let’s go... we’re going somewhere else’ and I really didn’t want to.

William’s interactions with his son’s school personnel were positive. He detailed ways in which the resource teachers had helped his son and described the band teacher as “outstanding.” In addition, William had gone into the classroom to share presentations related to math and English.

Ginny was very involved in the band in middle and high school, and her parents participated heavily with band activities, rather than with academics. Ginny shared that her interactions with the school primarily involved volunteering with the PTO. She noted, “I am a very hands-off mom when it comes to what the teachers do with, um, my

children, and I think it's a trust factor." Ginny's parents held high expectations for her, as did her band teacher. Ginny also held high expectations for her son and expressed that she wants her son to "be pushed" in his classes at school.

Some of Marlis' interactions with school personnel reflected continuity with her experiences in middle school in Germany. For example, she wrote, "In Germany parents are not 'expected to help' so much physically and monetarily with school." She recalled a teacher in middle school who addressed problems with the students only and told them she did not need to speak to their parents. Her own opinions reflected that view. When asked how her experiences impacted communication with her child's school personnel, she responded, "I don't." She continued, "I have my own little thought about that, this whole communication with teachers forth and back; there's not enough time in a teacher's hour to write, to say 15 kids or 20 kids each day." Her approach was that of continuity with her culture and she shared, "I don't need to, to call me about things or, I need, I don't need to call you about things. If you don't hear from me, we're good." However, Marlis also shared, "I am much more involved than my parents were." She shared how parents in the United States take a greater interest in their children's educational outcomes, and she explained that she volunteers in the office, on field trips, and on the PTO.

Bly's interactions with school personnel reflect a discontinuity with her own experiences. Her mother was never involved with her education, but Bly regularly interacts with her children's teachers. Bly's experiences in school gave her a unique understanding of adolescents, and she explained, "I'm one of those parents... "What did she do? [Laughter] What did she do?" You know, I just go ahead because the minute I

think it's not my kid, it's my kid you know." She made sure to convey her expectations to school personnel as well. Bly explained, "I make sure that I know all the, the teachers and the guidance counselors . . . and I'm like . . . 'This is what I know she can make,' you know, 'This is, this is an A child, an A+ child.'"

Intervening conditions. This study examined the influences of parents' adolescent experiences on their attitudes toward education and interactions with their children's school personnel as adults. However, the data revealed that the interactions participants may have had with school personnel based on their middle school experiences may have been altered by intervening conditions. Such was the case for Gabriella, Wanda, and Keith.

Bullying, prejudice, and perceived discrimination. Gabriella experienced friendship and support in middle school, and her grandmother interacted with teachers frequently and positively. Gabriella immigrated to the United States from Mexico and cited several ways in which she believed the educational system is better than what she experienced in Mexico. She expressed appreciation for her children's teachers, especially in regard to instructional strategies to meet diverse needs of learners. Gabriella also shared that she regularly communicated with her children's teachers, and she spoke positively of the communication. However, bullying, prejudice, and perceived discrimination presented intervening conditions that made it necessary for Gabriella to interact with school personnel in ways that she would not have chosen. She explained, "This kid always you know, bothering him and telling him that he's Mexican. He say 'Go back to your own . . . ' . . . bad words. To me, sounds really mean." She shared her son's account:

He said ... “Go back to your country” and I told him, and I ask him, “What are you talking about? This is my country, I’m born here” and he said, “No... tell your Dad and your Mom to go up to your country, take you there ‘cause you, you don’t belong here” ... It always, you know, and so he came home really sad, crying.

After numerous attempts to rectify the situation, with no results, Gabriella took further action. She explained, “I told him, I said, I’m going tomorrow to the school, so I went four times to the school, the fourth time, the f, the fourth time when I went there I was... I was really mad.” Gabriella felt that the school’s approach was different for her son than it would have been for someone with “an American name” and detailed:

I was telling them that they don’t do anything I’m going to call the cops and come to the cops. You know, they don’t like the cops at school, so I tell them, I said, the fifth time when I came back, if I come back I’m gonna come back with the cops because this kid is really bothering my son.

The interactions with school personnel reflected some interactions that were based on her experiences in middle school and others she would not have chosen, but did not have a choice due to intervening conditions.

Impact of abuse. The most devastating intervening condition was Wanda’s full realization of the abuse she had endured as an adolescent. It impacted her interactions with school personnel, with her children, and in her daily life. She explained that she went to the school for parent conferences and described positive relationships with her child’s school personnel. However, she had been dealing with recurring depression and shared, “It’s been rough for me trying to really um, let go some things, so, you know,

really to let go of some of what happened to me.” She felt that “It’s like a rut, you know, and don’t know which way to go” She also shared:

I’m stifled right now. I don’t know which way to go. You know, um, mentally I’m not ready to work because of what I’m still going through. Physically, um, I’m capable of working, um, but mentally it’s not allowing me to, to function the way I need to function.

Wanda’s ongoing depression had led to suicide attempts and hospitalization for her. As a result, she was unable to interact with either her children or with school personnel in a way she would have chosen.

Strategies with children. Participants’ interactions with their children also revealed strategies of continuity and discontinuity.

Academics. Monique’s academic strategies with her children fit the description of discontinuity. Her parents were unable to assist her with her homework, but she noted, “I wanted to make sure for my children I could always help them if they needed it.” She also explained that her parents’ math deficiencies resulted in their lower expectations for her. She shared, “I think they thought a ‘C’ was ok, because they didn’t think they could have done any better than that, so... I think they were proud of that, whereas I’m not like that now.” She had also shared that her parents did not check her homework, but said of her son, “I do check his homework most of the time.” She summarized her feelings about her strategies, “I think it’s made me want to be very involved in his learning . . . I don’t want to tell him that I don’t know. I don’t want to tell him that I don’t understand.”

Although Melissa’s parents were uninvolved in her education, she encouraged her children academically, saying, “That’s your job now. You wait ‘til you get out in the real

world. It's not as easy as you think. . . . And homework. It's kind of like your job. You've got to go every day." Anna's approach to academics was also that of discontinuity, but in a different manner. As a middle school student, she had experienced a high level of academic pressure. Although she admitted that the pressure came from within, rather than from her parents, she still wanted to avoid that type of pressure for her children. She commented, "I think I've probably been a little bit less, um, you know, put a little bit less pressure on my kids because didn't want them to feel you know, that same stress." Anna felt that communication was the key to accomplish this goal. She explained:

You know, it was I think it was just kind of how I internalized a lot of that and then I didn't talk to them about it, so I, again, that's why I wanted to make sure that my, that I did talk to my kids about it so they would understand what the expectation was.

Keith also took an approach of discontinuity to some degree. In his early middle school years, he had done well, but he explained that he "quit trying" in high school. His regrets at not pursuing his education reflected in his strategies of communication with his son. He explained:

I'm hoping that, trying to instill in Caleb, [pseudonym] to do your work. Do it all on time. So you don't, so you can go to college and have a degree and hopefully get a scholarship to go to college 'cause all I've done physical labor my whole life. I don't have a college degree. I couldn't, I can't really get it being hired in what I'm in now, 'cause there are a lot of places that want you to have a college degree to even get hired. Just so, heck I don't even think I can be a manager at

where I work 'cause I don't have a college degree. So, hopefully, I'm trying to instill in him how important it is to get his education so he can go to college and get a good job.

Not only did Keith have an approach of discontinuity, but his parents did as well. He recounted:

They just encouraged me to get my work done and do it right. 'cause my Mom never made it to 8th grade, and she dropped out of school; my Dad made it to 9th grade, he dropped out of school. I mean, he finally went back and got his GED and got a 2 year degree, but he wanted more for his kids, and they both grew up and Mom grew up during some of the depression and Dad right after that on a farm, so, they always wanted more, more for their kids.

Wendy's difficulties in school and afterward also prompted her to emphasize the importance of education for her son as well. She shared, "My husband's parents were teachers and doctors and you know, so I had to catch up to be just in a conversation." As a result, she explained:

I think I worked really hard to make sure he didn't have to have some of the experiences I did, like I, um, probably help him too much. It's hard to let him fail. Um, I'm like, gosh...he has to stay up 'til 10 because he had to do something; he's going to sit there 'til it's done.

Ginny had allowed herself to dislike certain classes in school, but wanted her children to appreciate all their classes. She shared, "I just don't want them to uh, to miss out on something you know, because they think they don't like it at that age, you know, I think now looking back I wish I, I paid attention."

Another participant whose strategies revealed discontinuity was Marlis. She joked, “I have much, much higher impact on my, on my, my kid, I’m . . . going to the ‘Dark Side’ almost, um, I make sure that my kid has the good education.” She shared:

I don’t want him to fall below the grade because I think I have, might’ve fell a little bit below the grade. . . . I didn’t have the someone slap the back of my hand, say, ‘Hey, come on, you need to do this now,’ and I want him at least to have the opportunity and then decide which way to go.

Marlis referred to herself as a “control freak” because, she said, “I know what you can do if you work to your full potential.” She explained that she had gone back to school later, but noted, “It is so much easier to learn when you are young and you’re your [*sic*] brain cells are still working. I hope my child will understand one day.” Bly also had had to delay her education. She noted, “Well the reason why I stay on it is because I know it’s so much easier to learn now than to try to learn when you’re twenty, you know, and see, that’s what I had to do.” Her strategies revealed a discontinuity with her own experiences as she stated, “I guess because I wasn’t pushed, I push my kids and I stay on top of ‘em, like ‘Let me see your homework.’” She added, “When it comes to their education, we’ll do whatever we have to, to give them the tools to get there.”

Even for Gretchen and her husband, who employed strategies of continuity related to academics, the intensity of their encouragement was higher than that of their parents. Gretchen noted, “We had good positive learning experiences and I make sure my kids do uh, probably more than, probably more than our parents.” She shared, “I think more than anything my husband and I wanted to give them more chances than we had.” She explained, “We just try to just give them the pieces and I guess as best we could and just

like our parents . . . our parents' attitude definitely influenced what my husband and I do." Monique's most positive experiences in a middle school experience that was otherwise negative involved music. Her love for music led her to use continuity in guiding her son's choice of classes. She explained, "I know I tried to help my son in choosing his connections classes and told him chorus would be fun and that he would probably enjoy it, probably because I love music." However, she also noted, "Based off of my influences, I feel like I was only given one path . . . And I don't want to limit him to that."

William's parents monitored his classes closely, and he shared the continuity of his own strategies with his son, "I can go on and look at I-Parent and go, 'Ahhh, you told me you passed that, but it's a 72. You know, that's not really my idea of passing,' and so I can watch his grades, in basically real time and go, 'Here's how we're actually doing.'" Ginny and her husband also employed continuity strategies related to academics. She described:

In that aspect, I would say, probably the apple hasn't fallen far from the tree, that and my husband is ah, very much the same way too and, and, I think his parents were very similar growing up, that they, there were just those expectations that school was a priority, that you will make good grades, that you will be a good student, um, and so we've continued that.

Ginny's strategies of continuity were not limited only to the priority of education, but also included the approach to her children's schoolwork. She shared:

I'm very lenient about how they do their homework, how it gets done, um, as long as it gets done . . . but then looking back, my parents didn't stand over me and

make sure that everything was done either, so that may have transferred as well. I just haven't realized it until now.

Social life and activities. The social aspect of life and school was also an area in which participants employed strategies of continuity and discontinuity. Monique had been severely limited in her opportunities for activities that were not related to music. Her approach to her children's social life was that of discontinuity. She noted, "I don't want my children to feel like they can't have friends over or can't go to their friends' houses." She also encouraged school activities, sharing, "I don't feel like I was allowed to experience very many aspects of middle school and high school, and so we try to communicate that to him, that if he wants to go to a school dance, you know, we encourage him for the social aspect of it." Ginny's experiences and strategies were similar. She shared, "Whereas I did not have as many play dates and, and friends sleeping over, I mean, my children, that's one thing they will not be able to complain about...every weekend we have somebody at the house or they're gone." She stated that she wanted them to have "positive experiences" and "a group to fall back on if they need it."

Melissa shared that she had been friends with many different groups of people and encouraged the same. She expressed to her children, "Give everyone a chance; get to know them yourself, not from others' opinion. Think how you would feel or how you would like to feel." Anna also continued the strategies of her parents. She wrote in her booklet, "Liked school for the social – I still feel that's impt [important] in MS [middle school] & try to encourage." She also shared in her interview, "I kind of had the same expectations of them you know. They have certain chores they have to do at school, at

home, but they're both involved in outside activities, which, keep them busy, keep them out of trouble." Anna also used strategies that showed continuity with her own experiences in guiding her children's choices of friends. She explained, "He was like my best friend, you know. . . I encourage my daughter to have guy friends. I think that it's, I think it's good to have friends from both sides, same with my son." Gretchen was involved in many sports and community activities in middle school, and she chose strategies of continuity for her children. She explained, "We tell them that, um, they have to be involved in something in middle school, I didn't care, and I didn't care what it was. We really urged them to be involved in an extracurricular activity." For William, the extracurricular activities were more specific and definitely were on the continuity end of the continuum. Boy Scouts had been a significant part of his life in middle school. He shared, "I'm making sure that my son's part of Boy Scouts now." Ginny's comments not only demonstrated her strategy of continuity, but also illustrated the significance of middle school activities. She explained, "I've been a really big proponent of my son participating in middle school sports." Although she was in band instead of sports, she explained:

He just wasn't a band person or a chorus person, but . . . I think it's so important to be involved in some . . . type of group activity, um, it just gives them um, a purpose other than just going to school and doing the work.

Marlis also employed strategies of continuity related to social life. She enrolled her son in dance classes and sports activities, which were two activities she had also enjoyed in middle school. In addition, she provided direction on choosing friends, and explained, "I would like for my son to make good choices with friends. I am giving him

more direction what a true friend is.” She herself had been selective in whom she considered her friends in middle school.

Bly’s experiences as an adolescent exposed her to various unhealthy activities in which teenagers participated. This exposure, along with Bly’s constant presence in her friends’ homes served to provide a unique strategy of involvement for Bly in both her own children’s lives and those of their friends. Bly found models in her friends’ parents, and explained, “I didn’t want that life. I didn’t want my kids to have that life. I seen, and I, and it probably did help that I did have other friends that did have families, and that’s what I wanted.” Bly made every effort to be there for her children and for their friends, sharing, “A lot of parents are like, ‘Well, I want to stay at home with my kid when they’re a baby.’ I’m like, ‘Oh no... I want to stay at home with my kid when they’re a teenager.’ That’s when they need the guidance to me, when they are babies, yes, they need their Mom, but they’re gonna get loved. A teenager really needs a parent, you know, to guide them.” She noted, “Because kids are coming over to my house and, and I just, they don’t realize I’m listening but I’m always listening, you know.” She shared various life lessons with her own children and other teenagers as well. On her survey, she wrote, “I try to be a big part of my kids lifes out of school. I’d rather have all there friends here then my kids everywhere. I have had pool parties with 20 kids and I let their parents know they are welcome.”

Although most of Bly’s strategies with her children were on the discontinuity end of the continuum, she also recognized the value of some of her experiences and used strategies that were more on the continuity end as well. She remarked, “I guess it just made me have common sense, common sense instead of someone always telling you.”

As a result, Bly was involved with the school, but also allowed her children to work out problems for themselves. She explained, “That’s why I want to be there for my kids even if it’s just me in the back ground. I am there if needed but try to let them handle it.”

Life lessons. Several participants formed strategies that included life lessons. An area that shows the continuity of Bly’s desires, but discontinuity with her experiences was the emphasis on family. She encouraged her children, “That’s your brother and sister,” you know, “You love your brother and sister, that’s all you have” and, you know, because I didn’t have that.” An intervening condition, the death of her brother, served to reinforce Anna’s belief that academic pressure for her children should be minimized. Bly shared a life lesson learned from her grandfather. She explained, “My grandfather was full-blooded Indian, so I had his beliefs of ‘You work for what you get; nothing gets handed to you,’ so all my kids work for what they get. . . . you don’t get a free ride in life.” Melissa remembered a middle school friend who was injured and was paralyzed for life. She used the story to teach her children the value of life and of caution. She expressed, “So I just try and tell them as far as watch what you’re doing, watch who you’re with, and be careful. You know, she just happened to be there.” She also shared a similar story of friends in high school who died, and noted, “You need to do the best you can. I tell them that all the time. Do the best you can. You know, that’s all you can do. . . . You got a snack cupboard right now. That could be gone tomorrow.” Anna shared with her children the value of learning to work with teachers. She explained, “You know, as everywhere there’s good teachers and bad teachers and your children have to learn how to, you know, work within what they’re given and you’re going to come across good

bosses and bad bosses.” Bly used her experiences to encourage friendship. She explained:

Don’t ever judge somebody until you walk in their footsteps, because you know, you may see a girl and she may be acting out a certain way, like trashy, but that may be getting her attention.” I said, “So, if you talk to her you never know, you could change that girl’s life. You know? Just by talking to her, by being a friend to her.

Wendy and her husband had similar difficult experiences. She shared, “Some of those choices you make early on really impact who you are later, so we’re teaching him . . . be strong and . . . use your common sense, uh, and think about things a little bit before you do it.” In thinking back on her experiences, she remarked, “So I think it’s, it’s shaped everything we do with our son on a daily basis, um, everything.”

Discussion of Findings in Relation to the Research Questions

In this section, I discuss the findings of the study in relation to the research questions that guided this study. Findings relate to (a) participants’ past middle school experiences and their influence on individuals’ attitudes as adults, (b) the influence of parents’ attitudes toward education on their interactions with school personnel; and (c) the influence of parents’ attitudes and the strategies they use with their children.

Research Question 1

The first research question for this study was “How do parents’ adolescent experiences influence their attitudes toward school as it relates to their own middle school children?” In examining the influence of parents’ past experiences, I identified three categories of causal conditions for this study: Stabilizing Experiences/Situations,

Destabilizing Experiences/Situations, and Communicating Experiences/Situations. Each of these three major categories included several subcategories. Stabilizing influences included (a) the presence of significant individuals, community, and church; (b) basic needs being provided; (c) a meaningful social life; (d) participation in enjoyable activities; and (e) a positive school context. Destabilizing influences included (a) the absence of parents, stability, material goods, activities, and a meaningful social life; (b) abuse; (c) loneliness; (d) bullying; (e) negative self-image; and (f) negative school contexts. Communicating influences included culture, communication, expectations, and involvement. Communicating influences served to bear on individuals' attitudes primarily in a communicative manner. Stabilizing Experiences/Situations and Destabilizing Experiences/Situations bore on the individual and produced either (a) a sense of security, contentment, and/or comfort, (b) a sense of insecurity, unhappiness and/or discomfort, (c) resilience/self-reliance in the individual, or (d) a combination of these characteristics. In response to the impact of some destabilizing influences, participants employed strategies, which varied in consequences from temporary relief to acceptance of situations and a development of resilience. The aggregation of causal conditions, strategies and their consequences contributed to the formation of participants' attitudes toward school for their children.

Research Question 2

The second research question was "How do parents' attitudes toward their children's education impact their interactions with their children's middle school personnel?" The data showed that most participants were more involved with their children's education than their parents were. Participants whose parents communicated

an attitude of respect for education, teachers, and school rules tended to replicate those attitudes in their interactions with school personnel. They supported teachers, reinforced school expectations at home, and communicated with teachers as necessary. Those interactions followed a path of continuity with their own experiences. Participants whose parents conveyed negative expectations for their children or who were completely uninvolved in their children's education followed a path of discontinuity, because those participants were very involved in their children's education. The three participants whose parents were notably absent all served as volunteers in various capacities at their children's schools. One, whose parents were completely uninvolved, appeared more assertive in confronting teachers as advocate for her child than other participants appeared to be. Participants who had experienced unpleasant interactions with teachers as adolescents tended to be less positive overall toward teachers, although they were still very supportive in volunteering at their children's schools. Intervening conditions that occurred in participants' lives after adulthood produced an altering effect on strategies. For example, depression in one participant caused her to be unavailable at times. Another participant who was generally positive in her interactions with school personnel was compelled to take negative action as a result of her child being the victim of prejudice, bullying, and discrimination.

Participants' communication with teachers varied in relation to their attitudes as well. For some participants, a lack of communication did not signify a lack of interest, but rather the presence of trust that teachers were doing their jobs or the assurance that communication was not necessary due to their children's positive performance in school. For one participant, a lack of communication reflected her own cultural beliefs regarding

teachers communicating primarily with students rather than with parents. The majority of parents, however, maintained a consistent positive communication with their children's teachers and other school personnel. Some parents openly invited and encouraged teachers' communication.

Research Question 3

The final research question was "What strategies do parents employ as they participate in their children's education?" Attitudes that participants developed as a result of (a) their experiences and situations as adolescents, (b) the strategies they employed as adolescents in response to their experiences and situations, and (c) the consequences of those strategies, were expressed through the strategies they employed in their interactions with their children. The data showed that these strategies also fell into two general categories: continuity and discontinuity. In the context that causal influences created a sense of security, contentment, and/or comfort, the individual employed strategies of continuity. In the context that influences created a sense of insecurity, unhappiness, and/or discomfort, the individual employed strategies of discontinuity. These results, however, were modified to some degree by the value participants found in difficult experiences and situations. For example, one participant whose parents had been uninvolved in her life valued the freedom she had experienced as an adolescent, but recognized that she should have not been part of some peer groups. As a result, she allowed her children freedom as well, but distinguished it from her experiences by maintaining an awareness of what was going on in their lives. Another participant recognized the value of having had to work hard as a child. She provided for her children, but she insisted that they work for items they received, and she set budgets

within which her children were expected to make choices. In the academic component of school, as well as in other areas, most parents employed a combination of both continuity and discontinuity.

Academic strategies employed by participants included:

- helping with homework, reading with children, and discussing learning and academic progress;
- providing a dedicated study area at home;
- communicating with teachers regarding children's abilities, needs, and academic expectations and progress;
- communicating with teachers regarding online resources and other materials for children to use as aids in learning;
- making certain they as parents understood concepts in order to provide needed help for their children;
- providing tutors;
- enrolling children in outside educational agencies in order to remediate or accelerate children's academic performance;
- monitoring children's assignments and grades; and
- guiding children's choice of classes.

In their surveys, participants shared the benefits they believed resulted from their involvement with their children's education. Many of their comments illustrate the continuity or discontinuity of parents' strategies with their own experiences. Monique, whose parents were unable to help her with schoolwork, wrote, "Helping child understand learning objectives & concepts he didn't understand in class; providing other

ways to solve/complete assignments.” Awareness was a theme for Melissa, whose parents were oblivious to what was going on in her life. She wrote, “Parent awareness and knowing who is part of their lives,” “Awareness of child’s needs,” and “Awareness of people involved in child’s education.” Others felt that awareness was important as well. Keith’s comment on the survey was, “Knowing early on if/when there are issues.” Marlis and Bly shared similar views. Marlis wrote, “To know what is going on in the school socially and educationally, so you can intervene sooner than later.” Bly, whose mother was not there for her, wrote, “Knowing who she/he is around, the parents, how the teachers are and what she is doing ahead of time.” Anna had placed a lot of academic pressure on herself as a middle school student, and she felt that her parents did not communicate with her. She wrote, “He knows I care and that I am here if he needs me but he also knows I trust him and think he can handle some things on his own.” This concept of letting children know that parents care was shared by other parents as well. Wanda wrote, “Letting him know I care,” and William wrote, “They know I care about education.” Gabriella also referred to education when she wrote, “Lets him know that I think education is very important.”

Participants’ strategies went beyond academics to influence a broader context as well, including school and community activities and the social lives of their children. Participants made sure they were there for their children. One participant who felt communication was deficient with her parents focused on communicating with her children. Participants who had found solace, acceptance, and enjoyment in band, chorus, and sports at school encouraged their children to be involved in organized activities as well. Others encouraged interest and involvement in church and community activities

they had enjoyed as adolescents. Those who had not been allowed to participate in events at school or with friends ensured that their children had such opportunities. One participant who had suffered sexual abuse as an adolescent constantly monitored her children's whereabouts, peers, and environments, and strongly cautioned her children regarding other people. Participants whose parents had not been available for them and who had to fend for themselves as adolescents possessed a unique knowledge of pitfalls facing teenagers, and they were circumspect regarding their children's peers and surroundings. One participant took this strategy even further by providing frequent activities at her home for her children and their friends in order to be cognizant of their surroundings and activities. A final area in which parents employed strategies with their children was through sharing life lessons. Using their own experiences and those they had observed, parents used life lessons to illustrate their values and to encourage their children to make good choices.

The overarching motivation in every case was participants' desire for their children's lives to be better than their own. Participants' sentiments of wanting more for their children was repeatedly present in interviews. Whether participants' strategies and interactions followed a path of continuity or discontinuity, the goal behind each strategy was to make life better for their children.

Impact on Parents

One significant factor of this study was the impact the findings produced on some of the participants. The reflective nature of the activities focused their attention on factors that contributed to their attitudes and interactions with their children's education. In preparing for the interview, Wendy remarked that she had not realized that her past

experiences had influenced her actions, but quipped, “I do now!” Reflecting on her past experiences enlightened her in several ways. She had held negative memories of her parents’ home interactions during her middle school years, but remarked, “It’s funny because doing this probably helped to enlighten me on some things that I had forgotten. Some positive things.” She also noted the approach of continuity she had chosen in regard to her children’s homework, as she remarked, “Looking back, my parents didn’t stand over me and make sure that everything was done either, so that may have transferred as well. I just haven’t realized it until now.” One of her comments simply served to illustrate the importance of reflective experiences such as the ones employed in this research study. In speaking of her parents, she used phrases such as, “. . . Probably before this I wouldn’t have thought about it at all,” and “I think looking back at my experiences, I realize. . .” As she reflected, she began to remember more positive characteristics of her parents and stated, “Especially when I started writing down for some of the questions and remembered, ‘You know what? They, they did do a lot.’” Participants’ reflections on their past experiences enlightened them and expanded their understanding of their experiences and themselves.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this grounded theory study was to explain how parents' school experiences as adolescents influence their attitudes and behaviors toward their children's education. In this chapter, I begin by restating the purpose of the study and providing a summary of the findings. Next, I relate the findings to the research questions. I then present and explain the theoretical model developed through this study and follow with a discussion of the findings in the context of the conceptual framework for this study and other relevant literature. Finally, I discuss implications for practice and limitations of the study, followed by recommendations for further research.

Summary of the Findings

Twelve individuals participated in this study. Participants were parents of middle school students from five middle schools in one suburban school district in the Southeastern United States. Three primary forms of data were used in the study. First, participants completed a brief survey that included demographic questions, those regarding involvement with their children's education, and participants' evaluation of their own middle school experiences. Second, participants completed a reflective booklet related to their past middle school experiences. Finally, individuals participated in an interview that I conducted and audio recorded. After interviews were transcribed, I analyzed the data following the approach for grounded theory proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1990). I analyzed each transcript and identified concepts and categories of information in open coding. In axial coding, I rearranged the data around categories, identified subcategories, and arranged categories according to the coding paradigm of causal conditions, phenomenon, contextual conditions, intervening conditions, strategies,

and consequences (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Following axial coding, I used selective coding to identify the core category and relate other categories to the core category by means of the paradigm. Three research questions guided this study. The core category, Influence, relates to all three of the research questions.

Research Question 1

The first research question was “How do parents’ adolescent experiences influence their attitudes toward school as it relates to their own middle school children?” In data analysis, three categories of causal conditions emerged: Stabilizing Experiences/Situations, Destabilizing Experiences/Situations, and Communicating Experiences/Situations. Stabilizing influences were those that produced a sense of security, contentment, and/or comfort in the adolescent. Stabilizing influences included (a) the presence of significant people, such as parents, grandparents, and friends, as well as community and church support; (b) provisions present to take care of needs; (c) healthy social lives; (d) activities that provided a sense of belonging and acceptance, and (e) positive school contexts. Destabilizing influences resulted in a sense of insecurity, unhappiness, and/or discomfort for individual adolescents. Findings from this category included (a) the absence of parents, stability, material goods, activities, and healthy social lives for adolescents; (b) abuse; (c) loneliness; (d) bullying; (e) negative self-image; and (f) negative school contexts. Communicating influences served primarily to communicate concepts regarding school to individual adolescents and influence their attitudes as adults. Communicating influences include culture, communication, expectations, and involvement of parents. This combination of influences served to impact individuals as adolescents. In response to some causal conditions, particularly

destabilizing ones, individuals employed strategies, or others employed strategies on behalf of the individuals. These strategies resulted in consequences. The combination of causal conditions, strategies, and their consequences influenced individuals' attitudes toward school and education. These attitudes encompassed a broad view of children's experiences, including academics, social life, activities, and spiritual life.

During data collection and analysis, one participant did not fit the pattern that was evident, so a new pattern emerged. These divergent data were later confirmed with other participants I interviewed. Some participants who experienced adverse situations developed a sense of self-reliance and patterns of success despite their circumstances. For these participants, adverse circumstances led to the development of resilience in their lives.

Research Question 2

The second research question that guided this study was "How do parents' attitudes toward their children's education impact their interactions with their children's middle school personnel?" One aspect of the influence parents' attitudes had in regard to this question was that activities and interactions represented continuity for some participants and discontinuity for others for similar actions. For example, some participants who appreciated the volunteering efforts of their own parents chose to volunteer at school functions, in the office, and in other school-based activities as their parents had done. They sought to interact with school personnel in a way that demonstrated continuity with their own experiences as adolescents. On the other hand, other participants also volunteered as a result of their attitudes toward education, but for reasons that represented discontinuity with their own experiences. Their parents were

never involved at the school, and the absence of their own parents caused the participants to value school involvement. One participant, whose parents were not there for her, spent a lot of time volunteering at the school in order to be aware of teachers and other people in her children's life. She also indicated that her role was to advocate for her children when necessary. This interaction was in discontinuity with her own experiences, because there was no one there to advocate for her, but it also reflected her attitude toward education and school for her child.

Another example of this type of dichotomous reaction was providing. One participant expressed that her parents "never said no to the school" in terms of providing. The example of her parents impacted her attitude toward education. As a result, she and her husband also provided supplies and materials that teachers needed according to their means. A different participant also emphasized that she provided whatever the students and the teacher needed. However, her background was as a middle school student who "needed things." Her needs as a middle school student caused her to develop an appreciation for materials that students and teachers needed and to provide them. Another example of participants' interactions demonstrating their regard for education was that they supported teachers' rules, consequences, and actions.

In some cases, interactions that might have occurred were altered by intervening conditions. For example, a parent who was generally supportive and positive toward education and teachers found it necessary to threaten legal action because of perceived discrimination when her child was being bullied at school. Her attitude toward education was positive, but the intervening condition disrupted positive interactions with school

personnel. Another example was a parent who was unable to interact with school personnel at times due to extreme depression.

Research Question 3

The third research question for this study was “What strategies do parents employ as they participate in their children’s education?” Strategies participants used in guiding their children also followed patterns of continuity, discontinuity, or a combination of patterns that could be placed on a continuum of continuity and discontinuity. There were various examples of continuity in parents’ actions. Several participants whose parents strongly encouraged college attendance did the same for their children. The importance of a college education had become a part of their own attitudes, and they used the strategy of talking with their children about college. Another example of continuity included a participant whose parents closely monitored math and science for their son. As an engineer, this participant’s attitude also included a belief that math and science were important. As a result, he encouraged his son in math and science, as his parents had done for him. For this same participant, an important factor in his middle school life was Boy Scouts, because it helped him see relevance in his education. As a parent, he also became involved in Boy Scouts with his son. Several participants who found acceptance through activities such as band and sports required their children to be involved in some type of extracurricular activity as well. For these participants, activities gave meaning to their school experiences. As a result, their attitudes toward education included a belief that involvement in activities was essential for their children. Another example of how parents’ attitudes reflected continuity with their own experiences was

participants' reinforcement of school rules at home, just as their parents had done with them.

An unexpected finding emerged with participants who had experienced adverse situations due to their parents' absence. Although most of their strategies followed a path of discontinuity, they also found value in their experiences and chose to continue elements of them for their children. For one participant, this meant that she allowed her children much freedom, but within parameters of her knowledge. Another realized the value in becoming self-reliant and encouraged self-reliance in her children.

There were also areas of discontinuity in parents' actions. One participant whose parents were not there for her had become very independent and valued that trait within herself. However, as a parent she only worked jobs in which she could be home when her children were home, so her children would not become "latchkey kids" as she had been. In terms of academic orientation, several parents who had not made academics a priority in their middle/early high school years realized the deficiencies caused by an insufficient educational focus in their own lives. As a result, their attitudes were that education should be prioritized, and they promoted a strong academic orientation for their children. Also, parents who had struggled in school made certain that either they were knowledgeable and could help their children, or they obtained tutors and other help. Their attitudes about the importance of education and the help their children needed prompted them in their strategies. The realization of abuse for one participant led her to constantly focus on her children's safety. Her own experiences had impacted her life at home, school, and elsewhere. As a parent, she desired for her children to be safe and to be successful in school. As a result, she tried to protect her children from potentially

abusive situations. In each of these examples, participants chose strategies to use with their children that reflected their attitudes and reflected either continuity or discontinuity with their own adolescent experiences.

As with interactions with school personnel, strategies used with children were at times altered by intervening circumstances. The parent who had suffered abuse went to parent conferences and tried to support her child. However, recurring and severe depression resulting in an inability to function, along with suicide attempts prevented her from consistently participating with her children as she would have liked. An interesting finding was that her mother had provided for her, but was not present as a positive encouragement in her life because she was always working. This participant missed the communication with her mother, but chose at times to work as much as 100 hours per week herself. Working and buying clothes as a teenager had been one strategy she used in dealing with the abuse. It was unclear from findings whether the strategy of working continued as she was still dealing with the abuse issue, or if a sense of identification with her mother's busy work schedule may have played a part in this activity. It is possible that a totally different factor could have contributed. However, this was an area that was not conclusive.

A pervasive concept throughout the study was that parents wanted a better life for their children. Participants' desires for their children to have a better life than they themselves had experienced served to motivate participants in using strategies with their children and interactions with educators. Several of the participants in the study stated this motivation, and one participant shared, "I think we all want more for our children than what we had . . . that's what drives us." Participants chose strategies of continuity in

areas in which they had experienced a sense of security, contentment, and/or comfort, but chose strategies of discontinuity in areas in which they had experienced a sense of insecurity, unhappiness, and/or discomfort.

Discussion of Findings in Relation to the Conceptual Framework

Four theories formed the conceptual framework for this study, each of which relates to individuals and the contexts, people, and situations that impacted their lives and learning. The framework also includes theories that address the relationships between the various contexts. The conceptual framework consists of Adler's (1931/1992) theory of individual psychology, Bandura's (1989) social cognitive theory, Epstein's (2001) overlapping spheres of influence, and Bronfenbrenner's (1986) bioecological model.

Adler's Individual Psychology

The first component of the conceptual framework for this study was Adler's (1931/1992) theory of individual psychology. Adler (1935/1982) posited that individuals relate to the outside world, not based on environment or heredity, but based on the meaning and interpretations they ascribe to their experiences. He stated that such interpretations are the "bricks" (p. 3) by which individuals build their attitudes toward life. Participants in this study illustrated this concept. Although some participants had similar experiences, they formed their own unique views of the experiences. Two participants who experienced adversity as adolescents specifically noted that the ways in which they responded to their difficult experiences were unique to them and their views of life, and they acknowledged that other individuals may have chosen to react differently. This sentiment emphasizes Adler's (1931/1992) principle that "Unhappy

experiences in childhood may be given quite opposite meanings, and so result in contrasting interpretations of the meaning of life for different individuals” (p. 23).

Adler (1956) also expressed, “No experience is a cause of success or failure. We do not suffer from the shock of our experiences . . . but we make out of them just what suits our purposes” (p. 208). The absence of parents’ interest and involvement served to make these two participants more determined that they would not be defeated, but would succeed. Another participant whose life had been characterized by a significant lack of stability shared that her experiences had helped shape her into the successful person she had become. The interpretations of these participants’ experiences impacted their attitudes both toward their experiences and toward education.

The participant who experienced abuse also illustrated the concepts in Adler’s theory. Adler (1956) asserted that the individual “Relates himself always according to his own interpretation of himself and of his present problem” (p. 206) and that “We are self-determined by the meaning we give to our experiences . . . we determine ourselves by the meanings we give to situations” (p. 208). The participant who experienced abuse felt shameful and dirty as an adolescent, and as an adult continued to relate to the world, including her children, work, and her inner self, in light of the substantial adversity she had experienced.

Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory

Bandura (1989) referred to the need for social support in his social cognitive theory and expressed its importance during individuals’ developmental years. One of the most poignant themes as participants recounted their experiences was the meaningfulness of secure relationships. A recurring phrase as participants described their parents,

friends, and other significant individuals was “always there.” Participants found security and comfort in the persistent presence of these individuals in their lives. Bandura also asserted that such “social resources” (p. 8) are necessary for individuals because they “give incentive, meaning, and worth to what they do” (p. 8). This aspect of his theory was confirmed by participants who shared that the activities in which they were involved in school, such as band, orchestra, sports, and Boy Scouts, gave meaning and purpose to their school experience far beyond that of its academic impact.

Bandura (1989) stated that “Those who figure prominently in children's lives serve as indispensable sources of knowledge that contribute to what and how children think about different matters” (p. 12). This aspect of Bandura’s theory was also confirmed by findings in this study. Participants noted that the knowledge imparted to them by parents, grandparents, teachers, and other persons of influence clearly contributed to their views of education, family, and life. For example, one participant whose parents were not there for her sought companionship in the homes of friends. The observance of family life in their homes and in visits with her father and stepmother gave the participant an understanding of family and helped shape her choice of lifestyle for her own family. One participant emphasized this influence:

They need to teach parents how to act. How to talk, because childrens are sponge. They absorb everything what you say. . . . Parents need to know how to act in front of a child. We don’t think they listen. They listen. We don’t think they care. They care. We don’t think they gonna think bad about us. They think bad about us. You know?

In addition to these models, participants also referred to their parents' models of behavior when they recounted their own attitudes and strategies.

Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model

Bronfenbrenner (1977) described human development as a mutual interchange between individuals and their immediate environments. His original theory of human development evolved over time to become a bioecological model in which he used broader terms (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). However, he expressed that "a close reading reveals a continuity of themes and arguments" (p. 1) existent in the original theory. Use of his original terms is helpful in understanding the model, so I chose to describe middle school contexts in light of his original terminology.

According to Bronfenbrenner (1977), a microsystem refers to the relationship between a developing individual and an immediate context. For middle school students, microsystems involve home and school contexts. These were the focus of examination for this study. A mesosystem is an expansion, or "system of microsystems" (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, p. 515). Mesosystems for middle school students involve interactions between their parents and school personnel, peers, church, and other organizations to which they belong. In this study, participants' experiences not only within their microsystems, but also in the mesosystems in which there was a larger context of social interaction, impacted their lives. Exosystems impact adolescents, although they are not an immediate part of their lives. Examples of exosystems for middle school students are government agencies, access to goods and services, social networks, and communication and transportation systems. In this study, the impact of exosystems was evident as participants discussed ways in which the lack of transportation

and goods affected their lives. Macrosystems refer to cultural patterns within societies. Two of the participants in this study were not native to America, but grew up and attended school in other countries. Cultural differences surfaced as these participants described their past middle school experiences and the adjustments that became necessary by having children in American schools.

Some parallels exist between Bronfenbrenner's (2005) model and Adler's (1931/1992) theory in that both refer to ways in which individuals perceive their situations. Bronfenbrenner explained that individuals' experiences "are characterized by both stability and change" (p. 5) and that "They can relate to self or to others, and especially to family, friends, and other close associates" (p. 5). More particularly, Bronfenbrenner noted that past experiences "can also contribute in powerful ways to shaping the course of development in the future" (Bronfenbrenner, 2005, p. 5). Findings in this study substantiate this theory. Repeatedly, participants explained their actions as adults and cited past experiences as the cause of those actions. Bronfenbrenner's model encompasses multiple levels of human experience in regard to adolescents' home and school contexts, social lives, cultures, and the interactions of these environments and individuals' experiences. Bronfenbrenner (2005) described "proximal processes" (p. 6), or interactions with individuals in one's environment over extended periods of time, as the primary means of development for individuals. He dichotomized outcomes from these processes as either competence or dysfunction (Bronfenbrenner, 2000) and noted the importance of parental characteristics in determining whether environmental factors resulted in positive or negative outcomes (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Although this study

was not limited to participants' experiences with their parents, the influences of their parents had the overall greatest impact on their outcomes.

Epstein's Overlapping Spheres of Influence

Based on data from research studies, Epstein (2007) posited that families, schools, and communities each have spheres of influence that impact children's learning and that the greater the overlap among these spheres, the more efficient would be their impact. Three aspects of her theory that related to this study were community, communication, and volunteering.

Community. In Epstein's (2001) framework for involvement, one key component is that of community involvement. According to the framework, individuals and schools can draw upon community resources to strengthen schools, families, and individuals (Epstein, 2007). Findings in this study provided evidence of this component of Epstein's theory. Participants cited resources within the community that were not available in schools, but that helped strengthen adolescents' school experiences. This was true both of participants' experiences as adolescents and in the lives of their children. Community resources, such as learning centers, public libraries, Boy Scouts, and Girl Scouts served to remediate, accelerate, enrich, and give relevance to learning, thus strengthening individuals and schools. Collaboration includes schools providing families information about and access to community programs. One participant in this study wrote that one of the most significant barriers she found to involvement with her child's education was the uncertainty of where to find appropriate tutoring for her child. Although this participant enjoyed the support of her parents and the community as an adolescent, she still found it challenging to locate appropriate resources for her child.

This point illustrates the need for schools to provide information about community resources to parents.

Communication. One assumption of the overlapping spheres theory is that parents and schools have mutual interests in the lives of children and that communication between them benefits students. In this study, participants felt that communication with their children's teachers helped them (a) build rapport that would ease later communication if problems arose with their children; (b) advocate for their children in the event of adverse situations, such as bullying; (c) understand expectations in classes and subjects, (d) obtain information and access to resources to increase their children's academic progress; (e) provide teachers and other school personnel information about children in order for them to challenge students; (f) address specific needs of individual children; and (g) know what classroom needs were, so they could help provide for them. Some of these opinions reflected attitudes developed in continuity with their own positive experiences in school, and others reflected discontinuity with their negative experiences.

Volunteering. Participants in this study volunteered in their children's schools in a number of ways. For example, some were involved with academics, including (a) giving classroom presentations, (b) providing other classroom help, and (c) serving as academic boosters. Other participants volunteered primarily in supporting roles, such as (a) volunteering in media centers, book fairs, and school offices; (b) chaperoning; and (c) organizing fundraisers, awards events, and dances. Still other participants served in official capacities with school PTOs and school advisory councils. As discussed earlier, some parents volunteered because they observed the value of their own parents' volunteer efforts and chose to do the same for their children. Other participants wished their

parents had been more involved and as a result, saw value in volunteering. In each case, parents believed their efforts as volunteers benefitted schools and their children.

Discussion of Findings in Relation to Existing Literature

An examination of major categories in this study reveals their connection with various other theories and research findings found in the literature. In this section, I discuss stabilizing and destabilizing influences, communicating influences, factors regarding parental involvement, self-reliance, and continuity/discontinuity.

Stabilizing and Destabilizing Influences

In this study, causal influences included those that produced feelings of security, contentment, and comfort, and those that produced insecurity, unhappiness, and discomfort. Maslow (1943) proposed a hierarchy of human needs that must be satisfied in order of prepotency, or predominance. He believed that an individual's basic needs must be met before higher level needs can be addressed. The "thwarting," or absence, of these needs being met may have unhealthy results for the child, and only when the basic needs are met is the individual free to experience cognitive growth and self-fulfillment (Maslow, 1943). On the hierarchy, physiological needs are the first that must be met. Once these needs are met, the next level of need is safety, followed by need for love and esteem, and finally self-actualization, which is where most learning occurs. Findings from the current study confirmed elements of Maslow's hierarchy. Basic physiological needs were met for participants in this study, although for some, even basic provisions were minimal. Others did not lack these provisions, because their parents provided whatever they needed. However, there were other areas of deficiency among participants, beginning with that of safety. One participant was sexually abused.

Another participant's mother encouraged inappropriate situations for her daughter, having her daughter modeling bikinis in bars while she herself was intoxicated. Others were exposed to alcohol abuse or environments that included altercations between rival groups. The impact of her parents' constant conflicts and arguing was a significant part of middle school memories for another participant. The uncertainty of constantly moving and being shuffled from place to place made life difficult and confusing for another participant in this study. Maslow (1943) noted that "inconsistency in the parents seems to make a child feel anxious and unsafe" (p. 9). These situations were missing the element of security for the participants involved.

In this study, there were aspects of participants' experiences that related to different levels of Maslow's hierarchy simultaneously. Maslow (1943) noted that, in addition to basic needs, individuals also need acceptance and esteem. Some participants whose parents could not afford name brand clothing were bullied and teased about their clothes. Others were ridiculed about hair styles and choices of friends. These experiences diminished participants' sense of worth and esteem. Payne (2001) explained that poverty often impairs students' cognitive abilities and hinders learning. In this study, the absence of material goods impacted participants' lives as adolescents in varying degrees. Although some participants felt that their peers' opinions were unimportant to them, others experienced emotional pain and developed a sense of inadequacy because their clothing and hair styles did not fit in with those of their peers. One participant mentioned that the absence of money was very disturbing to her as an adolescent; as a result, financial security had become paramount. Another compensated for the hurt and

loss of self-image she had experienced by working and buying noticeably expensive clothing.

The principle of needing love and esteem was also illustrated in a positive manner. Several participants shared the acceptance and sense of belonging they felt as members of sub-communities within schools (such as band and sports teams), organizations, and social circles. This acceptance provided participants a means by which they could function at a higher level.

Another construct that impacted participants' self-esteem was their physical features. Perry (2012) asserted that the overwhelming physical changes taking place during adolescence lead to an increased awareness of one's self-image and can impact adolescents' emotional well-being. This increase in self-awareness resulted in heightened self-consciousness and/or self-criticism for some participants in this study.

Communicating Influences

In addition to causal influences, the category of communicating influences emerged in this study. This category included subcategories of communication, expectations, and involvement.

Communication and expectations. A subcategory that emerged in a communicative capacity was that of parent expectations. This finding is consistent with that of Yamamoto and Holloway (2010), who found that parents' high expectations communicate their value of achievement to their children. They conducted a review of the literature related to the development and effects of parent expectations in the context of race and ethnicity and found that African American parents were less likely to trust teachers' intentions and assessments of their children's abilities than were other groups.

However, this study resulted in the opposite finding. The African American participant in the current study placed great confidence in her child's teachers, despite her son's negative opinions of his teachers. Minority participants in this study were limited to one African American and one Hispanic participant, thus making it impossible to view their experiences and opinions as representative of others in their ethnicities. However, it is possible to draw parallels and contrasts with existing literature for these individuals.

Urduan, Soleck, and Schoenfelder (2007) conducted a study to determine how students perceived their families' influences on their academic motivation. One theme that emerged was students' desire for academic achievement in order to make parents proud. This attitude was particularly present for one participant in this study. Her perception of her parents' expectations was that they were proud of her academic success. She felt that since her parents were proud of her for making good grades, they would not be proud of her if she did not.

Factors Regarding Parent Involvement

Past research has shown that several factors impact parent involvement in their children's education. Among these are education levels of parents, socioeconomic factors, and cultural factors.

Parents' education levels. In educational research literature, one area of study has been the influence on involvement of parents' educational levels. Conger and Donnellan (2007) found that parents with higher educational levels are more supportive and more involved with their children's education. This study confirmed these findings to some extent, but not conclusively. Participants with the two lowest educational levels were involved with their children's schools, but cited work schedules as hindrances.

Those who had earned graduate degrees also participated in strong home and school-based participation. However, the level of highest involvement was among parents who were college graduates or had “some college.”

Socioeconomic factors. Another area of study has been the role that socioeconomic factors play in parent involvement. Cooper and Crosnoe (2007) found that economic disadvantage negatively impacts parent involvement due to work demands and other factors. Findings from this study confirmed these earlier findings. Participants from the lower socioeconomic levels were those who also had the lowest educational levels, and they cited their work schedules as barriers to involvement. There were exceptions to these patterns, due to factors such as emotional distress or physical disablement that hindered involvement and lowered income level, respectively.

Cultural factors. Good (2012) found that the contrast in relationships between parents and teachers in participants’ home countries and in America hindered parent/school relationships, because participants “did not feel that school personnel listened to them or respected their input” (p. 330). This finding was confirmed in the present study as well. The Hispanic participant in the current study felt that school personnel did not view her concerns as important as those of parents with an “American name.” Eberly, Joshi, and Konzal (2007) also found that cultural differences and biases led to miscommunication between teachers and schools. In the current study, it was unclear whether the biases truly existed or if they were perceived by the participant, but in either case they led to disruption of the parent/school relationship. Mapp (2003) conducted a study that included several parents who were born and attended school in other countries. Results indicated cultural differences in educational expectations

between the United States and their countries. In participants' home countries, parents taught their children to respect education and teachers; however, they did not become involved in the business of the school (Mapp, 2003). The finding regarding the participant from Germany was consistent with this prior research. She shared that parents were not expected to be as involved in Germany as they are in the United States. One of her teachers in middle school had made a clear impression on her regarding the role of parents when she told her students that she would talk with them, and not with their parents. Although this participant volunteered at her child's school in order to monitor his behavior, she distanced herself from communication with her child's teachers unless they felt that her child needed tutoring. Another difference this participant found in the United States was the collaboration parents had with one another about their children's school performance. She indicated that such collaboration would not be considered acceptable in Germany.

Self-Reliance

In this study, several participants faced adverse circumstances. Three of these experienced situations in which their parents were fundamentally absent from their lives, even though the participants lived with them. In light of the dearth of parental support, guidance, and indications of love and caring, one would expect negative outcomes in their lives. However, these participants developed an approach of self-reliance, or resilience, which enabled them to succeed in school and become productive adults. Resilience "relates to the different ways in which individuals adapt to all challenges of their environment" (Waaktaar & Torgersen, 2010, p. 157). Cefai (2007) noted that resilience literature is "focused on success . . . in the context of risk, such as threatening

or adverse circumstances” (p. 120). Participants in this study expressed their determination to become successful despite their adverse situations. Involved in this literature is the concept of protective factors, which are elements that mitigate or reduce the impact of adverse circumstances. Three primary categories of protective factors are family ties, external support systems, and “dispositional attributes” (p. 119). The participants in this study acknowledged that their personalities, or dispositions, contributed to this response to their situations. They possessed attributes that strengthened them and gave them resolve to become stronger individuals in the face of adversity. To a lesser degree, other participants also experienced adverse or uncomfortable situations. For these participants, external support systems provided the security they needed.

Continuity and Discontinuity

Merriam Webster defines continuity as “uninterrupted duration or continuation especially without essential change” (Merriam-Webster, 2013), and discontinuity is the absence of such continuation. Numerous research studies have been conducted in relation to continuity in the field of medicine, sociology, and psychology, but such studies are not abundant in educational research literature. The current study contributes to the field of knowledge related to this area, because findings in this study revealed that parents’ strategies and interactions with their children’s education often follow a path of continuity or discontinuity. These findings align with previous research studies in which researchers found evidence of continuity in parenting styles (Conger et al., 2009; Kerr et al., 2009; Neppl et al., 2009).

In this study, most parents' actions were a combination of strategies that followed a path of continuity and those that followed a path of discontinuity, not only in regard to generational factors, but with their experiences apart from home. This finding confirms earlier research in which parents looked to previous experiences to inform choices of whether to reproduce their own experiences for their children or change them (Miller et al., 2011; O'Toole & Abreu, 2005). For example, several participants' parents emphasized the importance of completing homework, doing one's best, following school rules, and going to college. The participants followed a path of intergenerational continuity by emphasizing the same concepts with their children. However, participants also followed paths of continuity in relation to experiences that were not related to their parents. Several participants found acceptance and meaning in school activities, some of which were related to academics and others that were not. Some of these participants followed a path of continuity by requiring their children to be involved in activities. Although they followed a path of continuity, it was not intergenerational continuity, but rather related to their experiences apart from their parents. Similarly, participants followed paths of discontinuity, both in relation to their parents and to their experiences apart from their parents. The participants whose parents were largely absent from their lives were all very involved in their children's lives, thus demonstrating intergenerational discontinuity. However, the participant who had experienced abuse also followed a path of discontinuity that was unrelated to her parents. Barnett and Taylor (2008) found that for participants in their study, recollections of their school experiences relating to school contexts and their parents' involvement influenced their engagement in transition activities for their children entering kindergarten. Although the current study was

conducted with parents of middle school students, the findings both confirm the concept of continuity and extend the findings of the earlier study to middle school.

Raty (2011) conducted a longitudinal study that examined parents' ($N = 326$) descriptions of their children's school and engagement in their children's education in light of their recollections of their own school experiences. The major finding of the study was that parents' recollections of their own school experiences contributed to the ways in which they recalled their children's school experiences and interacted with their children's education (Raty, 2011). Although the design of the current study and that of Raty (2011) varied, the findings of this study strengthen the basic concept that parents' experiences in school influence their attitudes toward their children's education. Mapp (2003) examined parents' ($N = 18$) engagement with their children's elementary school in light of their past experiences in school. Participants in that study shared that their past school experiences significantly influenced their interactions with their children's school experiences (Mapp, 2003). Results from the current study strengthen and confirm results of this earlier research and extend the finding to the middle school level. In the current study, participants also confirmed that their past experiences in school prompted them to action with their children's education. Participants employed numerous strategies, among which were to (a) guide their children's choice of classes, (b) become involved in volunteering and serve as advocates for their children, (c) establish a strong system of communication with children and their teachers, (d) obtain tutoring and other academic help for children, (e) provide for teachers' and students' material needs, (f) ensure that children did not have to move away from their schools, (g) monitor children's whereabouts and companions, (h) take their children to the library, (i) advise their

children about how to handle bullying in school, and (j) request more rigor for their children's instruction. The consistency of findings in the current study with prior research emphasizes the contribution of this study to the body of educational knowledge, because other studies have dealt primarily with other grade levels or specific subject areas in middle school.

Implications for Practice

Inherent in findings from this study are implications for practice for educators. The literature reveals that parent involvement positively impacts student engagement and achievement (Jeynes, 2007,2012). There are several ways that findings from this study may be used in educational practice, including teacher education, professional development, parent programs, and opportunities for students.

Teacher Education Programs

In light of the significant impact of parent involvement that is pervasive in the literature, it is essential for teacher candidates to understand the importance of positive communication with parents of students. In addition to classes that teach pedagogy and content, teacher education programs should be designed to include a component on understanding the diversity in students' home contexts and effectively communicating with parents to maximize student success. Findings from this study should be included in order for teacher candidates to have a broad view of family issues, including the influence of parents' past educational experiences. The following are specific areas that should be considered:

- Parents' past experiences may impact their ability to effectively parent their children and to be productively involved in their children's education. In this

study, some participants' parents were unable to help their children academically due to their insufficient levels of education. In addition, depression related to past experiences impacted one participants' ability to function effectively.

- At times, ongoing situations may influence and/or inhibit parents' ability to communicate and become involved with school personnel. Not only depression, as mentioned previously, but parents' other health issues and work-related time constraints impaired parents' ability to interact with schools as they would have liked. Developing sensitivity to these issues will be beneficial for new teachers.
- It is essential for teachers to communicate with parents. Although this is an obvious conclusion, its importance should not be minimized. Only through effective communication will teachers be able to establish effective partnerships with parents in order to support students.
- School personnel must understand the importance of supporting and encouraging students, keeping in mind the diverse situations they face at home. It is impossible for educators to remedy all adverse situations at home, but it is essential that teachers be sensitive to their students' situations and needs.
- School activities may be of utmost importance in the lives of some adolescents, especially in providing social acceptance and caring adult support in their lives. In this study, several participants felt a sense of belonging and survival only through the connections and activities they had at school.

Teacher Support and Professional Development

Educational literature encompasses an array of subjects relating to parent involvement, such as economic, racial, ethnic, gender, and education level factors, but

few studies have examined the influence of parents' past experiences in school on their involvement with their children's education. Studies that have been conducted, including the current study, indicate that parents' past experiences are an important factor in their involvement with their children's education (Barnett & Taylor, 2008; Mapp, 2003; Raty, 2011). Therefore, educators may benefit from the knowledge gained in this study to incorporate its findings in professional development opportunities and support for school personnel.

One strategy that can improve teaching practice is to design professional development programs to enhance teachers' understanding of factors that impact both students and their families. Factors related to families that emerged in the current study included poverty, sexual abuse, alcohol abuse, absentee parents, and instability. Teachers should be trained regarding appropriate communication with parents in order to ascertain their needs and ways they can be supportive of parents and students. In addition, an awareness that parents may be dealing with experiences in their past that make positive interactions, or any kind of involvement, difficult will enhance teachers' abilities to initiate positive supports. In the current study, a major issue was the lasting effects of sexual abuse, but illness, death of a loved one, financial need, and numerous other situations may also impact parents' and students' lives. It would be useful for administrators and counselors to develop and provide teachers with support materials related to school and community resources in order to strengthen the bond between parents and teachers and to help meet the needs of families.

In addition to awareness of parents' needs, it would be wise for teachers to understand that their students may be experiencing adverse situations or the absence of

positive influences in their lives. Designers of professional development will create more effective programs if they keep in mind the direction teachers need in knowing how to best support their students who face adverse situations at home. Greater coordination between counselors and teachers in supporting students, while maintaining student confidentiality, would also be beneficial.

Another area that would benefit students would be for teachers to be informed regarding the importance of the school context for middle school students. Several participants in this study faced difficulties either in their home contexts or in school contexts. Only through participation in school-based activities did they cope with their situations. Professional development programs that emphasize this important point may encourage teachers to support their students in these school activities. Two ways teachers can do this are by encouraging students' participation and by volunteering to serve in advisory and sponsorship roles. Within schools, collaborative communication systems may be established in order for teachers to share opportunities available to students with other teachers.

Educational leaders should also develop materials that promote an understanding about factors that influence parents' attitudes toward their children's education and motives behind their actions. An awareness of these factors may lead to healthy communication, greater understanding, and healthy partnerships between parents and teachers. Approaching communication in this manner may convey to parents that teachers truly care about them. Jeynes (2010) noted that "loving, encouraging, and supportive" (p.748) school personnel may be even more vital to parents than communication about expectations and academic content. Using professional

development to enlighten teachers about potential family issues increases teachers' opportunities to invite a deeper level of communication and may be beneficial to teachers, parents, and students.

Parent Programs

Data from this study show that opening doors of understanding for parents by helping them reflect on their own attitudes and strategies is a way in which educators can promote positive interactions. After participating in the current study, participants expressed a greater understanding of their attitudes toward their children's education, the strategies they use, and the motives behind their strategies, than they had previously held. Several participants indicated that they did not realize their attitudes and interactions reflected their own experiences.

A major theme in education today involves educators reflecting on their practices in order to improve their efficiency ("National Board Candidates | NBPTS," 2013). However, little is noted about the importance of reflection for parents. Through reflection, parents in this study were able to identify contributing factors to their actions regarding their children's education. If curricula can be developed for parent programs that will promote reflection, it is likely that positive outcomes will be the result. As one participant expressed, "I would not probably have connected the two, but knowing, and looking at some of the questions, um, just because . . . my parents weren't involved, maybe I've, I've decided to try do more." This sentiment reflects the goal of many parent involvement programs, and it should motivate educators to consider this avenue of support for parents.

Educational leaders should develop reflective lessons for parents similar to the exercises in the reflective booklet used for this study and the last two questions on the survey. Opportunities can be designed within existing parent organizations at regular meetings or by organizing special seminars for the purpose of the reflective activities. For example, materials that contain prompts to help parents remember and write about their middle school experiences may be used to enlighten them regarding their attitudes. Focus groups are another possibility to evoke memories related to middle school. Surveys that ask questions about what aspects of parents' past experiences influence their interactions with their children's education may initiate understanding. Making parent nights and other similar events that are held during the school year available to offer these seminars would be ideal. Such activities will serve to empower parents in efficiently working with their children. Once parents have identified ways in which they most effectively may interact with their children and the school, then schools can provide opportunities and resources to enhance parents' involvement.

Student Programs

An unexpected finding from this study was the need to develop strong programs in which students can participate. Several participants who faced otherwise unstable situations at home and in school as adolescents found comfort and acceptance in programs such as band, chorus, tutoring opportunities, cheerleading, and sports. Although age levels differ somewhat, these findings support those of Fletcher, Nickerson, and Wright (2003), who found that individuals ($N = 147$) in middle childhood who participated in organized leisure activities had higher psychosocial development and academic proficiency than those who were not involved. Although many middle schools

offer these programs for students, faculty and staff may not realize the power these programs have to positively impact students' lives by providing motivation and giving meaning to their middle school experience.

One way to strengthen programs for middle school students is to eliminate as many barriers to participation as possible. School leaders, sponsors, and coaches may consider increasing the number of students that are allowed to be involved in activities. Provisional programs for students who do not qualify for sports teams due to low grades may be developed. For example, programs that combine tutoring with sports may serve to motivate students' academic performance and allow more students to participate in sports. Transportation to activities was a barrier for some participants in this study. It may be beneficial to organize means of transportation for students who would like to participate, but are unable to do so because they do not have transportation. Possibly, arranging transportation would reach many of the students who could benefit the most from school activities.

Another way to promote student activities would be for administrators to make opportunities available for faculty to develop areas of interest in order to sponsor clubs. For example, training in drama workshops could benefit teachers who may be interested in starting drama clubs. In addition, providing incentives for teachers who sponsor activities may increase faculty participation. Promoting student participation in activities by encouraging unified faculty cooperation would be helpful as well.

Limitations

The sample for this study was delimited to participants who are parents of middle school students, because there was a gap in the literature related to the phenomenon of

this study. A quantitative study was completed (see Sanchez-Horn, 2005) related to parents' perceptions of their own school experiences and their perceptions of their children's middle school, but its findings were inconclusive, and the author recommended qualitative research. Studies relating to the phenomenon of parents' school experiences and their effects on participation in their children's education have been conducted at the kindergarten level (Barnett & Taylor, 2009; Miller et al., 2011), but a gap existed in the literature regarding this phenomenon for parents of middle school students. This delimitation aided in expanding the body of knowledge on this phenomenon at the middle school level, but it excluded parents from other grade levels. It may be beneficial to include parents from later elementary and high school levels in future studies.

In addition to the literature gap, delimiting the participants to one specific level of school afforded a more manageable and more rigorously controlled study in regard to interviews, transcription, and analysis of data. As a result, however, this study was limited in its scope. A greater cross-section and a larger number of participants would have expanded the knowledge gained from this study even further. For example, a larger number of participants would likely have resulted in more minority participants and others who shared similar experiences with participants in this study. An examination of their experiences may have strengthened or extended findings from the current study. Due to restraints of time, resources, and proximity, the study was also delimited to participants in one school district in the southeastern United States. Similar studies conducted in different areas of the country or in other countries may enlighten this phenomenon further regarding the contributions of background and culture.

Another limitation stems from the voluntary nature of the study. Although I interviewed participants from a variety of socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds, some were not represented. There were no participants with an Asian heritage in the study. Also, only one Hispanic participant and one African-American participant chose to participate and complete all data collection for the study. In regard to participants, the study was also limited in terms of socioeconomic status of participants. The heaviest concentration of participants came from one school in an affluent area of the school district. As a result, the study had a high percentage of White, upper middle class parents. Five out of the 12 participants made over \$100,000 per year. A greater cross section of the socioeconomic strata may have revealed different categories of experiences, influences, and attitudes among participants.

Initial sampling strategies used in this study involved contacting principals through letters and face-to-face meetings to orient them regarding the purpose of the study and the diversity of participants I sought. I had hoped to interview both parents with a positive approach to school and those who had negative interactions with the school in order to gain a broader understanding of parents' experiences and involvement. However, the volunteer nature of sampling appealed primarily to very involved parents who were eager to contribute to their children's education in positive ways. Most of the parents volunteered at the school in more than one capacity. All of them acknowledged the value of education and encouraged their children to do well. Within the school district where the study took place, there are two additional middle schools, both of which are Title I schools. One of these has a high military and otherwise transient population. If these schools had been included, results may have been different for this

study. Due to the volunteer nature of the sampling procedures, participants were those who were willing to share their stories. It is probable that individuals with stories that may have led to rich data were those who were unable or unwilling to participate. Interviews with such individuals may have led to different findings. Another limitation in this study was the tendency of participants to present their interactions with school personnel in a positive light. It is possible that a study that included perspectives of school personnel may reveal different opinions of home-school relationships.

Another limitation pertains to the human experience itself. The nature of this study is retrospective. Therefore, selective recall may affect the participants' retelling of their past experiences. The current study was delimited to a qualitative grounded theory study that took place at one point in time. Although participants were given time to reflect on their past experiences, the study was short-term. A longitudinal study that examined parents' perspectives at several time intervals may provide a greater contribution of knowledge to the field. In addition, although this study focuses on parents' past experiences in school as one aspect of the human experience, it is important to keep in mind that humans are complex and that numerous factors affect their attitudes and actions. It is impossible in this study to examine all the factors that may interact to impact participants' behavior. A final limitation for this study is that the group of participants for this study all came from one school system in the southeastern United States. Research with participants in other areas may reveal different results.

Recommendations for Future Research

In order to add to the body of knowledge on parents' attitudes toward their children's schools and education, future research should replicate this study with a

greater variety of participants. It would be helpful to delimit participants to specific criteria. For example, two participants in this study were immigrants. The Hispanic participant described vast differences between her middle school experiences in Mexico and that of many American middle school students today. It would give an added dimension to the research to conduct a study with only immigrant participants in order to determine ways in which their past experiences in their indigenous cultures and their experiences as parents of school children in their new American culture intersect and impact their attitudes toward education.

Other specific populations from which researchers could draw are (a) those who grew up in military families, (b) parents of school dropouts, (c) parents who themselves dropped out of school, or (d) parents whose children attend Title 1 schools, charter schools, private schools, or parochial schools.

This study points to one significant need for developmental research. Research is needed to develop reflective instruments for use in parent programs. Results of interacting with the instruments in this study, particularly the last two survey questions and the reflective booklet, impacted some of the participants in positive ways when they realized the effect of their past experiences on their attitudes toward school for their children. For example, the last question in the survey asked, “Can you identify any ways in which your own school experiences may have influenced your feelings toward education for your children?” After completing the survey and reflective booklet, one participant in this study expressed:

This was, um, I think in a pleasant way, very eye opening for me. You know. To, to realize that um, you know, some of the things that my parents did weren't so bad (laughter) and that they have influenced what we do in a very positive way. If instruments can be developed to effectively aid parents in reflection, the instruments can then be used by schools in parent programs. Booklets or workbooks that prompt parents to reflect on their past experiences and draw parallels with their current attitudes would be beneficial.

Recommendations for future research also relate to resilience. Waaktar and Torgersen (2010) noted that "There are considerable individual differences in the ways in which people typically form and adapt to their environments" (p. 157). Some of the participants in this study who faced adverse situations responded by developing a resilience that strengthened their resolve and contributed to their success. However, they acknowledged that their personalities played an important role in this response. Waaktar and Torgersen (2010) stated that "the last 40 years of research on stress and resilience have failed to find factors that, with reasonable consistency, moderate the predictive relationship between high risk and pathological outcome," (p. 157). The Big Five dimensions of personality have been classified as "Extraversion, Emotional Stability, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Openness to Experience" (Waaktar & Torgersen, 2010, p. 158). Researchers should continue efforts to identify the relationship between personality and resilience for individuals who face similar adversities.

Although much literature exists regarding parent involvement in children's education (Cooper & Crosnoe, 2007; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Jeynes, 2012), there is a dearth of literature dealing with parents' school experiences and their influence on parents'

involvement in their children's education. Studies that have been conducted have primarily dealt with elementary or high school or with specific subjects in middle school. This study was designed to add to the body of knowledge about parent involvement by examining the influence of parents' adolescent experiences on their attitudes toward and interactions with their children's middle school education.

Through the coding of data into categories of information and relating categories to the core category of Influence, I generated a model that I termed Identifying Influences. This model illustrates causal conditions that serve to stabilize, destabilize, and communicate to individual adolescents. Individuals then may choose to employ strategies in response to these conditions. The interactions of causal conditions, strategies, and the consequences of the strategies serve to shape individuals' attitudes toward education as adults. In turn, individuals' attitudes toward education influence interactions they use with their children's school personnel and strategies that they employ with children. At times, intervening conditions arise that alter the strategies individuals might have employed. Strategies individuals employ may be placed on a continuum of continuity and discontinuity with their own experiences based on the responses the experiences evoked in the individuals as adolescents.

Propositions

Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research is inductive in nature. Creswell (2007) described qualitative research procedures as "inductive, emerging, and shaped by the researcher's experience in collecting and analyzing the data" (p. 19). Due to its inductive nature, qualitative researchers generally do not begin studies with research hypotheses, but rather allow the data to drive the study. As a result, propositions, or

hypotheses, are generated in the final stage of data analysis, selective coding (Creswell, 2007). The data for this study led to the following four hypotheses, or propositions:

1. Individuals' experiences and situations as adolescents in school impact their attitudes toward education as adults.

In this study, both positive experiences in school and negative experiences emphasized the importance of education to participants. However, participants who had negative experiences with teachers reported mixed reviews of teachers at their children's schools, more so than those who did not report negative experiences with teachers.

2. Parents desire that their adolescent children experience and enjoy the good things they experienced and enjoyed as adolescents.

Participants in this study primarily used strategies of continuity with their children in relation to experiences they enjoyed in school. Examples were sports, music, healthy social lives, freedom to make choices, and having nice clothing.

3. Parents desire to change, correct, avoid, and/or reverse for their children experiences that resulted in difficult and unpleasant outcomes for themselves.

In this study, participants attempted to avoid situations for their children that were unpleasant for them, such as abuse and loneliness. They made attempts to monitor and protect their children and to ensure healthy friendships. They also tried to reverse trends they had experienced by ensuring that their children had (a) nice clothing, if they had been embarrassed about their own clothing; (b) opportunities for social lives, if they had not been allowed to be involved with friends; and (c) opportunities to be involved in school activities such as dances and ballgames, if they had not been allowed to become involved in those activities.

4. In some cases, intervening circumstances enter individuals' lives that alter the strategies they would have used with their children.

The overarching motivation for parents in choosing strategies to use with their children is for their children to have a better life than they experienced.

Conclusion

Parent involvement in education is beneficial for children and adolescents, but often decreases when children reach middle school (*This We Believe: Keys to Educating Young Adolescents*, 2010). Researchers have conducted studies related to various contextual factors in order to determine ways to promote involvement, but little research is available concerning parents' experiences as adolescents and the influence of their experiences on individuals' attitudes toward and interactions with their children's education. The purpose of this grounded theory study was to explain how parents' adolescent experiences influence their attitudes and behaviors toward their children's education. Research Question One asked how parents' adolescent experiences influence their attitudes toward school as it relates to their own middle school children. Twelve participants who were middle school parents participated in the study. They shared ways in which their experiences influenced their attitudes toward education, including (a) parents' examples with involvement or lack of involvement causing participants to value involvement; (b) parents' expectations for education, including schoolwork, homework, grades, and college influencing participants to value education; (c) parents' communication with their children about school and teachers influencing participants' attitudes of respect for educators; (d) adverse experiences influencing participants' attitudes that children should be supported, protected, and that their needs should be

provided. Research Questions Two and Three asked how parents' attitudes influence their interactions with school personnel and their strategies with their children's education. The data revealed that attitudes participants developed about education led them to interact with their children's education through (a) making sure they could help their children with homework; (b) providing tutoring and opportunities in other outside educational organizations; (c) communicating with teachers by email, notes, and face-to-face contact; (d) meeting with teachers in formal conferences; (e) obtaining additional academic resources to those provided at school; (f) volunteering in various capacities at schools; (g) providing guidance for their children regarding classes in which to enroll; and (h) teaching classes and providing materials that teachers and students needed.

I analyzed data using methods of systematic grounded theory, including open coding, axial coding, and selective coding, and a theoretical model related to the phenomenon was generated grounded in the data. The core category in this model was Influence, because the concept of influence was present throughout the study. Individuals' experiences influenced them as adolescents and resulted in feelings of security, contentment, and/or comfort, or feelings of insecurity, unhappiness, and/or discomfort. Most participants' experiences were varied in nature, and therefore produced a combination of effects. Causal conditions of Stabilizing Experiences/Situations, Destabilizing Experiences/Situations, and Communicating Experiences/Situations impacted individuals as adolescents. In response to particular destabilizing influences, individuals implemented strategies, which resulted in consequences. The combination of causal conditions, strategies, and their consequences served to influence individuals' attitudes toward their children's education. As a result of their attitudes, participants

interacted with school personnel and employed strategies to use with their children that either reflected continuity or discontinuity with their own experiences or combined strategies of continuity and discontinuity. The overarching motivation behind participants' motives in using strategies was that parents "all want more for our children than what we had."

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

January 10, 2013

Brenda Williams

IRB Approval 1475.011013: A Grounded Theory Study Investigating How Parents' Adolescent Experiences Influence Their Attitudes and Behaviors toward Their Children's Middle School Education

Dear Brenda,

We are pleased to inform you that your above study has been approved by the Liberty IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

Fernando Garzon, Psy.D.

Professor, IRB Chair

Counseling

(434) 592-4054

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Appendix B

Request to Conduct Research

My address

Date

District Personnel Name

District Address

Dear _____:

I am a teacher at (school name) and a doctoral candidate at Liberty University. The purpose of this letter is to request permission to conduct a research study with (name of county) County parents as participants. This qualitative study relates to parents' past experiences as adolescents in school and ways in which their experiences influence the attitudes and behaviors they have toward their middle school children's education. Results of this study may provide valuable insight for parents and educators regarding parents' interactions with their children's education.

My goal is to procure participants from several different middle schools in the county, resulting in 10 to 30 parent participants. I would like to administer a brief survey to each participant, ask each individual to complete information forms, and conduct an interview with each. Before collecting any data, I will obtain approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Liberty University. In addition, I will inform each participant regarding the purpose of the study and ask each participant to sign a consent form. All data will be kept confidential, and pseudonyms will be used for all participants and locations.

I truly appreciate your consideration in this matter. I assure you that my goal in conducting this study is to contribute to greater understanding between educators and parents and to improve the educational experience for (name of county) County and other students.

Please send correspondence to me at brwilliams@xxxxxx or at bkwilliams@xxxxxx. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than me as researcher, please contact the Dissertation Chair, Dr. Lucinda Spaulding, at lsspaulding@xxxxxx or the Institutional Review Board Chair, Dr. Fernando Garzon, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1582, Lynchburg, VA 24502 or email at fgarzon@xxxxxx.

Again, thank you for your consideration of my request.

Sincerely,

Brenda Williams, Ed.S.

Appendix C

Research Study

Would you be interested in becoming a participant in an educational research study that examines parents' past school middle school experiences in light of how those experiences may impact their current roles as parents of middle school students? I am seeking 10 to 30 participants who are middle school parents to participate in my study.

Q: What would the study require of me?

A: As a participant in the study, you would complete a brief survey, a reflective booklet about your school experiences, and participate in an audio-recorded interview by the researcher.

Q: What benefits will result from the study?

A: The goal of the study is to provide educators information about ways in which they may better communicate with families.

Q: What will I receive?

A: Participants who complete participation in the study will receive a \$25 gift card to Wal Mart.

If you are interested in possibly becoming a participant, please write your name and contact information below in order for the researcher to contact you. Your signature below does not mean that you will be a participant. It only gives the researcher permission to contact you. Thank you so much for your consideration.

Name _____

Phone # _____ Email address: _____

Appendix D

Consent Form for Parent Participants

**A Grounded Theory Study Investigating How Parents' Adolescent Experiences
Influence Their Attitudes and Behaviors toward Their Children's Middle School
Education**

Brenda Williams

Liberty University School of Education

Lynchburg, Virginia

This study is being conducted by researchers from "Liberty University.

Consent Form for Parent Participants

A Grounded Theory Study Investigating How Parents' Adolescent Experiences Influence Their Attitudes and Behaviors toward Their Children's Middle School Education

Brenda Williams

Liberty University School of Education

Dear Participant,

I am a doctoral candidate at Liberty University working on my doctoral degree (Ed.D.) in education. As an educator, I am interested in students, their families, and ways to work with families to ensure students' academic success and positive middle school experience. The purpose of this research study is to discover ways in which parents' experiences when they were in school may influence their interactions with their own middle school children's education. In this study, I desire to capture your experiences and write about them in order to assist educators in communicating better with families.

Your status as the parent of a middle school student in XXXX County and your indication of interest in this study by completing the initial questionnaire have identified you as a potential participant in my study. Participation in this study is voluntary. Non-participation or withdrawal from the study at any time is without penalty and will not affect your relationship with your child's school or with Liberty University. I hope you will consider becoming a participant.

Data collection for this study will include your participation in the following:

- I will ask you to complete a survey regarding involvement with your child's school.
- I will ask you to complete a reflective booklet to share your middle school experiences.
- I will interview you about your experiences in school and how those experiences may influence your attitude toward school as an adult.
- I will audio record the interview and transcribe what is said.
- I will send a follow-up email to provide an opportunity for you to include anything you might wish to add.
- I will ask you to review my report of your interview for accuracy and provide feedback.

Time required for the above data collection activities include (a) approximately five to ten minutes for the survey, (b) 10 to 15 minutes a day for one week for the reflective booklet activity, (c) approximately one hour for the interview, and (d) approximately 5 to 10 minutes for the follow-up email, depending on your responses. None of the above data collection methods is lengthy, although more thorough answers will provide a greater contribution to the study.

After collecting data, I will analyze it, organize it into categories, and write a report. I will share your section of the report with you before it is submitted. Any information I obtain about you will remain confidential, and I will use pseudonyms to protect your identity. In any report I may publish, I will not include information that will identify you. The transcriptionist will also sign a confidentiality agreement. Records will be kept in locked storage (paper) or will be password-protected (electronic) and only I, as the researcher, will have access to them. After three years, I will destroy the information I collect by shredding (paper) or deletion of files (electronic).

Risks associated with participation in this study are no more than one would expect to encounter in everyday life, except that the researcher is a mandatory reporter, should information arise regarding child abuse, neglect, or intent to harm oneself or others. It is also possible that an increased awareness of past events could result in emotional distress. A list of referrals will be provided to you in the event that you should desire to seek professional counsel.

By participating in this study, you may be contributing to the understanding of educators in ways to establish better relationships with students and their families. In addition, you may find that reflection upon the topic of this study enriches your interactions with your child's education.

Upon your completion of all the participant tasks outlined above, you will receive as a token of thanks a \$25 gift card to Walmart.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to me, please call me at (706) 414-8434 or email me at bkwilliams@xxxxx. Any request to withdraw from the study should be sent in an email to the above email address.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, please contact the Dissertation Chair, Dr. Lucinda Spaulding, at lsspaulding@liberty.edu or the Institutional Review Board Chair, Dr. Fernando Garzon, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1582, Lynchburg, VA 24502 or email at fgarzon@xxxxx. (Form adapted from Creswell, 2007; Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007)

Your signature on this form indicates that you have read and understood the information in this letter and that you agree to participate. Participants for the interview process will be selected from among applicants who have signed and submitted this form and who have completed the survey. You will be notified if you are selected to be interviewed.

_____ Your initials here indicate that you agree to allow audio recording of our interview.

_____ Date _____
Signature of Participant

_____ Date _____
Signature of Researcher

Brenda Williams (Principal investigator)

IRB Code Number: 1475.011013

IRB Expiration Date: 1/10/2014_

Appendix E

Participant Survey

Name of Participant: _____

1. What middle school does your child attend?

2. What is your age? _____

3. What is your ethnic/racial background? If you are of mixed ethnicity, circle all choices that apply to you:

a. African-American

b. Asian-American

c. Native American/American Indian

d. Hispanic/Latino

e. White

f. Mixed ethnicity

g. Other _____

4. Please circle the answer that best describes your level of education:

a. Did not finish high school

b. Earned GED

c. High school graduate

d. Some college

e. College graduate

f. Some graduate work

g. Graduate or professional degrees

(Please specify what degrees: _____)

5. Please circle the answer that best describes your family's gross annual household income.
- a. Under \$24,000
 - b. \$25,000 to \$35,000
 - c. \$36,000 to \$50,000
 - d. \$51,000 to \$75,000
 - e. \$76,000 to \$100,000
 - f. Over \$100,000
6. Where is most of your involvement with your child's education focused?
- a. School
 - b. Home
 - c. Both school and home
 - d. Other (please specify) _____
7. What kinds of activities do you participate in at home to support your child's education? Please circle all that apply.
- a. Help with Homework
 - b. Provide a special homework/study area
 - c. Read with my child
 - d. Discuss what my child learned in school
 - e. Go over my child's assignments/book bag to make sure my child is keeping up with schoolwork
 - f. Check my child's grades online
 - g. Check teachers' websites to find obtain materials
 - h. Obtain outside tutoring for my child
 - i. Other

8. What activities do you attend at your child's school? Please circle all that apply.
- a. Open House
 - b. Parent Nights
 - c. Dances
 - d. Concerts
 - e. Football, basketball, baseball, soccer, or other sports games
 - f. Parent conferences
 - g. Other school-based activities (e.g. classroom presentations, talent shows, plays, etc.) _____
9. About how often is there communication between you and your child's teachers? Please circle the answer that best describes your situation.
- a. Never
 - b. Once or twice a year
 - c. Once a month
 - d. Once or twice a week
 - e. Every day
 - f. More than one time a day
10. What forms does your communication with your child's teachers take? If more than one choice applies, circle the ones that apply most often.
- a. Phone calls
 - b. Notes
 - c. Email
 - d. Text messaging
 - e. Person to person contact

- f. I usually contact the principal or counselor rather than the teacher
11. Who initiates most of the communication between you and your child's teachers?
- a. The teacher
 - b. You or your spouse
 - c. The principal/assistant principal or counselor
12. What do you think are the greatest barriers to your involvement with your child's education? _____
13. What do you think are the greatest benefits of your involvement with your child's education? _____

14. Which of the following words describe your relationship with your child's teachers? Please circle all that apply:
- | | | | | |
|----------|---------------|----------|-------------|------------|
| Friendly | Understanding | Positive | Frustrating | Not caring |
| Helpful | Caring | Negative | Unfriendly | Unkind |
15. How would you describe your own experiences in middle and early high school? Please circle the answer that best applies to your overall school experience as an adolescent:
- a. Mostly positive experiences
 - b. Mostly negative experiences
16. Can you identify any ways in which your own school experiences may have influenced your feelings toward education for your children?

Appendix F

Reflective Booklet

Dear Participant,

This booklet is designed to aid you as you journey back to your middle school years. It begins with a brainstorming exercise to get you started on Day 1, followed by questions to jog your memory about various aspects of your middle school experience on Days 2-7. The booklet also has headings with specific topics.

Each day, on Days 1 through 7, please read and respond to the questions, which are designed to make you think about your experiences. Instead of just answering the questions, write your thoughts about the topics on the different pages. If there is something you do not remember, go on to the next question. You can always go back if you remember later. For example, Day 2 asks about friends. On that day, jot down your thoughts and responses to the questions on the “Friends” page. You can also add anything else you think of about friends on that page. If you want to write in sentences or paragraphs, that is fine, but it is also perfectly acceptable to simply write words or phrases that come to mind. (Next to the name of one of my friends, I wrote, “pretty hair, funny, sweet, fun times together, silly, braces, washed hair with bleach, ‘Va-va Monster’.”) You might, however, want to add more detail about people who were important to you and why.

On any day, please feel free to add your thoughts to any page. It is very likely that more and more memories will open up to you as you work through the booklet. If you have questions at any time as you work through the booklet, please feel free to call me at (706) 414-8434.

Thank you again for your participation in this research study.

Sincerely,

Brenda Williams

Appendix F

DAY 1

Page 1 is entitled “Thoughts.” Please take a few minutes and simply write words that come to mind when you think of your middle school years on this page. They can be names, places, items, ideas, feelings, clothing, and anything else that comes to mind. (When I did this, some of my words were “moving,” “Raleigh,” “basketball,” “brain,” and “paisley,” as well as names of teachers, friends, activities I attended, and some other very random thoughts.) When you finish writing your thoughts, please look back over the things you have written. Was there anything that impacted you so that you wanted things to be the same or different for your children? If so, please put a star by those items. (Example: When I thought of “moving,” I realized that my family moved many times as I was growing up. It was hard for me to make friends each time. Therefore, I wanted to provide more stability for my children by staying in one location as they grew up in school.)

DAY 2

Who were your friends in middle school? What types of activities did you do together outside of school? If you visited in one another’s homes, what were those visits like? What attracted you to these friends? Are there any interesting stories or interactions you remember about your friends? Please add your thoughts about your friends to the “Friends” page. Now look back over the things you wrote. Was there anything that impacted you so that you wanted things to be the same or

different for your children? If so, please put a star by those items. Think of any actions you took to make sure you helped your children have the same kind or different kinds of experiences than you had and jot them down.

DAY 3

Were there other classmates that you especially remember? What makes them come to mind? Are there any interactions with other classmates that you especially remember, either positive or negative? Please add your thoughts to the “Other Classmates” page. Now look back over the things you wrote. Was there anything that impacted you so that you wanted things to be the same or different for your children? If so, please put a star by those items. Think of any actions you took to make sure you helped your children have the same kind or different kinds of experiences and jot them down.

DAY 4

What teachers did you have in middle school? Were there any teachers whom you especially liked? Why? Were there any whom you particularly disliked? Why? Are there any interesting stories or personal interactions you remember about any of your teachers? Please add your thoughts about your teachers to your “Teachers” page. Now look back over the things you wrote. Was there anything in your own experiences that may have influenced your attitudes toward or interactions with your child’s teachers? Were there any actions you took as a result of your experiences to ensure that things would be the same or different for

your children? If so, please put a star by those items. Please jot down some notes about these thoughts on the “Teachers” page.

DAY 5

What classes/subjects do you remember most in each grade? Why were those classes/subjects memorable? Which ones were easiest for you? Which were hard? Which did you enjoy or not enjoy? Please add this information to your “Academics” page. Did any of these experiences with academic subjects make you want your own children’s experiences to be the same as your own or different than yours? Were there any steps you took to make sure your children had the same positive experiences or to avoid difficult experiences for your children? If so, please make a note of them on your “Academics” page and put a star by them.

DAY 6

Were there any significant changes in your family during middle school? If so, please add them to your “Family” page in the booklet. If you are comfortable doing so, please share your thoughts about those events. Write your thoughts on the “Family” page. When you finish, please look back over the things you have written. Was there anything that impacted you so that you wanted things to be the same or different for your children? If so, please put a star by those items. Think of any actions you took to make sure you helped your children have the same kind or different kinds of experiences and jot them down.

DAY 7

Did you participate in extracurricular activities – sports, music, art, dance, etc. –

during middle school? Did you attend these activities or others as a spectator? Did you participate in outside organizations or activities, such as church, clubs, girl/boy scouts/ tutoring, lessons, etc.? If so, please add them to your booklet. Please share your activities on the “Extracurricular Activities” page. Did participation in or attendance at these events influence you in providing or preventing activities for your own children? Think of any actions you took to help your children have the same kind or different kinds of experiences and jot them down. Please place a star by those items.

Appendix G

Chart for Electronic Reflective Booklet

THOUGHTS	FRIENDS	OTHER CLASSMATES	TEACHERS	ACADEMICS	FAMILY	EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Appendix H

Excerpt From Memos

Operational Notes 3/17
Look at surveys and booklets!

So #3 actually connects destabilizing influences to attitudes about educ.

P1 – “don’t want to tell him I don’t understand”

Wants to allow more exp. – don’t want to limit

P2 – less acad. Pressure

eyes and ears open (thought parents “clueless”)

communication (none w/par.)

boyfriend

church

P4 monitoring (both)

tutor, PIA, huge focus on educ.

#2 connects stabilizing infl. w/attitudes (expect?)

P1 – Relat. w/ God

P2 – Freedom (w/awareness of parent)

diversity

P3 – respect

college

responsibilities @ home

outside activities

involvement

reinforcement of sch. rules @ home

self – reliance??

“guy friends”

Destabilizing Exp./Sit.

-Absence

-Abuse

-Diff. in academics

Activities

~~Being There~~

Bullying/Rejection

-Context – Within the context of individuals’ satisfaction/sense of security that results from an influence he/she will employ strategies of continuity –

-Within the context of insecure/unpleasant/uncomfortable feelings, individuals will employ strategies of discontinuity

-The individual may encounter intervening conditions that reinforce or alter the strategies. . .

Appendix I

Example of Audit Trail

PARTICIPANT #P2-2	2
NAME	XXXXXXX
PSEUDONYM	Melissa
DATE OF INITIAL PHONE CONTACT	1/16/13
ADDRESS	XXXXXXXXX
PHONE #s	XXXXXXXXX
EMAIL ADDRESS	None Available – Use mail
CHILD’S SCHOOL	Middle School A
DATE CONSENT FORM SENT	1/17/13
DATE CONSENT FORM RECEIVED	1/23/13
DATE SURVEY & BOOKLET SENT	1/25/13
DATE SURVEY RECEIVED	2/5/13
DATE BOOKLET RECEIVED	2/5/13
OPEN CODING COMPLETED ON SURVEY AND BOOKLET	2/8/13
INTERVIEW SCHEDULED FOR	2/9/13 4:00 LIBRARY
INTERVIEW COMPLETED	2/9/13
INTERVIEW TRANSCRIBED	2/14/13
OPEN CODING COMPLETED ON INTERVIEW	2/16/13
FOLLOW-UP EMAIL SENT	FOLLOW UP PHONE CALL 3/4
	STATUS

- Use mail instead of email

2/5/13 – Called to set up interview; left message of thanks and request to set up interview within the next few days

2/6 – She called and left message

2/7/13 – I called and left message with XXXXX’s son to let her know I called

3/4/13 – Called to find out if she wants me to mail transcript or bring it by; she does not want either – she said to save my time and paper until I have written up everything. I also called to clear up the “puzzle” that I feel she is. She hasn’t fit into the theory of stabilizing influences/destabilizing influences, and their effects. However, her answer was what I suspected – her difficulties from not having anyone there for her made her stronger; those were her words, “It just made me stronger;” she felt that her personality was such that she was not going to allow her circumstances to ruin her; in her words, she was “stubborn” and was not going to let it get her. However, she said she would be

“darned” before she let her children go through what she went through. There was going to be someone there for her children. She has no qualms about confronting teachers and has had her children moved out of teachers’ classes if she did not like the way things were going – she stated that such a situation was not beneficial for anyone. She admitted that her constant presence and approach may be intimidating (my word – I asked her specifically if she thought she might be), but said she didn’t care. She said she didn’t know if she was doing the best thing or not – maybe it would be better if her kids fought their own battles like she had to – but her decision was to be there for them.

Appendix J

Audit Trail List of Codes

INITIAL OPEN CODES

Absence
Abuse
Academics
Acceptance
Activities
ADHD
Altruism
Apprehension
Awareness
Band
Barriers to involvement
Beautiful days
Being there
Benefits of involvement
Betrayal
Boy Scouts
Bullying
Challenges
Change
Child's actions
Choice
Church
Classes
Clothes
Collaboration
Comfort zone
Communication
Community
Confidence
Conflict
Context
Continuity
Contrast
Cost
Cultural differences
Deficiencies
Desire for better life
Destabilizing influences
Discontinuity
Dissatisfaction
Diversity
Empowering

Escape
Expectations
Expression
Family
Fear
Feeling alone
Feeling appreciated
Feeling helpless
Fighting
Food
Freedom
Friends
Friendship
Help
Impact of life experiences
Individualism
Influences
Instability
Interactions with others
Interests
Intergenerational discontinuity
Involvement
It helped me become me
Lack of confidence/Acceptance
Learning
Learning differences
Life lessons
Lifestyles
Loneliness
Meeting diverse needs
Modeling
Monitoring
Moving
Music
Need
Needing others
No choice
Obstacles
Opportunities
Order
Parent/community programs
Parental influence
Parental support
Parenting
Parents
Parents' inability to help

Parents' limitations
Participation
Perceived discrimination
Perceptions
Personal struggles
Physical characteristics
Positive experiences
Poverty
Presence
Pressure
Priorities
Privilege
Protection
Providing
Public speaking
Recognition
Reinforcement
Rejection
Relationship with teacher
Relationship-building
Relationships
Resilience
Restrictive home context
Security
Self-image
Self-perception
Self-reliance
Social life
Sports
Stability
Stabilizing influence
Student Recognition
Teachers
Teaching
Technology
Trust
Unhappiness
Unwelcoming
Vicarious living
Welcome
Working

1st REVISION

Absence

Abuse

Academics

Acceptance

Activities

ADHD

Altruism

Apprehension

Awareness

Band

Barriers to involvement

Beautiful days

Being there

Benefits of involvement

Betrayal

Boy Scouts

Bullying

Challenges

Change

Child's actions

Choice

Church

Classes

Clothes

Collaboration

Comfort zone

Communication

Community

Confidence

Conflict

Context

Continuity

Contrast

Cost

Cultural differences

Deficiencies

Desire for better life

Destabilizing influences

Discontinuity

Dissatisfaction

Diversity

Empowering

Escape

Expectations

Expression

Family

Fear
Feeling alone
Feeling appreciated
Feeling helpless
Fighting
Food
Freedom
Friends
Friendship
Help
Impact of life experiences
Individualism
Influences
Instability
Interactions with others
Interests
Intergenerational discontinuity

Involvement

It helped me become me
Lack of confidence/Acceptance
Learning
Learning differences

Life lessons

Lifestyles
Loneliness
Meeting diverse needs
Modeling
Monitoring
Moving
Music
Need
Needing others
No choice
Obstacles
Opportunities
Order
Parent/community programs
Parental influence
Parental support
Parenting
Parents
Parents' inability to help
Parents' limitations
Participation
Perceived discrimination

Perceptions
Personal struggles
Physical characteristics
Positive experiences
Poverty
Presence
Pressure
Priorities
Privilege
Protection
Providing
Public speaking
Recognition
Reinforcement
Rejection
Relationship with teacher
Relationship-building
Relationships
Resilience
Restrictive home context
Security
Self-image
Self-perception
Self-reliance
Social life
Sports
Stability
Stabilizing influence
Student Recognition
Teachers
Teaching
Technology
Trust
Unhappiness
Unwelcoming
Vicarious living
Welcome
Working

POSSIBLE CATEGORIES

*Absence -

*Academics +/-

*Being there+

Change

*Communication+/-

*Context ??? +/-

Continuity

Cultural differences

Desire for better life

*Destabilizing influences-

Discontinuity

*Expectations+/-

Family

*Involvement+

Life lessons

Providing+

Resilience/ Self-reliance

Self-image+=

*Stabilizing influence+

Appendix K

Audit Trail Member Checking

PARTICIPANT	DATE TRANSCRIPT SENT	DATE RESPONSE RECEIVED/ RESPONSE	DATE MEMBER CHECKING SENT	DATE RESPONSE RECEIVED/ RESPONSE
Monique	2/26/13	2/27/13 “Hi Brenda, Thank you for the email. It was my pleasure to assist you in this research. I was not able to open the attachment. It said it was password protected.” (I sent the password; I did not receive further response until in-person member check, which confirmed findings.)	4/2/13 Met in person; “Monique” read her participant profile, overview, model, and all entries in manuscript for this participant.	4/2/13 Participant confirmed that my findings were accurate and emphasized her agreement with findings.
Melissa	(Did not want to see transcript – see other audit trail)	(Did not want to see transcript – see other audit trail)	4/15/13 Sent by mail	No response as of 4/23/13
Anna	3/5/13	No response	4/9/13	4/9/13 “Hey Brenda, All the information is correct and can be used. The overview is very interesting as well as the model. I hope you get a "good grade" on it:) Let me know if I can help any further.”
Wendy	3/5/13	Could not open;	4/9/13	4/9/13

		she was trying from i-Phone (password-protected document would not open with i Phone) – received no further response once I re-sent password		“Hi Brenda Looks good to me!”
Gretchen	3/4/13	No response	4/9/13	4/10/13 “Everything looks great! Mailing address [XXXXXX.] Have a great week.”
William	3/2/13 (Also asked for clarification about school)	3/4/13 “thanks I went to [XXXXX] School in [XXXX] county in [XXXX] not here, it opened in 1964 My parents did not have much input into my playing soccer, my friends did. My best friend learned soccer from his older brother when we were juniors. Soccer was new sport for high school at the time, we had a football coach who did not even know the rules. My best friend's brother did most of the real coaching of	4/9/13	4/15/13 “Thanks for sharing. I would question the position of the church being more on the left of destabilizing influences. I personally think the timeless values (Ten Commandments, turn the other cheek, etc) that the church teaches as more stablizing than social life and friends. Thus I would place the church to the left of these two icons.” (I sent him an email thanking him and explaining that I am re-working the model, since the first draft was confusing to readers.)

		<p>the team.</p> <p>You mentioned that you did not have many fathers participating in your research. You might need to go where they are in the school, suggest you pass out information at sporting events, concerts and maybe dances. You may also want to approach the Boy Scout troops in the area, these fathers are typically more involved in their sons activities. Our troop meets on Tuesdays and has a committee meeting on the second Tuesday of each month where the adults meet and discuss finances, advancements, outing planning, etc. Would you like to come?"</p>		
Wanda	2/28/13	3/6/13 "Hi thanks for every thing. It is great, i wise you the best with your project."	4/9/13	No response
Gabriella	3/2/13	No response	4/9/13	4/23/13

				In-person contact. She said that everything was "fine."
Keith	3/9/13	No response	4/9/13	No response
Ginny	3/7/13	3/8/13 "Looks good to me (except for all of my ummms...haha). I talked with my patient. Her name is [XXXXX]. She said she would be willing to help, but hasn't sent me an email or phone number yet. You may be able to email to her facebook...which is how I contacted her this morning. Not sure if she will respond, but you can try. good luck & it was nice meeting you,"	4/9/13	4/9/13 "Looks great to me. My address is [XXXXX] Congratulations!"
Marlis	3/11/13	No response	4/9/13	4/22/13 Sorry for the late response. Found it in my spam folder. It looks great!!! I wish you best of luck and I am happy I (hopefully) could help.
Bly	3/12/13	No response	4/9/13	No response

I sent the following email to participants for member checking:
Hi XXXXX,

I am putting the finishing touches on my research report and wanted to share an overview of my findings with you, as promised. Below I have copied and pasted an excerpt that includes a description of you as participant. I have also attached an overview of my findings and the theoretical model that I generated from data in the study. Please look over the material and let me know if you have any questions or if there is anything that seems inconsistent with what you shared with me. Also, if there is anything you specifically do not want shared, please let me know that as well. Please keep in mind, however, that I have used pseudonyms (as you can see in the description) to protect your identity and the identity of our city and state so that your information remains anonymous.

Thank you again for your participation in my research study. Your information was very valuable in creating the theory from this research, and I believe it will be valuable in creating a better understanding between schools and parents. If you do not mind, please include your mailing address when you email me.

Thank you again.

Sincerely,

Brenda Williams

Appendix L

Confidentiality Agreement for Research Assistants

A Grounded Theory Study Investigating How Parents' Adolescent Experiences Influence
Their Attitudes and Behaviors toward Their Children's Middle School Education

Brenda Williams

Liberty University School of Education

As transcriptionist in the above named study, I agree to the following (please initial each section to indicate agreement):

_____ Maintain confidentiality of all information related to the research study.

_____ Discuss the contents of audio recordings, research notes, transcriptions, and any other information related to the study only with the researcher.

_____ I will not keep or allow access to information related to this study.

_____ I will delete transcription files and any related information from my computer after transcription.

Printed Name of Research Assistant

Signature of Research Assistant

Printed Name of Primary Researcher

Signature of Primary Researcher

Date

(Adapted from Sample confidentiality agreement for research assistants, n.d.)

Appendix M

Sample Participant Interview – Gretchen

BW-Here we go, alright, um, so we'll go ahead and this is for the record um, February 20th, ok. We'll go ahead and start with the, the first few questions and what I'd like to do is as we go through these then I'll kind of also look at your survey

P-Sure

BW- and your booklet and kind of draw from that a little as well. The first few questions have to do with your child's school, now your child goes to?

P-Right now, [XXXXX] Middle

BW-[XXXXX] Middle, ok. Uh, Will you please describe for me what your child's school is like? When you go there what do you see and hear, what are people saying and doing? What do you notice?

P-Ok, you walk in, you get the most wonderful atmosphere in the office, uh, everybody's very welcoming, everybody's smiling. Usually the halls are quiet or you might see a few people going in. Um, they're always doing work, um, I do know that I've been in there when there's work going on, um, it is middle school so they, you know, it might get noisy when they switch but generally the stuff is, th, there's always a positive attitude in the air. You know, I've never really caught anything bad going on when I've (laughter) gone in there for anything, but generally any time I've ever attended or been in and out, even at times during school, always a good atmosphere and always positive teachers, it's, and I have to say fourteen, almost fifteen years ago when we moved down here the middle school probably impressed my husband the most, and was one of the most welcoming, and he said, "That's, we

have to move over there,” he goes, “I’m glad we picked this here,” he goes, uh, my oldest was going into 6th grade and he, in XXXXX he would’ve still been in elementary and of course you worry about your first one and he goes, “No, he’s really going to like it there,” and for my husband to say that, that’s impressive, so you get a welcoming atmosphere as soon as you walk in.

BW-Wonderful. Ok, um, please tell me what are some facts someone moving into the area would want to know about XXXXX Middle.

P-Um, oh, it’s, it’s always been one of the tops - at one point it was a Blue Ribbon School. Um, there’s gifted programs that are wonderful, they, the teachers are wonderful, they’re communicative um, there’s things for them to do. They have dances, they have sports, they have other clubs and everybody’s can kinda find a little niche if they want to, um, if there’s ever a problem or you have something, everybody is - the faculty and staff and administration all communicate greatly. It’s just a really nice place to not worry about your child and it’s very smart place I want to say (laughter), it really is; they have a lot of smart kids coming from there, so they, and they take care of everybody’s needs as best as they can is the best way to say it but it’s always a welcoming place. You’ll like it. You, you don’t have to worry about your, uh, first one going to 6th grade. They take care of everything. They’ve got it set, they, they’re fine. You know. There’s no problem with them. That’s what em, a lot of kids, especially 6th grade I’m like don’t worry they’ve been doing this for the years, they’ve got it down pat; they don’t have to worry about anything they will help them. Don’t worry about it.

BW-Great, uh, you mentioned they communicate well.

P-Um

BW- In what ways do they communicate?

P-We have newsletters, uh, even the PTO you know has newsletters, they help you know, get information out, sometimes things happen last minute, um, there's always enough information out there on the web, on their website, it's given to you it, it, it's very hard not to get the information and if you're looking for it, it's very easy to get. If there's a um, I don't - ever not find out about what I need to know and I guess I'm routine by now though I'm looking for certain things - did you bring that? Did you bring that? And you know, once they leave elementary they're responsible to bring home information so it gets a little harder. Uh, but they send things home with their report cards and progress reports that are the utmost importance and you know, we'll get it, so you know, I've never had a real big problem with that. Maybe my kids not bringing it in on time but, they're, they just communicate what needs to be communicated in a, in a good fashion.

BW-Ok, that's great, uh, lets - I'm going to look here real quick at your survey, which I don't see at the moment. Ok, the next question: if you were evaluating your child's school, what kind of rating would you give it, and please explain the reasons behind your evaluation.

P-Wow, um, uh, I gotta give [XXXXX] County school system an A plus plus plus all the way and I've been in and out of all the schools, middle schools and stuff, um, like I said, it's a good healthy atmosphere for kids, positive teachers, it, uh, even if something's going wrong, they say it in a positive way um, they - there's good learning going on. There's no nonsense. The nonsense is you know, there's always

kids gonna try stuff, especially at that age they have to show off a little bit, but it's handled, it's handled in the right way and if you don't feel it is you can talk about it and they don't, they don't push you away, they don't, uh, you know, push you off their list and if there's a problem then they'll listen and they, and if - they just do things nicely, and a good atmosphere. Um, like I - it's one of the nicest places to be, whether ya ha - and if you have problems they take care of it. If you have good things to say they take care of it. They, they just work it right. It's a good place for learning.

BW-Mm hmm

P-That's about - that's all I can - it's comfortable, it's home. It's my last year of home

BW-Very nice. Ok, the next few questions have to do with your school experience as an adolescent, and so the first question: Please describe for me what middle school was like for you.

P-Ah, that's so funny because I went to a uh, Catholic school which, everybody pretty much either went to public or Catholic school up, we were, and mine was one of the smallest, so there was only one of each grade. However, um, we had a lot there in this little middle class neighborhood school, uh, we did everything - math, science, social studies. We had a wonderful awesome science lab um, and teachers that could use it um, very flexible, we had a principal who taught us music so every Friday you had music. We had to have religion too, and it's so funny - we were, uh, my husband went to a different uh Catholic school. I said, my goodness did we write! We wrote a lot and we wrote a lot through all of our subjects you know, and

you had to write it I'm sure you, too, remember too, I'm sure you remember too how much paper you killed, how many trees you killed with all the paper and being perfect. Uh, they didn't accept it. There was no typing, there were no computers. You weren't allowed to erase. You had to present the best paper possible, that you could do to them, but we learned everything now we didn't have things like you would have in the um, in the public schools like a real music curriculum. Um, we had PE once a week - they would have it every day. We had recess, they didn't and I loved re, and you know what, recess I think is something I was saying to my husband, I said, that's something I think they need more of. They need a half hour to hang out, talk, chat and just throw a football around and be kids. I said, "I think they need that." I think we all needed that. I think it's good for the teachers and it's just not possible to do with schools that size. Um, I also was a, we had sewing class which they brought, they tried to make it as close to public school as possible. Also had Spanish, we did it once a week for two years, and to me it was great. I don't like the way they did that here in [XXXXXX] County where they had a 6 week thing, I'm like no, they should just teach them in 8th grade and let them get started, if they let them have it every day they'd be fine with it and even if they didn't have a credit, a half a credit, just get 'em started with it somehow. I didn't, I wasn't thrilled with the 6 weeks of let's try it out, I's like it's not gonna, it's not doing anything for them I think it could've been just done better is all, a however, I had one do the 7th and 8th grade Spanish, um, for me I walked into 9th grade, I knew what I was doing my first year of Spanish, they're all like you know it? I's like "yeah." Um, they also had sewing classes - they did something else for the boys when we did that. A lot of

projects - lot of ta - uh, with social studies and it's just we did it, we did it in class and I laugh - as I was going for my master's the uh, sense of one's own learning, my science teacher for 7th and 8th grade, was the epitome of that. Here's your work. Do it. She just left us alone, and we sat there figured it out and we did it her way and we took a test and I don't ever remember her being in front teaching. It's just amazing but she was a brilliant woman and she was a nun and at some point she had to be a nurse or a doctor or something and we don't, you know none of us knew and she was older, but she had, we had a science lab. We had all the materials. She showed us how to use it and that was it. We went and did it and we weren't rocket scientists. We did have a few very smart people we'd all be looking what did he do, what'd you do? How'd you do that? And it was funny - she never said anything about that because we weren't copying, we were learning and it took two years later to be in more of the biology and the chemistry to understand what she did for us.

BW-Mm hmm

P- You know and we were able to grasp it and she didn't say you do it like this. She didn't give us step by step (unintelligible) do the lab- hand it in so you know, we learned a lot that way and it, it was a true sense of that and I just laugh when I started you know reading things on that, I's like, they need more of that you know. Kids'll come home and say they didn't teach it, I'm like let me look at it I say, read it, you'll discuss it. That's learning, so, you know you can't have everything handed to you but a lot of the, just a lot of dif - we were able to do a lot of different things we were so small and because we were allowed to do religion or just, you know, we, we did one thing we did too was take care of our school. We were the ones who did the

bulletin boards and the decorating and everything, it's just here you do it you do it and we had for a group of 40 kids we had 6 unbelievable artists, so we had these wonderful things all around our school that showed the kids did it you know, whatever we had around or we brought in it was made that way so that was really, really fun and I don't see as much of that and I'd like to see more you know, that's when it's fun. It's kinda hard to do but we had flexible time too, we didn't, you know, as much you had to do math for an hour or whatever, she could spend more time on it if you needed her, she could spend more time on science if you needed it so the flexibility was there, wasn't as rigid with times, you know, you had that, you got that information, ok, let's do this now, need more time for that? Ok, we'll work on this, so that was fun too and the kids don't get that these days.

BW-Right. It's, it's um, it sounds as though um the expectations that you had, that you said they didn't just accept any, any old thing, they expected you to do it, can you share with me more...

P-Oh, yes and I - and you know what, it's funny - my husband said no, no, no, you can't hand it in like that, why is it not neat? Why is it not readable? Um, and I, and I said you know, I told him I's like, they do get - they don't get in trouble for handwriting like we did, you know, but, I'd be lucky excuse me if I'm a teacher and I can't read that, I can't grade it as well as if I can read it and one thing my husband said and it was from very young, excuse me, you have the answers to spelling and you have the answers to social studies before - you, you're not allowed to get bad grades. You are not - He wouldn't accept anything but 100 in spelling because they had the answers beforehand, so I don't care, he said 98 is not good enough and I was

lucky - my first 3 we, no problem, 4th one we had to work on but we helped and we showed 'em and we worked with 'em and we said you've got the answers give it back. Um, another thing we learned, I learned from his Mom and we carried through was because we went to Catholic school we said, she's, you had to have an A in religion. That's life. Everything else we can work on. You know, that and conduct so we've always said uh huh - conduct has to be perfect. Everything else we'll work on. We'll get you the help. If you don't understand something and, and it's very hard you know, especially, even if they're very smart and they get that first bad grade they want to hide it, you have to tea - we had to get them to the point where I don't know something, ask for help and it's ok to ask for help. If I don't know it, we're going to find someone that can help you and they all hit that wall somewhere. Some sooner than others, but we just you know, we said you know, don't, don't hide it if you have a problem and that was really good and something we learned from our parents and took us but we started it earlier and for other reasons too so my kids were pretty good about saying I failed something or I'm not doing good in this or I'm going to get a bad grade and they'd prepare us for it. They wouldn't try and hide it, and they learned not to so that was pretty good too, or ask for help or I don't understand, you know, for extra help I'll bring you in early. We offered them whatever - you know, whatever they needed for school, that we could do reasonably. Don't tell me you need a computer, no you don't, you know, but, they, we made sure they even had that to work on stuff at home so yeah, things we all do for our kids, when it comes to school we got them what they needed.

BW-Right

P-and that was it

BW-Ok, um, please describe, oh, tell a little bit about early high school. Was it any different? If there was

P-Oh, early high school! I couldn't wait to get to high school. I was the 4th of 5.

Um, walking into high school, I'd already known everybody 'cause of my brothers had already been there and I'd been to all the football games and done all the things so I couldn't wait to get there. I had no problem. I knew, I knew a mostly upper classmen as opposed to my age 'cause I was in a small school and everybody went to the other schools but it was real easy getting to know everybody, but I couldn't wait, I was ready to go, you know, ready to fly, have a little more fun so - I would say one thing the Catholic schools worked on better was grammar. Um, and writing, you could see the difference even with the very smart people we knew things that were required by just in, just like we weren't allowed to do that, we weren't allowed to write that way and we could rip apart a sentence and put it back together again. We diagrammed sentences, they didn't and that really made a big difference.

BW-Mm hmm

P- You know, parts of speech and how to set up a sentence and I really believe that's uh, that's one of the keys.

BW-So, were you, in high school, were you in Catholic School?

P-No, and then I went to public high school

BW-OK

P-So it was uh K-8th grade and then 9th through 12th for high school so, but we all went to public high school so...

BW-OK, um, please eh, please describe the most positive aspects of your middle school/early high school experience.

P-Hmm, I don't know, I just, I guess I always have a good, I liked going to school, I never had a problem, not positive, I guess it was something we had to do every day, I think there was, just the general atmosphere would keep it positive. There wasn't much to bring you down and I guess I was a good student, I didn't worry about stuff, I don't, I personally didn't really have any problems and I didn't mind having a challenge in school and, we kinda would work together on things and we, you know, now the other thing is you always had the, the friend thing, you always had a few good, there's always a couple in every grade or class that seemed to start some insurrection or some friend stuff or leave people out. I wasn't like that. I was more friends with everybody and the whole positive atmosphere, our school was positive you know, you came in, you did your work, you did what you were supposed to do and you weren't in trouble and tha - that's really for any school. I never had a problem of not wanting to go to school so, the general atmosphere was always positive. We had good people, we had good teachers, we had good parents around us and you know, some days were more boring than others, some days were more fun than others, that's, that's life so I don't remember having a bad experience, it's, and - you know I guess everybody's school always looked better, wanna go to that one, you know, I want to try that one but that's 'cause I knew different people elsewhere, but I had no problem with it. That was it.

BW-Ok um, give me just a minute, (long pause) so, um, tell me a little about [XXXXXX]

P-Uh, one of my best friends in the world. We've been friends since Kindergarten, our brothers were in school together, we just, both Irish Catholic, but she, it's so funny, in and out of school she always would have one friend that she was good friends with, now I was friends with her, I hung out with her but she could always be the one to cause the trouble and middle school she did, and, even with the friend that didn't go to our school, we didn't talk for a whole summer until we went to 9th grade and they stopped and said you know, we gotta be friends again, we're all going to high school and I said no, you just want to be friends with me because I know everybody going there, you guys are were the ones that weren't, so we had, but, you know we're still good friends now, I, she cut my hair in high school, we're still friends in high school, no matter what we will always be friends but she was always the one that would be between someone, or, or the one to talk about a person, you know and how something started good or bad you know, so it just, one of those people, but still always a good person you know, you all grow up and learn, live and learn - say you're sorry and move on.

BW-Alright, ok, um, so you mentioned a lot of your friends came from other schools?

P-That's right, um, mostly because the school my sch, there were two Catholic schools and two public schools in the little, and I'm talking it's a little town, but the school I went to, I would say about 10 of the kids lived in our town, the rest even lived in another county 'cause we were on the line

BW-Uh huh

P- Uh, but it was a good school so they and their public school wasn't as good, so a lot of them ca - came to our church and our school and just the way it was set up,

however when we went to high school there was only about, if there were 10 of us that went to the same high school, um, I thi - that would be the most. Now growing up I always did other things and went to the park and the pool and I had friends that went to the other public schools, or the, and then, in middle, 6th, 7th, 8th grade, the other Catholic school 'cause I had someone goes - you wanta play basketball - and the Catholic schools up there were the ones that di the uh, indoor sports, you know, like basket, volleyball and stuff, they did it through their churches and I, I mean, not so much recreation centers and we went and we all went against each other and you know, they, it's a big league thing up on Long Island and even in, in the city, and my friends said come play basketball for our school so I ended up being friends with kids from the other Catholic school but with that the kids would, you know, anybody could try out so you had friends from all the different schools and I also swam, so in the summer I get to get together with my swimming buddies you know, and we all went to different schools, but those kids did not do the same things I did at the same at St. Catholics, so I ended just knowing a lot of people you know, just 'cause I was out and about, always doing something, always at the park and the pool within my town too, so, you know and they didn't participate 'cause a lot of them didn't live around there so you had to know a lot of people

BW-So, you, you were involved in sports

P-Yeah

BW- and community?

P-uh, did Girl Scouts, um, and when I was younger the sports wasn't there as much, we had more of a recreation center that was just unbelievable. It had uh, a very

large pool like the aquatic center uh, it had baseball fields, it had two like a younger kids park, a big kids park, it started out having two tennis courts, it had 3 and, and basketball courts and then volleyball courts and everybody was very active in the town, that, it still hops all day long, in the morning when we were younger they had just fun kickball things, they had free bingo, they pay a lot of taxes. I said to my Mom you paid a lot of taxes but we went there for free every day and if you saw the area I mean, the area's smaller than [XXXXXX] Park, but they, everybody hung out there, even when you were older there were volleyball leagues for adults and so just different things to be busy and I happen to like sports so, you know, I met people through that and then our swimming pool, I, I loved swimming, I wouldn't come out of the water ever, so we had a swim team there, just a local team that went against two or three other teams and I met a lot of friends from it 'cause we all hung out at the pool every day. Again those people didn't live in my neighborhood so they didn't do all those things we did.

BW-Ok,

P-Weren't afforded the chance I should say, it was just for the residents.

BW-Ok, Um, I would like to, to find out just a little bit more about the uh, the social studies and science, you said this uh, teacher kinda gave it to you and expected you to

P-Just do it

BW- go with it and can you um, can you share a little more 'cause you said that whenever

P-She would literally put notes on the board

BW-Mm hmm

P-We would copy them and good ole blackboards, notes - notes, we would copy them, we in 7th grade dissected things on our own, we uh, we had to draw it out, I mean we, there was enough, there were steps there she gave us notes, we drew out what we were going to do, then we had labs to hand in and I'll tell ya, they, I remember these cardboard paper type things and we literally had to set it up, write it out, you know, the ten thing - I guess about 10 steps she had to do and write everything out, you know, for each step, what we did, and then we had to draw a diagram of what we did so by the time we're done, you learned it and then you had a test on it and you studied it that way. She, you know, and it's just, you know, here ya go - that was it - she didn't make a big presentation. Um, her presentation was very quiet and like, you know, here's the stuff you had to read and the questions, but when we worked in class it wasn't silence either. We did but we'd turn around and go what'd you have for that? What'd you get for that and, and it's funny now that you're making me think about it, she never yelled about it and said don't look at that, don't look at that. It wasn't a test, you know, it kinda, she kinda just let it happened, which you get for, for? And we'd have to turn it in and we'd be graded on it and whatever, but in that process of finding out the answer from each other you know, teachers make it specific now, ok, you can work on this in a group, she just let it happen you know and it was instinctive, so, and then social studies I also had a very good teacher, um, again, we did a lot, we were assigned a lot of projects and I personally got more through doing a project and understanding where that fit in making something, making um, we did uh, was it in 7th grade, revolution and we did a lot on Native Americans and we called them Indians then and then especially

our state, but every ta, every couple of weeks you had a project and I can remember, I made a book, you know, out of like this old piece of rubbery leather thing and I made the book and I made the tablet and I remember how, relating that into the curriculum and then it's so funny, it's like I'm sitting there writing about this stuff in my Master's going oh, we did that, you know, we did it like that and it's just that we didn't have a name on it or we didn't state it as just, how we learned and yeah, you have a study, but they gave you enough practice that it'd be, you know, if you were uh, a good student, you didn't study that much. It was there. It was all brought together so, and I guess I like doing it, you know, I like making, I like doing... I learn better that way, or writing a paper and researching. If you just sit there and talk and, ah, it's not staying in my head - now my one son, he's just got to listen, he doesn't want to do the projects, but he remembers everything and my husband's like that too, so that's why he always said social studies is so easy and I'm like it's not so easy to remember the dates but they remember that and it's just how you, how you learn - That's all it is.

BW-Alright, alright, what do you feel were negative aspects of your middle and early high school experience and please describe them.

P-Um, the negative was that it was small too, that could also um, there's just more of the um, and they just had different things than the public schools like you could take a musical instrument you know, something like that could be afforded to, uh, that they did every day you know uh, and I think for me advanced classes more, and it's funny but when we went to high school I didn't have advanced math. I had advanced everything else and it was a good thing I didn't 'cause I had the best darn

teacher in the world and we have um, we have in, in [XXXXX] state regent, we had to take the end of the year and uh, every year in math, uh, third and eleventh grades, social studies and language arts, every year science and it was only a few were in the regents classes and I got a 99 and I remember not studying for it and all the kids that were in the advanced class, they had done, they didn't do as well and I was like why didn't you do as well, but our teacher had been sick in 6th and 7th and 8th grade and uh, I don't think we were taught as much and I would've been tracked more for advanced math but maybe 20/20 hindsight, I was better just where I was and I didn't have to work, I got A's all the time and so if I'd been in those advanced classes, I would've been mad, I would've ended up hating math and I ended up not hating math because I had some really great teachers you know, in fact it came easy to me but easier than you would expect, so that would be the, you know, like there were, the kids that were advanced got a little bit more but eventually we all caught up too, it didn't matter that much.

BW-OK, uh, during your middle and early high school years, what kind of attitudes and expectations did your parents have about your education?

P-Oh, you went to school, you didn't give 'em a hard time and you, it was, "Why don't you have A's?" now that was for me because I could have it, I think I got a B in science and I's like, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, what are you, are you doing any work? You're not studying, you're not doing this" and it's funny, you find that with your own kids and, and, and, and again, it depends on which one, "Why do you have a, why do you have a "B", why do you have a 91, what didn't ya-?" It sounds bad, but you're asking that to say maybe give them a little bit more of an umph! because I

know they didn't work on it. Now my daughter came home with a 91, we know she did everything she could to get that 91, and don't bother her, you know, you could see her working on it, and the others there, they get a 91, it's like, "Uh, you couldn't get a 95? Maybe if you'd study for a little bit you know," but um, in each, we were expected to do the work, not give the teachers a hard time, make it simple, and that's it, and I think my parents even knew and ah, ah, never said anything, they had he, my husband had 5, I had 5, and everyone was different and they were smart enough to know that, but they stopped you if you were not getting it the right way or doing the right thing you know and questioned you but, they never rode me to do my work or they didn't have to and if there was a problem they'd help and if you had a problem they'd answer but I think we all, with our friend, friend's problems you know, what's the matter? Nothing. You know, that stuff, but, they were very, very good but I think their attitudes definitely were on my, you know, we could, I could see my husband and I saying yeah, yeah you have to do this, yeah you have to do that, why did you get the B? What's wrong or why did you, you know, what happened? I got this on the test, I didn't get it. Alright, what are you going to do about it? I have to do better. Yes. I got to do better than better so I can bring my grade up so you'd make them see it and um, we just try to just give them the pieces and I guess as best we could and just like our parents, they're atti - our parents attitude definitely influenced what my husband and I do.

BW-Mm hmm

P- Absolutely, 'cause that, I hear him repeat his Mom and Dad all the time, so...

BW-Uh well, a couple of more things about that, how did you, you said your parents you know would question you about “did you do this? Did you do that?” How, how else did they communicate?

P-Um

BW-to you their attitudes and expectations?

P-You know I guess like most parents if you go with the flow and you didn't get in trouble you know, I think I got a call 'cause I was talking too much in class and you know, you come in the house and “bomb - pffft” ok, alright, I won't do - you know you were quiet for those next couple of days and not you know, that was when there wasn't going to be any nonsense. Um, you just kinda did what both your parents told you to do. They listened but they also did more of the talking too and uh, there really wasn't a choice - you did, you know you followed through. If there was a problem though, they would listen and you gotta believe that again, um, but you also need to communicate that, you know, and they didn't, they would say something - “Oh that darn teacher,” whatever, and but you knew, it's like, “Too bad, you have to do what the teachers said anyway. I don't like them doing that, but you gotta do it anyway.” Too bad, you know. Um, it just had a good positive attitude and they wanted us to go to college and I know my Dad was pretty adamant about that, he, everybody, 'cause he didn't get to go. He was one of eleven, so - but that and he saw that as he went through his work, that every, he's like no - everybody needs it and that's what, that was one thing everybody, that was up there, for everybody you're going to college and we put that on our kids and now though we've had to with one of them say you don't have to go to college, but we gotta do something, we gotta find

you something and if you want to go to college later that's fine 'cause maturity level and how we're acting, but we put it out there and "College is up to you" and the hope scholarship with our kids, um, once the, I think we put that out there to them and like, "Guys, you've gotta do this!" and um, my one daughter figured out the whole money deal very, very young, because of the 7th grade project on researching a college and then she figured out well, ooh, if I stay in state I get this much and I didn't have to tell her. I's like yeah, click on how much that's, that one is you're researching - Ooh, and she worked for that, she knew I wanted to keep it; she kept it for four years of [XXXXX], so God bless her.

BW-Very nice

P-Um, right now the one in 8th grade I've gotta get a hold of a little bit more because they have to ha... you know, I'm, I was mad because he was taking 7th grade math last year as an advanced and he was doing bad. He was getting a C and he's like and they all had this big rough start, the teacher had a rough start but he wasn't getting it and unfortunately I couldn't get him there at 7 a.m. for extra help, I'm like no, they have to do, this is not working for me. I had another one acting up, that was in high school and my husband knew I did not want him out of it. I'm like no, he needs to stay with it, he needs to stay with it because down the road I'm want - if he needs to back up he can, but him ,my husband went to school and he's like no, they pulled him out of it but he sat in the class and gets 99's in math - it's real easy, but what I wanted him to do was - my daughter made it through the 8th grade algebra and then she worried so much by the time she got to high school and that's when that Dr. [XXXXX] took over [XXXXX] I'm worried about math - I want my A

- I, you know, and she always wants her As, and Dr. [XXXXXX] said, I pulled [XXXXXX] back; you just need to step back. Just take regular, don't take accelerated and then she looped, she was really good, she looped taking calculus at [XXXXXX], at, she did it in joint enrolment and took it at [XXXXXX] State so she had calculus before she went to [XXXXXX] out of the way, which was real big,

BW – Very nice

P-but I'm try... I want him to have that math because they have to have, three, two or three credits of AP courses if they want the [XXXXXX] scholarship or if you even want to get accepted to [XXXXXX] or [XXXXXX], which is a lot on kids so they're taking these AP classes and if they're not ready for it you know, but I want to try and get him there because he's so quiet, smart, you know, but I don't know if he's ready to do the work for it yet.

BW- Mm hmm

P-You know, he does not, he does not do much work to get an A, but I don't know if he's ready to do the work for AP, so when I'm, and I'm like keep in the math, keep doing the good stuff, you have to do this, but thank God my last one's been an easy one.

BW-Nice, well that's nice. Ok. Um, see, in what ways were your parents involved in your education? And just describe all the ways they were involved. At home, at school, in other ways.

P-Um, one thing my brother said about my Mom was, "Mom, you were always there." She was home, at breakfast and at dinner and God bless her she did work at times. My father was a police officer so his hours could be uh, very different.

However, he got to work, 11-7 or 7-3 and as we were older um, but they just expected you to go to school and act right. Now, did they work with us? No. Did they, they provided everything we needed. If the teacher asked for something we got it and you know, sometime - "Mom I need paint, I need this." "I need another dollar" was a lot to ask for. "Gotta wait 'til payday." Ok, um, they just provided you with everything they possibly could and if they got a call from school you know, you were, there weren't, they weren't going back up to, say, "My baby" this, "My baby" that. It was, "You better act right" and that was it, you know, there was no nonsense and we all had our times of something stupid, you know, whether it's friends acting up or talking or being silly, or I think we all, you know, had a phone call home at one time or another, but they, PT... well, we had PTA. My mom, you know, did what she did. She came, anything that was a school function, one of them were there you know, it didn't matter. My father didn't always go to everything 'cause of his time and hours or was home checking the others and that's funny because my hus - people say well where's your husband, where's your wife, I'm like wait, he's going to that one he kept the little one home. We just swapped out with 5 because I couldn't afford a babysitter for everything and it just worked better that way and he was also hurt, so, um, we just - Somebody was always there. There was a, had your meals at home. We had dinner on the table whether you had an activity or not, they were just always there for you and you, just being home um, were there if you needed a question, or just providing everyday things. It wasn't, it wasn't a big deal.

BW-So their presence there at home?

P- Their presence - Yeah, you know, they weren't, it was just a very simple life.

They got you what you needed. You went to school you acted right and they didn't want to hear about it. And if you were wrong they went up, and you know, they, my father with my brother in high school - I gotta go up, and my husband will say the same thing. He got in trouble in middle school really and our dads put on a suit and tie to go see the principal because that's just the way it was. You know? And it wasn't something like they, these two men put on suits and ties all the time. They were in that much trouble. (Laughter) That's really what it was but, they were there when the, in good times and bad, and they tended your functions and provided what you need. They never said no to the, they never said no to the school, I have to say.

BW-So your dad put on a suit to go to the school and this is what your husband?

P-Uh, well, my husband's father did the same for him. I's like you two got in a lot of trouble - (laughter) they weren't as, you know, whatever it was - fights and something stupid you know, but I's like - hey does my Dad put on a suit, I'm like on my gosh your dad put on a suit - you were in big trouble! (laughter)

BW-Oh, well, what experiences in middle school and early high school made the most lasting impression on you, either positive or negative, and how did this event ef... impact your overall school experience?

P-Again, looking back and you know I have to say we had the best people around us supporting us in school besides the teachers and that's important that somehow, uh, people made a difference. We had good positive learning experiences and I make

sure my kids do uh, probably more than, probably more than our parents, but, “You have this, you have that? You need this?” And probably not ad nauseum, um – But – uh – we, we were pretty blessed in uh, in a very simple way of things, uh, but I have to say one thing when they gave it to you was a New York way of giving it to you. You had the finger like this and you just sat there and you took it and that was it... when you were wrong you didn’t fight it back, as a matter of fact, you didn’t tell your parents you got in trouble and you prayed they didn’t find out. Um, high school again I was really lucky ‘cause I just moved in, I did everything. I was president of the class, I did every sport you can imagine, I knew everybody so it wasn’t a problem – I, I just, me personally a very good positive experiences from my parents, um, even if there was something wrong, it was kinda like you, you were still kept on schedule and you still had to do what you had to do and you kind of just picked up and did it and we had a very good community surrounding us, so no matter what there was always a lot of, everybody was always checking in you know. If you got in trouble for something, you got the eye. If you didn’t get it from your parents you got the eyeball from somebody else you knew and we knew these people for years so

BW-Mm hmm

P-You know, what did you do? Ok. I’m not going to say anything. Ok, you’re not going to tell? You know (laughter) that kind of stuff.

BW-Ok, how do you feel your own exp... school experiences in middle and early high school contributed to your feelings about your child’s education?

P-I think I was on them a little bit more 'cause my mother wasn't on me as much. I guess 'cause we did so well, but I like - I'm, I definitely check them more or I'll ask more and you know, do you have everything and eh, eh - it depends which child it was because 5 kids, 5 different ways of doing it, but uh, I think we still, all in all I think my husband or even I, we take the same things our parents did, but we really do support the teachers. My husband will tend to question them more. I'm like leave it alone. They have to do the work. But, um, I try to keep it positive for them, support them as much you know, listen to them when they're having a problem and, again I try to be involved in school as much as I possible - I will always send things in, I've always at least worked whatever, whatever grade they were, I worked something at their school to be involved, to know the teachers and know the parents, to know the kids, uh, I never took a big, big uh, PTO role or anything, but I always send stuff in and I let the teachers know that whatever you need let me know, um, and that's about the best I can - if you guys need something let me know, whatever it is. Made sure um, they, they have our emails and phone so they can, they can get a hold of you in an instant, but I just uh, I always did, in fact on school night Tuesday, if you need me for something, if you want something, and then a lot of times the most of the teachers got know me they're like you can ask for me, you can ask me, but I always try to do something in school to help out the PTO or pick a day or date say, at least once or twice, let me go in and help

BW- Mm hmm

P- 'cause that used to be harder when they were uh, all smaller 'cause I would have to find a babysitter, but I, I always found a way to do something. I'll send it in, you

need this, I'll send it in you know, at least I did that, and then anything I could do at home I counted box tops for a while in high school I would um, I helped out the band, but I could do it from home. I was in charge of contacting everybody. I'm like oh, I can do that I'm home - you know, so I always found a way to be involved to make sure it's really important to get to know people as you take that to high school, and high school now has gotten at [XXXXX] went from the first one having 300 students to the 3rd one having 600 students.

BW-Mm hmm

P-Graduation was not fun that day, oh my gosh! (laughter) - But you don't get to know everybody as well as I did with the others and I'm like who were you with and the fourth one was even worse. I was like I don't know anybody anymore

BW-Yeah

P-So, I miss that smaller

BW-Right, well, how do your feelings about education influence the ways you communicate with your child and you've told about that a little bit, uh, but how you communicate with your child about school and how do your feelings affect the ways you communicate with your child's teachers and other school staff?

P- Um, I feel sorry for sometimes for the teachers, but I know because they do have very educated parents, however some of 'em aren't as educated 'cause they're not in the class and don't really feel what they have to do. I understand it you, because I've been there and done that, um, I know what I'm required to do and I know what [XXXXX] County rules are um, with my 5th one, most of them actually, most of them, don't know me 'cause it switched over and was split up but uh, I don't, they

communicate very well by the rules of [XXXXXX] County or [XXXXXX], um, but always with of ‘em with a positive smile, you know, I... the communication is there, I just know my kids know I require them to go to school, act right, do their work or suffer the consequences. I had one that has suffered the consequences. We’ve always asked him to do their best, not everybody’s an A student. I have one where everybody else’s A’s, he’s not A’s, but if I know he did everything he could and got a B, yes, you got a B! I’m so glad you got a B because that feeling, people find out and I don’t care how smart you are, somewhere in your education life you hit that wall of something you can’t do very well, and you go, “Yay, I got a B!” and not everybody gets all A’s, all the way through.

BW-Ok

P- So, you gotta celebrate, a barely passing sometimes, oh, I got a C - Yay, you know, you have to celebrate those too. Every student’s different. We do accept that, um, but mostly act right, behave, be respectful, the other stuff we’ll take care of - that’s the most, that’s the most important and you mess up now you’re gonna suffer the consequences and they all have their moment of whatever it is.

BW- They’re gonna kick us out in just a minute so let me go... I have one more question here and then one more thing I just want to ask you about, um, and of course you pretty much answered this. In what ways are you involved with your child’s education, at school, at home, in other ways?

P-I uh, pretty much do your homework, do your stuff, like I say, I do try and attend events you know, if they had something going on and we were both there pretty much and like I said try to help out by sending in stuff, um, and I you know, we

need help with back to school night, I uh, last year I was finally able to do it so now I know I can throw myself in there and help when it's really important to, to show your face because the other kids get to know you too (laughter) and the other parents.

BW-Ok, um, you mentioned how that um, your parents expected your very best and would question if you got this grade, even if it was good grade, if it was not high as they thought you should do and then you, you've kind of expressed that you and your husband, you hear your experience in what you do. What made you decide to carry on that same?

P-I don't know, I think that was just innate. I think it was, you know, you heard it before. That stuff, I think that stuff just comes out of your mouth and you begin, you begin to sound like your parents. They're, their good stuff, you still sound like your parents and I think it's just that we want the best for kids and we know that school is important and you can't mess around with it. And we know that if you do well now it carries through high school and then through college and - what they start out young sticks with you. How you study and what you want to do, um, and if you make you know, they eventually get it and you're right, they may not listen the whole time and it may not happen 'til they're twenty something or thirty something and they'll say, "Oh they were right" and you can't let them slide. If you let them slide with a C and they really can do an A, you can't let them do that. At least not now and you know, that's and you can't let them do it in college either, especially if you're helping them pay for it (laughter)... after that you want to slide at your work, good, but that's when you're responsible, that's my responsibility, to question

it, but most times if they were having a problem we knew about it before they got their report cards.

BW-Mm hmm

P-Or at least we tried to, so

BW-Right

P-You know, you want to prevent it.

BW-Well, that's all I have as far as my um interview questions that are on my paper, but do you have anything else that um, thinking about the purpose being you know, thinking about you know, your experiences and how that influenced you to interact with your children,

P-A lot of...

BW-can you think of anything else you'd like to add.

P-Yes, I think more than anything my husband and I wanted to give them more chances than we had um, like my son with band, um, "We'll get you the best horn," "We'll get you this," "Do you have the ca"- especially the first ones, "Do you have your calculator?" "Do you have this?" um, we just want to see them take what they like to do and we especially, we tell them that um, they have to be involved in something in middle school, I didn't care, and I didn't care what it was. We really urged them to be involved in an extracurricular activity and I see the difference 'cause my 3rd and my 4th one, we couldn't find their little space and they weren't athletes, or they got hurt and couldn't hurt and couldn't play football and do something and uh, the other two just had so many other things different going on that it, it helps them, so and my 5th one, he's - he's just a likeable kid that just kinda

eases through and he plays sports and he's really good at it but the other two found my daughter would try everything near to my, need to, just I don't care what it is. What I did like that they did at [XXXXXX] middle, um, and it was something everybody can do, um, Frisbee football. It was a great activity that one of the coaches did and anybody can join, girls and boys and I think that was great because it allowed the kids to all get together after school for a couple of weeks and that, I think they did it for 8 weeks at beginning of school and that's great, especially if they weren't good at sports.

Librarian-It's time to start packing up

BW-Ok, thank you

P-That's the one thing that I, I was thinking - I's like that's one thing I liked for the kids, that they have something to go to that was school related and anybody can do better, so it's out there, they've just gotta find their little spot. Some of them don't find their spot 'til college. (Laughter), That's ok too.

BW-Well, thank you again

P-Oh, you're welcome, and hopefully it was helpful.

BW-Oh yes, oh yes, and if there's anything else you think of, give me a call

P-Yeah, or if you want to email me, call me

BW-Right

P-Well, email me and actually I'll be working 3-9 next week, working 'til ten but you can call my house after nine, so no problem. We are up, up, up.

BW-Alright, well thank you.

Appendix N

Sample Open Coding: Gretchen Interview

BROAD CATEGORY	CATEGORY	IN VIVO CODES	PROPERTIES/DIMENSIONS
PARENTS' OBSERVATIONS/ INTERACTIONS WITH CHILD'S SCHOOL	Change	<p>“Also had Spanish, we did it once a week for two years, and to me it was great. I don’t like the way they did that here in [XXXXX] County where they had a 6 week thing, I’m like no, they should just teach them in 8th grade and let them get started, if they let them have it every day they’d be fine with it and even if they didn’t have a credit, a half a credit, just get ‘em started with it somehow. I didn’t, I wasn’t thrilled with the 6 weeks of let’s try it out, I’s like it’s not gonna, it’s not doing anything for them I think it could’ve been just done better is all” p.5</p> <p>“We were the ones who did the bulletin boards and the decorating and everything, it’s just here you do it you do it and we had for a group of 40 kids we had 6 unbelievable artists, so we had these wonderful things all around our school that showed the kids did it you know, whatever we had around or we brought in it was made that way so that was really, really fun and I don’t see as much of that and I’d like to see more you know, that’s when it’s fun.” p.6-7</p> <p>“the flexibility was there, wasn’t as rigid with times, you know, you had that, you got that information, ok, let’s do this now, need more time for that? Ok, we’ll work on this, so that was fun too and the kids don’t get that these days.” p.7</p>	Language

	Communication	<p>“the teachers are wonderful, they’re communicative” p.2</p> <p>“if there’s ever a problem or you have something, everybody is... the faculty and staff and administration all communicate greatly” p.2</p> <p>“We have newsletters, uh, even the PTO you know has newsletters, they help you know, get information out, sometimes things happen last minute, um, there’s always enough information out there on the web, on their website, it’s given to you it, it, it’s very hard not to get the information and if you’re looking for it, it’s very easy to get.” p.3</p> <p>“they send things home with their report cards and progress reports that are the utmost importance and you know, we’ll get it” p.3</p> <p>“they just communicate what needs to be communicated in a, in a good fashion.” p.3</p> <p>“it’s handled in the right way and if you don’t feel it is you can talk about it and they don’t, they don’t push you away, they don’t, uh, you know, push you off their list and if there’s a problem then they’ll listen” p.3-4</p> <p>“they communicate very well by the rules of [XXXXXX] County or [XXXXXX], um, but always with of ‘em with a positive smile, you know, I... the communication is there” p. 25</p> <p>“most times if they were having a problem we knew about it before</p>	
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		they got their report cards.” p.27	
	Context	<p>“Ok, you walk in you get the most wonderful atmosphere in the office, uh, everybody’s very welcoming, everybody’s smiling. Usually the halls are quiet or you might see a few people going in. Um, they’re always doing work, um, I do know that I’ve been in there when there’s work going on, um, it is middle school so they you know, it might get noisy when they switch but generally the stuff is, th... there’s... always a positive attitude in the air.” p.1</p> <p>“always a good atmosphere and always positive teachers” p.1</p> <p>(what would someone want to know)</p> <p>“It’s always a welcoming place. You’ll like it.” p.2</p> <p>“I gotta give [XXXXXX] County school system an A plus plus plus all the way and I’ve been in and out of all the schools, middle schools and stuff, um, like I said, it’s a good healthy atmosphere for kids positive teachers, it, uh, even if something’s going wrong, they say it in a positive way um, they... there’s good learning going on.” p.3</p> <p>“There’s no nonsense. The nonsense is you know, there’s always kids gonna try stuff, especially at that age they have to show off a little bit, but it’s handled, it’s handled in the right way” p.3</p>	<p>Welcoming</p> <p>Positive</p>
	Involvement	“But, um, I try to keep it positive for them, support them as much you know, listen to them when they’re	

		<p>having a problem and, again I try to be involved in school as much as I possible... I will always send things in, I've always at least worked whatever, whatever grade they were, I worked something at their school to be involved, to know the teachers and know the parents, to know the kids, uh, I never took a big, big uh, PTO role or anything, but I always send stuff in and I let the teachers know that whatever you need let me know, um, and that's about the best I can... if you guys need something let me know, whatever it is. Made sure um, they, they have our emails and phone so they can, they can get a hold of you in an instant, but I just uh, I always did, in fact on school night Tuesday, if you need me for something, if you want something, and then a lot of times the most of the teachers got know me they're like you can ask for me, you can ask me, but I always try to do something in school to help out the PTO or pick a day or date say, at least once or twice, let me go in and help</p> <p>'cause that used to be harder when they were uh, all smaller cause I would have to find a babysitter, but I, I always found a way to do something. I'll send it in, you need this, I'll send it in you know, at least I did that, and then anything I could do at home I counted box tops for a while in high school I would um, I helped out the band, but I could do it from home. I was in charge of contacting everybody. I'm like, "Ooh, I can do that I'm home... you know, so I always found a way to be involved" p.23</p>	
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		<p>“I do try and attend events you know, if they had something going on and we were both there pretty much and like I said try to help out by sending in stuff, um, and I you know, we need help with back to school night, I uh, last year I was finally able to do it so now I know I can throw myself in there and help when it’s really important to, to show your face because the other kids get to know you too (laughter) and the other parents.” p.26</p>	
	Needs	<p>“And they take care of everybody’s needs as best as they can” p.2</p> <p>“I’m like don’t worry they’ve been doing this for the years, they’ve got it down pat; they don’t have to worry about anything - they will help them. Don’t worry about it.” p.2</p>	Met
PARENT’S EXPERIENCES IN MIDDLE SCHOOL/EARLY HIGH SCHOOL	Academics	<p>“We did everything - math, science, social studies. We had a wonderful awesome science lab um, and teachers that could use it um, very flexible, we had a principal who taught us music so every Friday you had music. We had to have religion too” p.4</p> <p>“we did it in class and I laugh... as I was going for my master’s the uh, sense of one’s own learning, my science teacher for 7th and 8th grade, was the epitome of that.” p.5</p> <p>(speaking of going from Catholic to public school)</p> <p>“I would say one thing the Catholic schools worked on better was grammar. Um, and writing, you could see the difference even with the very smart people we knew things that were required by just in, just like we weren’t allowed to do</p>	<p>“sense of one’s own learning”</p> <p>Language</p>

		And we'd have to turn it in and we'd be graded on it and whatever, but in that process of finding out the answer from each other you know, teachers make it specific now, ok, you can work on this in a group, she just let it happen you know and it was instinctive" p.14	
	Communication	<p>"everyone was different and they were smart enough to know that, but they stopped you if you were not getting it the right way or doing the right thing you know and questioned you but, they never rode me to do my work or they didn't have to and if there was a problem they'd help and if you had a problem they'd answer" p.17</p> <p>"Um, you just kinda did what both your parents told you to do. They listened but they also did more of the talking too and uh, there really wasn't a choice... you did, you know you followed through...if there was a problem though, they would listen and you gotta believe that again, um, but you also need to communicate that" p.18</p> <p>"and if they got a call from school you know, you were, there weren't, they weren't going back up to, say, "My baby" this, "My baby" that. It was, "You better act right" and that was it, you know, there was no nonsense and we all had our times of something stupid, you know, whether it's friends acting up or talking or being silly, or I think we all, you know, had a phone call home at one time or another" p.21</p>	<p>Individual needs</p> <p>Questioning</p> <p>Authority</p> <p>Listening</p> <p>Supporting school expectations</p> <p>With school</p>
	Community	"-uh, did Girl Scouts, um, and when I was younger the sports wasn't there as much, we had more of a	Scouts

		<p>recreation center that was just unbelievable. It had uh, a very large pool like the aquatic center uh, it had baseball fields, it had two like a younger kids park, a big kids park, it started out having two tennis courts, it had 3 and, and basketball courts and then volleyball courts and everybody was very active in the town, that, it still hops all day long, in the morning when we were younger they had just fun kickball things, they had free bingo, they pay a lot of taxes. I said to my Mom, “You paid a lot of taxes,” but we went there for free every day and if you saw the area I mean, the area’s smaller than [XXXXX] Park, but they, everybody hung out there, even when you were older there were volleyball leagues for adults and so just different things to be busy and I happen to like sports so, you know, I met people through that and then our swimming pool, I, I loved swimming, I wouldn’t come out of the water ever, so we had a swim team there, just a local team that went against two or three other teams and I met a lot of friends from it cause we all hung out at the pool every day. Again those people didn’t live in my neighborhood so they didn’t do all those things we did.” p.12</p> <p>“I... I just, me personally a very good positive experiences from my parents, um, even if there was something wrong, it was kinda like you, you were still kept on schedule and you still had to do what you had to do and you kind of just picked up and did it and we had a very good community surrounding</p>	<p>Activities</p> <p>Social</p>
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		us, so no matter what there was always a lot of, everybody was always checking in you know. If you got in trouble for something, you got the eye. If you didn't get it from your parents you got the eyeball from somebody else you knew and we knew these people for years" p.23	Monitoring
	Context	<p>"I went to a uh, Catholic school which, everybody pretty much either went to public or Catholic school up, we were, and mine was one of the smallest, so there was only one of each grade. However, um, we had a lot there in this little middle class neighborhood school" p.4</p> <p>"We had recess, they didn't and I loved re, and you know what, recess I think is something I was saying to my husband, I said, that's something I think they need more of. They need a half hour to hang out, talk, chat and just throw a football around and be kids. I said, "I think they need that." I think we all needed that. I think it's good for the teachers and it's just not possible to do with schools that size" p.4</p> <p>"One thing we did too was take care of our school. We were the ones who did the bulletin boards and the decorating and everything" p.6</p> <p>"I always have a good, I liked going to school, I never had a problem, not positive, I guess it was something we had to do every day, I think there was, just the general atmosphere would keep it positive. There wasn't much to bring you</p>	<p>(Most not on axial coding)</p> <p>Benefits of small school context</p> <p>Responsibility</p> <p>Positive</p>

		<p>down and I guess I was a good student, I didn't worry about stuff, I don't, I personally didn't really have any problems and I didn't mind having a challenge in school and, we kinda would work together on things" p.9</p> <p>"The whole positive atmosphere, our school was positive you know, you came in, you did your work, you did what you were supposed to do and you weren't in trouble and tha... that's really for any school. I never had a problem of not wanting to go to school so, the general atmosphere was always positive. We had good people, we had good teachers, we had good parents around us and you know, some days were more boring than others, some days were more fun than others, that's, that's life so I don't remember having a bad experience" p.9</p>	<p>Positive</p> <p>Positive</p>
	<p>Expectations</p>	<p>"My goodness did we write! We wrote a lot and we wrote a lot through all of our subjects you know, and you had to write it. I'm sure you, to, remember too, I'm sure you remember too how much paper you killed, how many trees you killed with all the paper and being perfect. Uh, they didn't accept it. There was no typing, there were no computers. You weren't allowed to erase. You had to present the best paper possible, that you could to them" p.4</p> <p>"Oh, you went to school, you didn't give 'em a hard time and you, it was, "Why don't you have A's?" p.16</p> <p>"in each, we were expected to do</p>	<p>Of teachers</p> <p>Grades</p>

		<p>different. However, he got to work, 11-7 or 7-3” p.20</p> <p>“Somebody was always there. There was a . . . , had your meals at home. We had dinner on the table whether you had an activity or not, they were just always there for you and you, just being home um, were there if you needed a question, or just providing everyday things. It wasn’t, it wasn’t a big deal” p.21</p> <p>“Their presence - yeah, you know, they weren’t, it was just a very simple life. They got you what you needed. You went to school you acted right and they didn’t want to hear about it. And if you were wrong they went up, and you know, they, my father with my brother in high school . . . I gotta go up, and my husband will say the same thing. He got in trouble in middle school really and our dads put on a suit and tie to go see the principal because that’s just the way it was. You know? And it wasn’t something like they, these two men put on suits and ties all the time. They were in that much trouble.” (Laughter) p.21</p> <p>“They were there when the, in good times and bad, and they tended your functions and provided what you need. They never said no to the, they never said no to the school, I have to say.” p.22</p> <p>“Again, looking back and you know I have to say we had the best people around us supporting us in school besides the teachers and that’s important that somehow, uh, people made a difference.” p.22</p>	<p>“Somebody was always there.”</p> <p>Providing</p> <p>Reinforcement</p> <p>Support</p> <p>Providing</p> <p>“People made a difference”</p>
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	Providing	<p>“Now, did they work with us? No. Did they, they provided everything we needed. If the teacher asked for something we got it and you know, sometime... “Mom I need paint, I need this.” “I need another dollar” was a lot to ask for. “Gotta wait ‘til payday.” Ok, um, they just provided you with everything they possibly could” p.20</p>	
	Self-reliance	<p>“Here’s your work. Do it. She just left us alone, and we sat there figured it out and we did it her way and we took a test and I don’t ever remember her being in front teaching. It’s just amazing but she was a brilliant woman and she was a nun and at some point she had to be a nurse or a doctor or something and we don’t, you know none of us knew and she was older, but she had, we had a science lab. We had all the materials. She showed us how to use it and that was it. We went and did it and we weren’t rocket scientists.” p.6</p> <p>“You know and we were able to grasp it and she didn’t say you do it like this. She didn’t give us step by step (unintelligible) do the lab-hand it in so you know, we learned a lot that way and it, it was a true sense of that and I just laugh when I started you know reading things on that, I’s like, they need more of that you know.” p.6</p>	<p>Being taught Self-directed learning</p>
	Social life	<p>“Walking into high school, I’d already known everybody cause of my brothers had already been there and I’d been to all the football games and done all the things so I couldn’t wait to get there. I had no problem. I knew, I knew a mostly upper classmen as opposed to my age cause I was in a small school</p>	<p>Anticipation</p>

		<p>and everybody went to the other schools but it was real easy getting to know everybody, but I couldn't wait, I was ready to go, you know, ready to fly, have a little more fun" p.9</p> <p>"There's always a couple in every grade or class that seemed to start some insurrection or some friend stuff or leave people out. I wasn't like that. I was more friends with everybody" p.9</p> <p>"it's a big league thing up on Long Island and even in, in the city, and my friends said come play basketball for our school so I ended up being friends with kids from the other Catholic school but with that the kids would, you know, anybody could try out so you had friends from all the different schools and I also swam, so in the summer I get to get together with my swimming buddies you know, and we all went to different schools, but those kids did not do the same things I did at the same at St. Catholics, so I ended just knowing a lot of people you know, just cause I was out and about, always doing something, always at the park and the pool within my town too, so, you know and they didn't participate cause a lot of them didn't live around there so you had to know a lot of people" p.12</p> <p>"Um, high school again I was really lucky 'cause I just moved in, I did everything. I was president of the class, I did every sport you can imagine, I knew everybody so it wasn't a problem" pp.22-23</p>	<p>Friends</p>
INFLUENCE	Communication	"They all hit that wall somewhere.	Open, honest

		<p>Some sooner than others, but we just you know, we said you know, don't, don't hide it if you have a problem and that was really good and something we learned from our parents and took us but we started it earlier and for other reasons too so my kids were pretty good about saying I failed something or I'm not doing good in this or I'm going to get a bad grade and they'd prepare us for it. They wouldn't try and hide it" p.8</p> <p>"I think I was on them a little bit more 'cause my mother wasn't on me as much. I guess 'cause we did so well, but I like... I'm, I definitely check them more or I'll ask more and you know, "Do you have everything?" and eh, eh" p.23</p> <p>"I think we still, all in all I think my husband or even I, we take the same things our parents did" p.23</p>	<p>Discontinuity</p> <p>Continuity</p>
	<p>Continuity</p>	<p>(on why doing things like parents did)</p> <p>"I don't know, I think that was just innate. I think it was, you know, you heard it before. That stuff, I think that stuff just comes out of your mouth and you begin, you begin to sound like your parents. They're, they're good stuff, you still sound like your parents and I think it's just that we want the best for kids and we know that school is important and you can't mess around with it. And we know that if you do well now it carries through high school and then through college and... what they start out young sticks with you. How you study and what you want to do, um, and if you make you know, they eventually get it and</p>	<p>"We want the best for kids"</p> <p>Priority</p>

		you're right, they may not listen the whole time and it may not happen 'til they're twenty something or thirty something and they'll say oh they were right and you can't let them slide." p. 27	
	Expectations	<p>"Um, another thing we learned, I learned from his Mom and we carried through was because we went to Catholic school we said, she's, you had to have an A in religion. That's life. Everything else we can work on. You know, that and conduct so we've always said uh huh... conduct has to be perfect" p.8</p> <p>“, I think I got a B in science and I's like, “Whoa, whoa, whoa, what are you, are you doing any work? You're not studying, you're not doing this” and it's funny, you find that with your own kids and, and, and, and again, it depends on which one, “Why do you have a, why do you have a “B”, why do you have a 91, what didn't ya...?” It sounds bad, but you're asking that to say maybe give them a little bit more of an umph! because I know they didn't work on it. Now my daughter came home with a 91, we know she did everything she could to get that 91, and don't bother her, you know, you could see her working on it, and the others there, they get a 91, it's like, “Uh, you couldn't get a 95? Maybe if you'd study for a little bit you know” p.16</p> <p>“You know, that stuff, but, they were very, very good but I think their attitudes definitely were on my, you know, we could, I could see my husband and I saying, ‘Yeah yeah you have to do this, yeah you</p>	<p>Continuity</p> <p>Grades</p> <p>Continuity</p>

		<p>have to do that, why did you get the B?” ‘What’s wrong’ or ‘Why did you,” you know, ‘What happened? ‘I got this on the test, I didn’t get it.’</p> <p>‘Alright, what are you going to do about it?’</p> <p>‘I have to do better.’</p> <p>‘Yes. I got to do better than better so I can bring my grade up!” so you’d make them see it and um, we just try to just give them the pieces and I guess as best we could and just like our parents, they’re atti... our parents attitude definitely influenced what my husband and I do.</p> <p>Absolutely, cause that, I hear him repeat his Mom and Dad all the time” p.17</p> <p>“that was one thing everybody, that was up there, for everybody you’re going to college and we put that on our kids and now though we’ve had to with one of them say you don’t have to go to college, but we gotta do something, we gotta find you something and if you want to go to college later that’s fine cause maturity level and how we’re acting, but we put it out there and “College is up to you” and the hope scholarship with our kids, um, once the, I think we put that out there to them and like, “Guys, you’ve gotta do this!” p.18</p> <p>“I was mad because he was taking 7th grade math last year as an advanced and he was doing bad. He was getting a C” p.19</p> <p>“I want him to have that math because they have to have, three, two or three credits of AP courses if</p>	<p>Understanding differences</p> <p>Continuity</p> <p>Influence</p> <p>College</p> <p>High expectations</p>
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	Interactions with child about learning	<p>“Kids’ll come home and say they didn’t teach it, I’m like, “Let me look at it.” I say, “Read it, you’ll discuss it. That’s learning, so, you know you can’t have everything handed to you.” p.6</p> <p>“I was lucky... my first 3 we, no problem, 4th one we had to work on but we helped and we showed ‘em and we worked with ‘em and we said, “You’ve got the answers - give it back.”</p>	Teaching self-reliance
	Involvement	<p>“My father didn’t always go to everything cause of his time and hours or was home checking the others and that’s funny because my hus... people say, “Well where’s your husband?” “Where’s your wife?” I’m like, “Wait, he’s going to that one;” “He kept the little one home.” We just swapped out with 5 because I couldn’t afford a babysitter for everything and it just worked better that way and he was also hurt, so, um, we just somebody was always there” p.21</p>	Continuity
	Providing	<p>“Everything else we’ll work on. We’ll get you the help. If you don’t understand something and, and it’s very hard you know, especially, even if they’re very smart and they get that first bad grade they want to hide it, you have to tea... we had to get them to the point where I don’t know something, ask for help and it’s ok to ask for help. If I don’t know it, we’re going to find someone that can help you” p.8</p> <p>“They learned not to so that was pretty good too, or ask for help or ‘I don’t understand,’ you know for extra help, ‘I’ll bring you in early.’ We offered them whatever... you</p>	Academics

Appendix O

Sample Open Coding: Gretchen Survey

BROAD CATEGORY	CATEGORY	RESPONSES/ IN VIVO CODES	PROPERTIES/ DIMENSIONS
PARTICIPATION	School	Open House; parent nights; sports; conferences	
	Home	Homework help; special homework/study area; check grades online	
	Other		
	Communication	Once a month; initiated by parent	
	Barriers to involvement	Not many; son completes work and is involved in school activities	
	Benefits of involvement	“Understanding requirements and goals, meeting teachers and staff is important to understanding their job and how we can help and what our responsibility as parents are. It is also great value to meet other parents and students so that you know who your child is with.”	Clarity Awareness
	Relationship with Teacher	Friendly; helpful; positive	
OWN MIDDLE SCHOOL EXPERIENCE		Mostly positive	
INFLUENCE		“I went to a small private school in NY. Education was valued by both parents and educators and community. My parents were always there and participated whenever necessary whether is was attending functions or volunteering. My parents always provided me with	Involvement Providing

		whatever tools the teacher requested and if help was needed provided that.”	
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Appendix P

Sample Open Coding: Gretchen Booklet

BROAD CATEGORY	CATEGORY	PROPERTIES/IN VIVO CODES	DIMENSIONS
PARENT EXPERIENCES IN SCHOOL	Context	St. [XXXXXX] Mass “Small classes with friends” “Small class of 40...in 8 th grade”	
	Family	5 children – 3 brothers, one sister, mom and dad “mom always had dinner ready every night”	
	Social life	“Most of my friends in school come from different areas did not live by me.” “Friends from other schools” Community activities	
	Teachers	“Lots of projects-learned and discussed so much in social studies” “Sister [XXXXXX] for science – left notes and the epitome of coming to the sense of your own learning. She put up the notes, put out the labs followed the format but we did the work and figuring out.”	“sense of your own learning”
INFLUENCES ON ATTITUDES/ INTERACTION WITH CHILD’S EDUCATION			

Appendix Q

Sample Axial Coding: Absence

CODE	PROPERTIES	IN VIVO CODES	DIMENSIONS
Social life	Amount	<p>“My father did not like us to have friends over & didn’t allow me to go over to friends’ houses much.” P1-bk</p> <p>“Not many friends” P1-bk</p> <p>“It was a small town and um, you know I had friends but around me not a lot of children my age so I was limited there in just going out to play, you know, or hang out. Um, and because my parents weren’t home, I didn’t have anybody over, like in the afternoons or, you know, it, and even on the weekends it wasn’t frequent that you know” P10</p>	None - Constant
Academic help	Extent	<p>Parents not there to help her “understand and grasp objectives and concepts” P1-survey</p> <p>“Mom, she would look at things to try to help us and then be like I don’t know what this, I don’t know what they’re asking. I don’t know how to instruct you or teach you but they were, they were supportive,” P1 p.7</p> <p>“She just didn’t know how to help me with homework.” P1 p.9</p> <p>“My Dad worked 3rd shift all the time during my middle school and high school years, so he was sleeping during the day and he worked at night and so he wasn’t available at all to ask for help” P1 p.6</p> <p>“...sometimes I did need help and they couldn’t seem to help me with my subjects. I had to try & self-teach content or go back to my teachers for extra help.” P1 bk</p>	<p>None – Everything</p> <p>(One subject? Several? All?)</p>

		<p>“Well, with, like, homework, I couldn’t go to my parents and ask them to help me or sit down and try to, you know, if I didn’t get it all in class from my teacher, I didn’t feel like I could go to my parents because they didn’t really understand, you know, what they were really teaching in the schools and, especially with math, that was not their strong suit,...” P1p.6</p> <p>“if we had any questions to, you know, either come to them and if they didn’t know they would tell us to just wait and go back to the teacher,” P1p.7</p> <p>if we needed extra help they would get it, if, if it wasn’t something that they could sit down and figure out and help us with.” P1 p.6</p> <p>“My parents cared but didn’t how to help. I was a good student and never got into trouble so I think they felt I didn’t need them.” P3 – survey</p> <p>“I’m smart person, but I never lived to the potential and education standpoint because I didn’t fulfill my potential I guess, because if somebody would checked on me or would’ve been little bit more on top of me, I probably did, done something else educational, not that I’m saying that I’m, not happy now, it’s just probably I would’ve gone in a different direction or would’ve gotten all my education right after school and not later on in life.” P11 p.3</p> <p>“I guess I was kinda pushed into it because everybody else’s parents were on them, but my Mom wasn’t staying on me.” P12 p.9</p> <p>“Whenever she was at home, you know, she didn’t never ask if I had anything to</p>	
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		<p>do or, and then even when I was younger she never understood. “Oh, I don’t know how to do that”, you know, and never tried to you know, never got me help or whatever” P12 p.8</p> <p>“I had ADHD and was never medicined. I had to just focuse. I made a and Bs” P12 survey</p>	
		<p>“Well, with, like, homework, I couldn’t go to my parents and ask them to help me or sit down and try to, you know, if I didn’t get it all in class from my teacher, I didn’t feel like I could go to my parents because they didn’t really understand, you know, what they were really teaching in the schools and, especially with math, that was not their strong suit,...” P1 p.6</p> <p>“But otherwise, I just, I felt like I was doing all of that by myself, you know, the whole school, schoolwork, homework, just everything by myself.” P1 p.5</p>	
Parents	<p>When</p> <p>Reason for absence</p>	<p>“My parents weren’t around much for my activities or friends.” P2 – bk</p> <p>“There was really no involvement there.” P2 p.6</p> <p>“Well, I, I think with me, I kind of wish I had the option of if my parents were there or could have been, not that I would have probably really involved them. But the choice would have been nice.” P2 p.11</p> <p>“my Dad, um, drank a lot and when I was with him he, there was no consistency, he was never there,” P3 p.14</p> <p>““My mother worked in the hospital for 35 years. She worked hard and long days. She was never at our school events</p>	<p>Sometimes – ever</p> <p>Choice - necessity</p>

		<p>partents day (sic), or graduation” P7 bk</p> <p>“my Mom worked from 1:00 in the evening ‘til sometime overnight in the hospital” P7 p.4</p> <p>“My father didn’t play a role ‘cause my mother, my grandmother told my father ... and he would come back and forth, back and forth, but it wasn’t consistent”; (speaking of grandmother) “She said, ‘I’d rather you stay away, because when you’re not here she’s asking, ‘Where’s my Daddy... where’s my Daddy?, so I’d rather you just go away if you’re not going to be consistent.’ So, and that’s what he did. He went away” P7 pp.10-11</p> <p>“you know, my mother’s not in no pictures” P7 p.32</p> <p>“Always working” P7 p.34</p> <p>“my mother and my father didn’t play those roles in my life,” P7 p.41</p> <p>(speaking of father) “we didn’t have no real relationship” P7 p.11</p> <p>“both of my parents worked during the week I stayed over with my grandmother” p.3</p> <p>“my mom was never home so I had guides councils, teachers, and some friends’ parents” P12 survey</p> <p>“being involded (sic) in school was best for me or I’d went home alone all the time.” P12 survey</p> <p>“my mom had to be at work before school started” P12 bk-p.2</p> <p>“My mom never came home” P12 bk-p.3</p>	
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		<p>“My mom never came to my game. My dad lived in [XXXXXX]” P12 bk-p.6</p> <p>(participant and daughter speaking with participant’s school friend) “she was like, ‘Where’s her Mom?’ and they were like you know, ‘What, I don’t know but we took her to school in the morning at 6:00 and her Mom wasn’t there and we’d drop her off at night and her Mom wasn’t. I don’t know,’ they say, ‘I don’t know, it just, her Mom was never home.’” P12 p. 4</p> <p>“If she would put me on restriction she wasn’t at home anyway so it really wouldn’t have mattered. I mean, she wasn’t home. She was never home.” P12 p.8</p> <p>“My parents were non-existent. I came and went, did whatever. Got myself up, got myself home, did basically whatever.” P2 bk</p>	
Activities	Amount	<p>“I wasn’t allowed to go to movies, I wasn’t allowed to go to school dances, and kids would, you know, they would tease and criticize about that. “ P1 p.4</p> <p>“Sports, I went to home activities sometimes. I never tryed (sic) out because of lack of transportation.” P2 bk</p> <p>“activities at the school, only thing I did was cheerleading, like I said because my Mom couldn’t get me there, I couldn’t go. If I couldn’t get myself there I wasn’t able to go. Um, I didn’t, I went to the football games that I cheered at. If I wasn’t cheering I couldn’t go, I didn’t go to a baseball game, didn’t go to a basketball game cause I didn’t cheer for basketball.” P12 p.6</p>	<p>All – none (Some types available/ allowed?)</p>

<p>(Illustrates need)</p>		<p>“basically the only thing that I could do is whatever a friend could get me to and from” P12 p.4</p> <p>“My Dad was um, ex-military. He’s very strict, um, my Mom overcompensated I think for him sometimes, so, um, as far as me being allowed to do things it was, not often that, you know, I just could ask to do something and be able to do it.” P10 p.6</p> <p>“I don’t remember them ever charging for the activities either - so that’s a good thing too. If you go right after school, you didn’t have to worry about having money, and you went after school if you weren’t doing anything. So that was a positive thing too I think, for a lot of the kids to go.” P2 p.6</p>	
<p>Stability</p>		<p>“Moving” P4 bk</p> <p>“parents divorced” P4 bk</p> <p>“my parents um actually divorced when I was in middle school.... and I went there um but I lived with my Dad” P4 p.14</p> <p>“we didn’t go to school half the time, um, didn’t do our homework, didn’t learn a lot of the basic foundation things that we should have, um, so when we moved forward or moved, we were starting all over and didn’t have the knowledge we should have” P4 p.14-15</p> <p>“and there was a lot of just unstable, not normal,” P4 p.15</p> <p>“when we moved forward or moved, we were starting all over and didn’t have the knowledge we should have” P4 p.15</p> <p>“It was and while we moved a lot here and then we moved to Alabama with my Dad and then we moved back here with my grandparents and then we moved</p>	

		<p>back to Alabama to Phoenix City” P4 p.15</p> <p>“my dad took us from here in middle school, don’t remember the grade, to Phoenix City, Alabama, and I ended up living with him and my uncle and my aunt who were all crazy, drinking people... my crazy people, they are crazy, um, just yelling all the time and not happy and they don’t do things together and I just didn’t enjoy it” P4 p.17</p> <p>“It was terrible, and then um, my grandparents lived over on [XXXXX] Road, cause you know, 50, well, 100 years ago, 50 year, a long time ago it was an all-white, upper class middle upper class neighborhood and now it’s, the ghetto. I don’t know how else to say it. It’s terrible. The houses get broke into, my grandmother had to move and they sent me to [XXXXX].” P4 pp.12-13</p> <p>(speaking of XXXXX)</p> <p>“I’m pretty sure I was the only white person in the school, female, and it was just - uh, terrible, so I, I, I wouldn’t go. I’d go to school, sit down, um and walk right back home. As soon as they checked me off in home room I’d go back home which is why I did so poorly um, and then they moved um, my parents uh, my dad was Air Force, um, we moved out to uh, South, not South [XXXXX] but, I don’t know... the other gate, if you go down [XXXXX], you know the gate, other... - I don’t know, [XXXXX], out that way, um, and so I ended up going to [XXXXX] (laughter) which was a little bit better but I was still the minority at the school which was again, very, I was used to integration because of the military background, but I wasn’t used to being the minority which</p>	
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		<p>was not pleasant, um, um, I had passed the little ugly duckling phase so I was you know, cute and the girls hated me, the guys liked me, um, so they gave me a really hard time, so eventually I was home-schooled. Um, a tutor would come, [XXXXX] County, or [XXXXX] County sent a tutor home, tutor um for several months and caught me up cause I had missed so much, um, so I could graduate with my class and I graduated from [XXXXX] in 1989, with not very good grades, but I graduated” P4 p.13</p> <p>“My Dad’s side was just you know not educated, alcoholics, crazy people.” P4 p.23</p> <p>(referring to mother coming after she was living with church family) “She came and got me ‘cause I hadn’t, my Dad lived around the corner a few miles and would drive by, it was just very weird... he’s weird though you know, I feel sorry for him. I love him, but just nuts you know... can’t change someone that doesn’t want to change. ” P4 p.17</p> <p>“Well, moving 3 times in 3 years was a pain in the butt ‘cause I knew, when I was in 6th grade I knew all the kids. We’d gone through school all together and then to have to go to a new school and then the following year go to another new school was like, “Geez you know, can we settle down here so I can make some friends?” So that was difficult”; “I had to make new friends twice in two years- I think that was difficult.” P6 p.8</p> <p>“My wife was one of those, they, her parents moved every 2 or 3 years with the military and she’s like, ‘I never had any friends in school, ‘cause I knew we were going to leave”” P6 p.8</p>	
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		<p>“For a while um, you know, all I could remember was their arguing and, um, it wasn’t awful. It wasn’t, you know, um, abusive or anything like that, but it was somewhat of a constant” P10 p.6</p> <p>“Challenging” “...my parents fought a lot” P10 bk</p>	
Material goods		<p>“Yeah ‘cause that was the big thing you know. Members Only jackets, the big wide shoelaces ‘cause Run DMC was out and they had ‘em. Uh, well, I never didn’t really have a lot of that stuff though, I was, we didn’t have that money so... If I got anything close to it, it was one of the knock off ones.” P9 pp. 4-5</p> <p>“Uh different kinds of kids as far as rich and poor you had everything there. You know you still had your free lunches you know ya, your kids still needed things. I was one of those kids for a while. I didn’t... I wasn’t a big shopper. And then in middle school I went on a big spree and it was actually funny because I didn’t think anything about it I could care less. You know it was, I had clean clothes, could do whatever I wanted, no big deal, and then the one year that I did come back with all kinds of clothes, different things, boy it was noticed! Where’d you go, what did you do and it’s like I don’t know... I just went shopping. But it was a big thing and to me it was like yeah yeah, whatever... But it was funny because there was a difference.” P2 p.5</p> <p>“Um, cause we just didn’t have a lot of money then, that was a big thing for me you know” P4 p.16</p>	