INFLUENCES OF PARENTAL EXPECTATIONS
AND INVOLVEMENT ON ACADEMIC SUCCESS

A Thesis

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in

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(Language and Literacy)

by

Kate E. Holmes

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Graduate and Professional Studies in Education
Abstract

of

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Statement of Problem

The percentage of students who graduated on time from California high schools in the 2010-2011 school year rose 1.5% from the previous year. However, there is still a concerning percentage of students who are choosing to drop out of school (California Department of Education, 2012). It is groups of these students, as well as others, whose grades, attendance, and work completion are inconsistent. The desire to determine why students succeed or fail was the catalyst for this study. A review of the literature pertaining to this topic revealed a multitude of possible influences to school success. However, this study focused on only two of these possible influences: parental involvement and parental expectations. Part of the reason for the focus on these topics was for educators to understand how parental involvement and parental expectations are related to student success in a specific
setting, thereby bringing possible areas for improvement into the foreground that have the capacity to increase student achievement.

Sources of Data

Data for this study was collected by using student surveys and interviews. The surveys were created to measure factors related to parental involvement and parental expectations. Approximately sixty students participated in the survey process. After the surveys were completed, interview questions were generated to expand and explain the initial findings from the survey. A total of six students participated in the interviews and responses from five of those interviews were used. The data offered by both the surveys and interviews were then analyzed and interpreted, providing the study’s final conclusions and answers to its research questions.

Conclusions Reached

This study asked two primary questions:

1. For students in an independent study school in Northern California, what is the relationship between levels of parental involvement and academic outcomes?

2. For this same population of students, are the academic expectations parents have for their children related to academic outcomes?

For the first question, it was determined that a positive relationship exists between parental involvement and academic achievement. The answer to the second question
was that parental expectations do not influence students to perform at a level that meets their parents’ expectations.

_______________________, Committee Chair
Porfirio Loeza, Ph.D.

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Date
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Certain factors influence the academic outcomes of the young scholars in this country. These influences range from personal factors to community and cultural factors. It seems that none of these can stand alone to explain academic success. In this sense, academic success or failure is explained by the interactions of a multiplicity of sources. Often these sources contain elements beyond what is within the control of the school, including issues of affect, cognition, culture, language and individual differences. This study explores the complexity of learning in relation to parental involvement and parental expectations in an independent study setting. In order to provide context for the exploration of parental involvement and parental expectations, a broad survey of literature regarding the affordances and constraints that promote or hinder academic success is provided.

Radovan (2011) found that a sample population of distance learning students were able to complete and pass tests more quickly if they valued education, believed that they could be successful, set more intrinsic goals, and were able to concentrate and handle distractions. In a broader sense, the results of the study suggested that academic success in distance learning is related to goal setting, perceived task value, self-efficacy, and effort regulation (Radovan, 2011).

Taylor and Graham (2007) found several scenarios that may hinder academic success. The researchers concluded that older students may devalue education because
of the changes in schools’ rewards systems that usually happen in middle school. In addition, the self-efficacy of minority adolescent males can be compromised by tough punishments and racial stereotypes. Finally, African American students’ perceptions of barriers are related to educational value (Taylor & Graham, 2007).

Motivation has also been shown to play a part in academic success. Easley, Bianco, and Leech (2012) conducted a study concerning the motivations of immigrant or first generation students. All of the participants in this study were of Mexican heritage. The researchers found that academic motivation among the participants was fueled by, “(a) acknowledgement of parental struggle and sacrifice, (b) strong value of family and family’s history, (c) parental admiration and respect, (d) a desire to repay and pay forward, and (e) resilience and willingness to persevere” (Easley et al., 2012, p. 169).

Sungur (2007) also conducted research concerning motivation. She concluded that self-efficacious students are highly motivated and do not shy away from difficult tasks, but rather view them as challenges to be overcome, persevere rather than give up, and use metacognitive strategies more often than other students. Sungur also determined that certain characteristics in a student can predict other characteristics. Being self-efficacious can predict intrinsic motivation, which can also predict the belief that a student is in control of his learning. In essence, each of these characteristics is thought to be a predictor of the others (Sungur, 2007).

Further research done by Whitaker, Graham, Severtson, Furr-Holden, and Latimer (2012) found a correlation between family dysfunction and learning
motivation/learning strategies. Having a household environment of dysfunction has a negative influence on learning motivation. Also, a child who is living in both a dysfunctional household and a neighborhood that is in poor condition is more likely to lack learning motivation than a child who is only subjected to one of those conditions (Whitaker et al., 2012).

A great number of researchers have asserted that when parents are involved in their children’s educations the children will perform better academically (Gordon & Cui, 2012; Houtenville & Conway, 2008). One study found that giving generous sums of money to schools to spend had little effect on achievement. Thirteen out of the 15 schools saw this result. However, two schools did see academic gains; these schools appropriated their money to various areas of concern, such as health care services, curriculum, and parental involvement (Murnane & Levy, 1996).

Parental expectations play an important role in the academic success of a child as well (Coleman, 1988; Lubienski & Crane, 2010). The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (1990) found that 47% of Asian parents, compared with only 20% of white parents, expect their children to earn postgraduate degrees (as cited in Kao, 1995). It is hypothesized that the differences in academic expectations among these two ethnic groups may affect GPA attainment significantly and as Kao (1995) reported, Asian students earn GPAs that are, on average, half a point higher than their white counterparts (Kao, 1995).
Rationale

In California, 76.3% of the 2007 high school freshmen graduated on time in 2011, while 14.4% dropped out (California Department of Education, 2012). Why did 14.4% of these students drop out? The cited research suggests an array of influences to academic achievement, but this research will focus on parental involvement and parental expectations. Parental involvement has been studied heavily. Some research suggests that it plays a significant role in a student’s school success, while others disagree. The influence of parental expectations, however, has not been studied to such a great extent. It does, however, seem to be positively correlated with academic achievement. This study will seek to add to the body of research concerning parental involvement and expectations.

The study will be particularly useful and significant because this researcher works with groups of students who fail and have previously attended schools where they also failed or were even expelled due to poor behavioral choices. These students have never regularly earned A’s or B’s and inconsistently attend classes. On the other hand, this researcher has students who have similar socioeconomic backgrounds, neighborhoods, and struggles as those who are failing, yet are excelling. An important question to be explored is, “Why are students with similar backgrounds achieving at different rates?” This question not only needs to be answered for the researcher’s school site, but for other schools as well. With a problem in the educational setting that is so widespread, it is necessary for researchers and teachers alike to take action; a number of failing students do not seem to realize the future consequences of an
inadequate education. If more is understood about the influences of parental involvement and expectations, educators would be enabled to use that knowledge to foster academic achievement.

**Context of the Study**

The study took place at an independent study school in Northern California; it involved students in grades 7-12. To determine the effects of parental involvement and expectations on the students at this school, surveys were given that asked questions concerning these topics. All students who attended math classes on the days of the survey were asked to participate; no specific groupings of students were purposefully excluded. However, there were students at the school who were not enrolled in math classes, who chose not to attend their math classes, or who were in special education math, which does not have a designated class time. Thus, these students were not asked to participate. The students who were asked to participate were approached during their math classes. Math classes were chosen for survey administration because the unique design of the school site provided math classes as the most optimal opportunity for getting the greatest number of student participants.

When the surveys had been completed, interviews were conducted. Interview participants were chosen after the survey was given. Interviewees were chosen in collaboration with other teachers and the decision to include each participant was based on their abilities to get the consent form signed, their likelihood of attending the interview sessions, their academic achievement (in some cases), survey completion (in some cases), and certain demographic information (ethnicity and grade level).
Academic achievement was considered so that data could be obtained from both high- and low-performing students. Demographic information was considered so that the interview participants reflected the overall population of the school.

**Definitions of Terms**

For this research and study, these definitions will be utilized:

*Motivation*: The desire a student has to accomplish or complete something

*Parental Expectations*: What parents expect in relation to their child’s education (i.e. grades, degree attainment, etc.)

*Parental Involvement*: A parent’s activities in relation to their child’s education (i.e. helping with homework, attending school meetings, being proactive in monitoring their child)

*Socioeconomic Status (SES)*: “The position of an individual on a social-economic scale that measures such factors as education, income, type of occupation, place of residence, and, in some populations, heritage and religion” (Socioeconomic Status, n.d.).

*Value (of education)*: The degree to which a student cares about his/her education; a student’s willingness to choose school as a priority over other things.

**Primary Research Questions**

The purpose of this research was to determine the effects of parental involvement and expectations on a child’s school achievement. As such, the primary research questions for this study included:
1. For students in an independent study school in Northern California, what is the relationship between levels of parental involvement and academic outcomes?

2. For this same population of students, are the academic expectations parents have for their children related to academic outcomes?

These questions were determined by data collected through an initial review of the literature. At first, a broad overview of the affordances and constraints related to academic success was explored. The initial research produced various explanations for student success or failure. The volume of these explanations was far beyond the scope of this paper, which gave rise to deliberation over which would be the primary topics. After much consideration of the research site and the multitude of explanations for student success, parental involvement and parental expectations arose as topics most desirous for investigation and consequently led to the proposed research questions for this study.

**Limitations, Delimitations, and Assumptions**

**Limitations**

The study was conducted at an independent study school in Northern California. Students at that school are only required to attend on certain days of the week. Attendance by individual students is not always consistent. Thus, the students who came on the days the surveys and interviews were conducted could not be controlled. Additionally, surveys were given during math classes. Most students who attend the school also attend a math class, but some students do not. Information from
this group of students was not collected. Secondly, the students who chose to participate in the survey/interview process could not be controlled because the survey and interviews were voluntary. Finally, it could not be controlled whether or not the parents of possible interviewees allowed their children to participate.

**Delimitations**

Because the study was performed at an independent study school in Northern California, the findings may not be generalizable to a larger population, especially given the unique nature of the school. In addition, the surveys were given during math classes to obtain the largest pool of participants and the interviewees were chosen based on their abilities to get the consent form signed by their parents, their likelihood of attending the interview sessions, their academic achievement (in some cases), grade levels, ethnicities, and survey completion (in some cases).

**Assumptions**

There are two assumptions that were made that cannot be proven. First, it is assumed that the students who completed a survey answered the questions truthfully and thoughtfully. The second assumption involves a teacher at the school. In order to more effectively survey the student population, the researcher employed the help of the site’s math teacher. The assumption concerning this teacher was that he carefully abided by the procedures set forth for administering the survey.

**Organization of the Thesis**

Chapter 1 provided an overview of the entire study. It included background information on the issues of parental involvement and expectations, provided
important definitions, and gave brief summaries of the study’s methodology, rationale, limitations, delimitations, and theoretical framework. Chapter 2 provides more in-depth theoretical information that supports the rationale for this study. Chapter 3 more thoroughly expresses the methodology used in this study and includes information about the surveys, interviews, and procedures that were utilized. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the surveys and interviews, including various statistical data. Finally, chapter 5 discusses the results of the study and offers conclusions.
Chapter 2

RATIONALE

Introduction

The focus and purpose of this study and research was to examine factors related to academic success. Specific factors that were considered were parental involvement and parental expectations. This chapter gives an explicit rationale for the topics of study and examines the academic research related to both parental expectations and parental involvement. The review of the literature presented in this chapter follows different strands, from basic information to that which is highly detailed. Subject matter related to parental involvement or expectations contained in the pages that follow includes definitions, types of involvement, parental roles in school, effectiveness of parental involvement, influences of significant people, and conflicting research, among others. These detailed topics encompass past and present research, and ultimately provide a framework for the current study.

Rationale

In California, 76.3% of the 2007 high school freshmen graduated on time in 2011, while 14.4% dropped out (California Department of Education, 2012). The students who made up California’s classes of 2011 had obvious differences, but many students had factors in common with each other, such as the neighborhoods they lived in, races, religions, and socioeconomic statuses. There is a vast library of research that attributes a multiplicity of factors to a student’s school successes or shortcomings. Statistically, graduation rates differ based on minority status, English proficiency, and
socioeconomic status (California Department of Education, 2012). Other factors, such as parental education level and gender, are also related to academic success (Allington & Cunningham, 2007). With such a wide array of factors attributed to school outcomes, what are the primary influences to academic attainment or collapse? This is a question that educators and school personnel have sought to answer. In the answer to this question lies power. Schools can begin to mediate the effects of the negative influences to academic achievement once they are discovered. While much research has already been done on this topic in general, it is the focus of this research to determine the degree of influence of two specific elements related to academic success: parental involvement and parental expectations. Exploring parental involvement and expectations is a worthwhile endeavor that will add to a growing body of literature on specific influences to school success. Both topics will be addressed, but parental involvement will be attended to first. In order to begin exploring and explicating parental involvement, it is necessary to first provide a definition of the term.

Parental Involvement

Types of Parental Involvement

Researchers in the field have diverse usages of the term parental involvement. The types of involvement that parents take part in are dependent on factors such as SES, cultural practices, and personal differences. This section explores how two different researchers approach the definition and usage of the term parental involvement.
Grodnick and Slowiaczek (1994) provided a definition of parental involvement that encompasses three categories: behavior, personal, and cognitive/intellectual, and they postulated that parents can be involved in their children’s educations in these three ways. Baker & Stevenson (1986) described behavior involvement as including the behaviors the parents exhibit, such as going to parent-teacher conferences, school assemblies, etc. (as cited in Grodnick & Slowiaczek, 1994). Personal involvement is related to attitude; it is the child’s perception of how the parent feels about school and school related activities, as well as the child’s perception of the parent’s availability (Grodnick & Slowiaczek, 1994). Lareau (1987) provided a definition for cognitive/intellectual involvement, declaring that it includes the act of parents exposing their children to intellectual items and activities, such as books or current events (as cited in Grodnick & Slowiaczek, 1994).

Epstein (1995) defined six types of parental school involvement, which included the areas of parenting, volunteering, communication, decision making, learning at home, and community collaboration. While parenting is self-explanatory, the other five categories require elaboration. As identified by Epstein (1995), volunteering can take place anywhere at any time, as long as the volunteer supports the goals of the school and the child’s education. Communication involves the community as well as teachers, school personnel, parents, family members, and students. Decision making encompasses both the school and parents working together to make decisions with common goals in mind. Learning at home consists of both homework and other learning tasks and could include a parent helping a child through
means such as guiding, monitoring, and encouraging. It could also include community activities or activities done at home that connect school with real life. Collaborating with the community can involve any neighborhood that influences the child’s education, not just the neighborhoods in the immediate vicinity of the school. This collaboration also incorporates finding available resources that can “strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development” (Epstein, 1995, p. 704).

**Parental Involvement Defined**

Parental involvement can be thought of in a variety of ways. Researchers have used this term to encompass a myriad of different aspects. Some studies do not even provide a definition for the term, possibly because of an assumption that the term has a universal definition or that it is commonly known or understood amongst the academic community. For the purpose of this study, a definition for parental involvement will be crafted from common definitions contained in past research.

Aspects of parental involvement that span multiple sources of past research include helping with or monitoring homework (Garn, Matthews, & Jolly, 2012; Gniewosz & Noack, 2012), attending school-related events or activities (Garn et al., 2012; Gniewosz & Noack, 2012; Lubienski & Crane, 2010; Peterson et al., 2011), and communicating either with the child or his teacher (Gniewosz & Noack, 2012; Kao, 1995; Lubienski & Crane, 2010). Other sources of parental involvement that were less commonly cited include the school-related volunteer work that parents engage in (Garn et al., 2012; Lubienski & Crane, 2010; Peterson, et al., 2011), being aware of or
paying attention to academic or school-related activities (Kao, 1995), parental interactions with teachers (Lubienski & Crane, 2010), and parents’ engagement in reading to their children (Gniewosz & Noack, 2012). These aspects will serve as a definition of parental involvement for this study. Consequently, attention can now be given to the views different parents have about their responsibilities pertaining to their children’s educations.

**Parental Roles in School**

School involvement has been found to positively influence student outcomes (Gordon & Cui, 2012). However, parents and families have different views about their roles in their children’s educations. Some may view education as the entire responsibility of the school while others may give great importance to staying abreast of the happenings at the school (Epstein, 1995). Some parents believe that they should be involved in helping their children with homework and supporting their educations through parent conferences and PTA meetings. Other parents cannot help their kids with homework or go to parent conferences and even see school activities as inappropriate when outside of the classroom (Allington & Cunningham, 2007). The remainder of this section provides specific examples that illuminate several ways that parents view their school-related responsibilities.

In a qualitative study highlighting successful African American fifth grade students, parents said that parent-teacher communication was important and that it was the parents’ job to motivate, encourage, and set boundaries for their children (West-Olatunji, Sanders, Mehta, & Behar-Horenstein, 2010). Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, and
Burrow (1995) discovered that the parent participants in their study asserted that they had a responsibility to contribute to their children’s homework tasks through various means, such as motivating their kids and communicating with their children’s teachers about the homework tasks (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Burrow, 1995). While the participants in these studies saw it as their responsibility to be highly involved, and were involved in the typical sense of the term, other parents are less involved or do not follow definitional norms for involvement, but still have children who perform well academically.

Asian parents in general have been found to be less involved in their children’s educations than their white counterparts, yet Asian American students outperform or achieve comparably to their white classmates (Kao, 1995). In fact, The NCES (1990) reported that Asian students attain average GPAs of 3.24 while white students average 2.96 (as cited in Kao, 1995). Nevertheless, Asian parents, as a whole, were found to leave the completion of homework to their children and refrain from talking with them about certain school-related matters. Even though research has asserted that parental involvement influences and predicts academic achievement, this may not be true for Asian students when traditional forms of parental involvement are considered. Further, “researchers should not expect the forms of parental involvement documented by studies of white parents and children to necessarily be valid for other racial and ethnic groups” (Kao, 1995, p. 152).

In addition, Grodnick and Slowiaczek (1994) asserted that it is stereotypical to believe that parents who have little education are not as involved in their children’s
schooling, but that this belief might be incorrect. This could be because parents express their involvement in their children’s educations in different ways. If multiple types of involvement are considered, less educated parents could be found to be much more involved than originally thought (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994).

The various methods of involvement that parents engage in related to their children’s homework, as well their education as a whole, are dependent upon several factors. These factors include: “specific domains of the parent’s self-perceived skill and knowledge; the mix of employment and other family demands experienced by the parent; and specific invitations, demands, and opportunities presented by the child and the child’s school” (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, p. 317). Delgado-Gaitan, (1992), McDermott, Goldman, and Varenne (1984), and Scott-Jones (1987) added to these ideas, postulating that the ways in which parents structure their homes for academic activities are linked to their child-rearing values (as cited in Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001). Additionally, “how a family structures and monitors the learning activities of its children at home is dependent upon family members' expectations that are formed through their cultural and economic experiences, the expectations of the school and community, and family resources…” (Schneider & Lee, 1990, p. 362).

Goodnow and Collins (1990) expressed that, for some parents, the degree to which they are or are not involved in their child’s education is not related to culture, or viewpoint, but rather is based on their attitudes, beliefs, and values (as cited in Gniewosz & Noack, 2012). For instance, a parent may value the family business
heavily and, on occasion, keep an older child home from school in order to take care of urgent business needs. This parent may view the family business as the child’s future and school or homework as necessary, but flexible when a pressing need arises. When this parent keeps her child home from school to contribute to the family business, she is sending him a message about her beliefs concerning the value and importance of education. Other parents who have different circumstances will also convey their beliefs about education to their children, and this conveyance can be carried out through a variety of means. One way that a child will receive a message about his parent’s value of education is through her involvement in his school and school-related activities. Specifically, when a parent is involved in the schooling experience of her child, she communicates to that child that education holds value and importance (Gniewosz & Noack, 2012).

Parental actions not only send a message to the child, but also can affect the attitudes and beliefs of the child. In this sense, activities such as parental involvement are linked to a student’s own value of education (Gniewosz & Noack, 2012). For instance, if a parent does not see value in completing homework, her child may also believe the same. Likewise, if a parent values high grades, her child may feel similarly.

A teacher’s perception of a parent’s value of education is also important. Hill and Craft (2003) determined that teachers’ perceptions of parental value of education for both African Americans and European Americans were related to reading achievement (Hill & Craft, 2003).
Just as there are many ways in which a parent can be involved, the methods parents use to help with their children’s homework also takes on many forms. Parents may check to see that their child has done his homework, find a tutor or other individual who can help their child, or be concerned about the level of effort the child apportions to his homework tasks (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001). These strategies are just three among many that parents use to be involved in their children’s homework tasks. Further, the ways in which parents choose to help their children with homework is grounded in their (a) child-rearing values and assumptions about learning, (b) understanding of the purposes and goals of homework, (c) personal knowledge of strategies appropriate for supporting child performance or learning, and (d) responses to specific information, from teachers or children, about homework tasks and processes. (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001, p. 202).

Decreasing Parental Responsibility and Involvement

While some researchers have concluded that parental involvement has positive effects on a child’s school achievement, Coleman (1987) describes how the American society has deviated from an environment in which the family and parents take responsibility for their children’s educations. He explained that, only a short time ago, most of life’s activities occurred in or near the residence. Since then, both men and women have gone outside the residence or its vicinity for work. Now, children also spend a good portion of their day outside of the home. With children spending much of their day away from their homes and families, socialization activities have
increasingly become the educational system’s responsibility. Afterschool activities and even sex education are now a part of traditional American schooling, while this was not always the case. A reduction in parental involvement, like this country has experienced, could cause not only poor academic performance, but drug and alcohol use, pregnancies, and suicide (Coleman, 1987).

With more parents depending on schools or the state for childrearing, children are receiving socialization input from schools in greater amounts than they are from their families or home. For children to receive the greatest benefit, schools and families should be working together or complimenting each other. However, if schools and families have stark contrasts, as they do now, children cannot reap the greatest benefits from their school experiences. For children in these cases, where the family or home environment is more concerned with careers and income than childrearing, schools are less effective because they do not have the added effect of the school’s resources being added to the family’s educational resources (Coleman, 1987).

Coleman, Hoffer, and Kilgore (1982, as cited in Coleman, 1987) found related information to Coleman’s 1987 study—dropout rates were the lowest among schools that had strong senses of community. In their study, the researchers examined public, private, and Catholic schools. The Catholic schools had the lowest dropout rates, at 3.4%. The private and public schools, on the other hand, had considerably higher dropout rates of 11.9% and 14.3%, respectively. Coleman (1987) noted that these percentages were different when transfer students were considered, but that Catholic schools maintained the lowest dropout rates. Coleman et al. (1982, as cited in
Coleman, 1987) determined that the religious association was not the reason for the low dropout rates, but that the community surrounding the school was. This community was so important because it provided social resources to the students that were usually only available to adults. One such example of these social resources would be a student having a deep friendship with an adult that, without the church community, would be unlikely to form.

Conflicting Research

In looking at past and present practices, it is clear that researchers have conflicting ideas about the impact of parental involvement. While many studies assert that it is a strong indicator of academic success, others disagree. Okpala, Okpala, and Smith (2001) determined that parental involvement and student achievement were not related (as cited in Gordon & Cui, 2012). Seyfried and Chung (2002) found that parental involvement made a greater difference in the later GPAs of white children when compared to African American children (Seyfried & Chung, 2002). Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) identified a few types of parental involvement, but did not find any significant effects of a parent’s personal involvement, or the child’s perception of a parent’s availability and how the parent feels about school and school related activities, on academic performance. They did find, however, that a mother’s behavior was directly associated with a child’s academic performance (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994). Additionally, Lin (2003) determined that non-white and low-SES students benefit from their parents emphasizing educational activities (as cited in Lubienski & Crane, 2010). With the identification of such starkly conflicting research, the question
remains as to whether or not parental involvement is beneficial to a student’s academic achievement. In order to illuminate possible answers to this question and expand on these conflicting findings, attention will now be given to a few studies in particular.

As Epstein (1995) remarked, there are various types of involvement that parents engage in in relation to their children’s educations. Parents may choose to be involved through monitoring homework, finding a competent tutor, communicating with school personnel, or various other means. However, not all types of involvement necessitate school achievement. Different types of involvement have different effects on the child and his education. While they certainly could increase academic outcomes, different forms of involvement could also influence a child’s attitudes and behaviors rather than achievement. Additionally, the researcher extends the traditional thought of parental involvement influencing the child and asserts that involvement may benefit parents and teachers. Parents can benefit via improvements in areas such as leadership and confidence while teachers can benefit via interactions with and understandings of families (Epstein, 1995).

A study conducted by Hill and Craft (2003) compared the effects of parental school involvement between African American and European American children of similar SES. They determined that parental involvement at home is related to the development of European American children’s social skills and improved academic achievement. However, this type of involvement did not make a difference in the academic achievement of African American children. Additionally, European American parents’ involvement at school was negatively related to academic
achievement while African American parental school involvement was positively related to math, but not reading performance (Hill & Craft, 2003).

Fan and Chen (2001) found that the relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement was stronger when academic achievement was assessed using global measures, such as GPA. Measures that focused on the relationship between parental involvement and achievement, but used specific subjects such as English or math, did not find as strong of a correlation. Additionally, the researchers’ findings suggest that parental involvement as represented by parents' supervision of children at home (e.g., home rules for watching TV, for doing school work, etc.) has the weakest relationship with students' academic achievement \( (r \approx .09) \), while parents' aspiration and expectation for children's educational achievement appears to have the strongest relationship with students' academic achievement \( (r \approx .40) \). (Fan & Chen, 2001, p. 14)

The researchers suggest that the reason parental supervision is only weakly related to student achievement is because students who need to be monitored may already be doing poorly in school. Overall, however, the researchers found that parental involvement positively affects school outcomes (Fan & Chen, 2001).

In looking at the conflicting research related to this topic it is important to consider the work of Lubienski and Crane (2010). These researchers used data from a large-scale study conducted by Rock and Pollack (2002) to find the influences to academic achievement. Rock and Pollack’s study spanned a six year time period, and
included several thousand children, at over a thousand schools. Lubienski and Crane’s findings related to this study indicate that, in general, parental involvement is not a significant predictor of success. Instead, the researchers found that variables that significantly predicted achievement in kindergarten, as well as growth in math and reading ability, included “SES composite, the degree parents expected the child to obtain, lunch-program eligibility, and music lessons” (Lubienski & Crane, 2010, p. 21). Further, the researchers discovered that “the addition of books, home computer, music lessons, whether parents read with children, and the number of children in the household [significantly explained the differences in] kindergarten achievement among students within schools” (Lubienski & Crane, 2010, p. 23).

Lubienski and Crane’s study represents significant evidence that opposes the theory that parental involvement leads to student achievement. Nevertheless, a number of researchers have asserted that when parents are involved in their children’s educations better academic performance will result (Gordon & Cui, 2012; Houtenville & Conway, 2008). One study found that giving generous sums of money to schools to spend had little effect on achievement. Thirteen out of the 15 schools saw this result. However, two schools did see academic gains; these schools appropriated their money to various areas of concern, such as health care services, curriculum, and parental involvement (Murnane & Levy, 1996).

**Reasons Parental Involvement is Effective**

Whether or not parental involvement is a pathway to a student’s academic achievement has been debated. Many researchers postulate that parental involvement
does indeed influence student success. The reasons researchers use to explain the effectiveness and influences of parental involvement are varied. This section explores some of the reasons researchers have discovered that link parental involvement to school success.

One study found that parental involvement is related to self-efficacy (Weiser & Riggio, 2010), which is a student-held belief about his abilities to accomplish a task (Gushue, Clarke, Pantzer, & Scanlan, 2006). Weiser and Riggio (2010) also found that greater self-efficacy is linked to academic success. Thus, the degree to which a parent is involved in his child’s education is related to that child’s perception of his abilities and indirectly related to academic success (Weiser & Riggio, 2010).

A German study asserted that parental involvement affects student motivation, but went further to say that “parents’ taking part in school activities, learning together with their children, and being cognitively stimulating went along with better self-regulation skills, higher confidence, and better achievement” (Gniewosz & Noack, 2012, p. 70). In this same study, Gniewosz and Noack (2012) also concluded that involvement influences a student’s perception of his mother’s value of academics. The researchers assert that parents hold certain values of education. Their values are expressed through various modes, such as the degree of maternal school involvement. A student perceives the value his parents give to academics based on their actions. In turn, the conclusions that a student draws about the degree to which his parents value education are related to the student’s own value of school. Thus, this study determined
that parental involvement is one way in which a child can perceive his parents’ value of education (Gniewosz & Noack, 2012).

Additionally, Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) found that parental involvement and academic performance were related through motivation. Behavior and cognitive/intelectual involvement were predictors of the motivational aspects of a child’s self-efficacy and control understanding. These factors, in turn, predicted better academic performance. The researchers suggested several other reasons for these outcomes. They postulated that a highly motived child, by way of self-efficacy and control perceptions could influence his parent to be involved in his education. They suggested that a circular relationship may also be in place, that parental involvement, motivation, and academic performance influence each other in a way that the presence of one encourages the next. A third explanation that was offered is the involvement of a parent motivates her child when he is young and when he gets older, involvement and motivation work either separately or together to effect school achievement (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994).

Relatedly, Hoover-Dempsey et al., (2001) offer insights into the positive effects of parental involvement in homework activities.

Parents’ homework involvement activities give children multiple opportunities to observe and learn from their parents’ modeling (of attitudes, knowledge, and skills pertinent to learning), to receive reinforcement and feedback on personal performance and capability, and to engage in instructional interactions related
to homework content and learning processes. (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001, p. 203)

Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2001) found that the collective effects of parental participation in homework activities, however, are less directly related to summative assessments of achievement and more related to student self-efficacy, knowledge of effective learning strategies, knowledge of the sources of academic success, and attitudes. Yet, these outcomes are of high importance because they transfer from homework tasks to classroom tasks, where factors outside the parents’ control are related to student achievement (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001).

**Influences to Parental Involvement**

Some of the pathways by which parental involvement influences school achievement have been identified and as the researchers in the previous sections have asserted, parental involvement is important to a child’s school success. However, not all parents are involved in their children’s educations and some are dramatically more involved than others. Yet, a lack of school involvement does not necessarily indicate diminished love or care for the child on the part of the parent (Allington & Cunningham, 2007). A broad explanation for the differences in levels of parental involvement can be partially explained by the work of a few different researchers, which present a variety of influences to parental school involvement.

Coleman (1988) discussed the family as possessing certain types of capital in regards to school, which include social, human, and financial. Financial capital includes the monetary resources a family has available, but is broader in the sense that
it also includes other resources that support academic achievement, such as having school supplies or a quiet place to do homework. Human capital includes the parents’ levels of education, and social capital involves the relationships that the parents (or other family members) have with the children. These relationships can be thought of in terms of the engagement the parents have with their children related to educational matters.

The researcher asserted that the human capital that a family possesses may not play a significant role in the child’s life if the appropriate level of social capital does not exist within the family. That is, a parent’s education level may not make a difference in the child’s academic performance if she does not interact intellectually with the child (Coleman, 1988).

In studies by Hoffer (1986) and Coleman and Hoffer (1987) the impacts of family dynamics were explored. These researchers discovered that having only one parent and having multiple siblings produces poorer academic performance (as cited in Coleman, 1988). Additionally, Coleman (1988) asserted that sibling position is important because younger siblings receive less attention from their parents (Coleman, 1988). To this end, the works of Hoffer and Coleman and Hoffer found that the dropout rate for a student with multiple siblings and only one parent is higher than for children with two parents and fewer siblings (as cited in Coleman, 1988). Coleman (1988) attributed these outcomes to social capital in that single parents or those with multiple children are not able to give their kids as much of their time as parents with different family dynamics (Coleman, 1988).
Grolick, Benjet, Kurowski, and Apostoleris (1997) discovered a number of predictors of parental involvement. These researchers determined that having a child who is perceived to be difficult, having challenging family circumstances, or having a lack of social support negatively affected involvement. An important caveat to note is that the latter two factors impacted involvement for mothers of boy children. Parent income was also considered a variable related to involvement; the researchers found that a parent with a higher SES was more likely to be involved (Grolick, Benjet, Kurowski, & Apostoleris, 1997).

In addition, coming from a single-parent household was also found to influence involvement. The researchers Grolick et al. (1997) believe this to be true possibly because of single-mothers’ lesser ability to be available to participate in school functions during school hours. However, when controlling for SES, only school involvement was lower for single mothers when compared to two-parent families. In this study, school involvement was only ambiguously identified by the researchers. However, it appears that in this case, school involvement pertains to activities that a parent engages in at their child’s school site (Grolick et al., 1997).

School involvement was related to other variables as well, including teacher attitudes and teacher characteristics. The former pertained to mothers of girls and two-parent families, while the latter had to do with mothers of girls only. It was determined that teacher attitudes and behaviors effect involvement when a parent’s life circumstances are good, their children are well-behaved, and other factors are overall positive. In terms of the relationship between teacher characteristics and school
involvement for mothers of girls, but not boys, possible explanations for this could be parents keeping more watchful eyes on their girl children, taking a more proactive role in communicating with their children’s teachers, or girls helping perpetuate their mothers’ school involvement and communication with teachers (Grolnick et al., 1997).

A final variable to be considered from the study conducted by Grolnick et al. (1997) is parental attitudes. In this study, parental attitudes were considered to be the parent’s self-efficacy and how they felt about being a teacher to their child. The researchers found that the attitudes of the parents were related to involvement.

In this study as a whole, the researchers listed various predictors of parental involvement. The full list included, “difficult context, social support, parent attitudes, teacher attitudes, and child difficulty” (Grolnick et al., 1997, p. 542).

Griffin and Galassi (2010) also contributed to the body of research pertaining to the influences of parental involvement. These researchers first organize the influences to involvement into three different categories, which include the school, the parents/family, and outside factors. There are a variety of school factors that hinder parent involvement. One researcher identified a lack of communication between parents and school personnel (Epstein, 1986); Lareau (1996) identified parents’ opinions about the existence of racism in the school (as cited in Griffin & Galassi, 2010); and Toy, Tarter, and Hao identified a lack of trust of parents and students on the part of the school personnel (as cited in Griffin & Galassi, 2010). A final school factor that could be a barrier to parental involvement is teacher self-efficacy. In their study, Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, and Brissie (1992) discovered a positive relationship
between teacher self-efficacy and parental involvement (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1992).

Parent or family elements that impede parental involvement are numerous. Sheldon (2002) cited financial issues (as cited in Griffin & Galassi, 2010), Eccles and Harold (1993) mentioned low parental education level (as cited in Griffin & Galassi, 2010), Johnson, Pugach, and Hawkins (2004) named parents being uninformed about school policies (as cited in Griffin & Galassi, 2010), Lareau (1996) cited parents having had adverse past school experiences (as cited in Griffin & Galassi, 2010), and other researchers cited low self-efficacy relating to a parent’s ability to contribute to the child’s education (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1992) and having too many children in the family (Bader, 2006).

Johnson, Pugach, and Hawkins (2004) relayed outside factors that inhibit parental involvement. Aspects that constitute these outside barriers include “inconvenient meeting times, transportation, [and] child care” (as cited in Griffin & Galassi, 2010, p. 87).

To give further evidence for these findings, the study done by Griffin and Galassi (2010) provides a specific example. In this study, a group of parents who were mostly African American or Latino identified lack of parental involvement as a major barrier to academic success. Additionally, and in speaking of their own experiences, this group of parents acknowledged that being involved was important, but that outside factors such as lack of time and work schedules kept them from taking action (Griffin & Galassi, 2010).
In this same study, a second group of parents identified lack of knowledge as a possible barrier to academic success, in that some parents do not know how much they should be involved in their children’s educations. Interestingly, the group of parents who identified this as a challenge had children who were academically successful (Griffin & Galassi, 2010).

Despite their differences, both groups of parents in this study were unsure about the existence of resources that could be helpful to their children. Having knowledge about how to access school resources seems to be an issue for some parents. In fact, specific groups of parents have been identified as having a more difficult time navigating the school system. Lareau (2000) asserted that African American parents struggle the most with accomplishing this task (as cited in Robinson & Werblow, 2012). This limited knowledge may cause African American parents to take an indirect approach to being involved in their children’s school experience and may result in a belief that their responsibility is to monitor their children, but not interfere (Hill & Craft, 2003).

These findings, however, do not necessarily reflect educational disinterest. Parents who do not know how to navigate the school system may simply be lacking knowledge. In addition, Cassanova (1996) and Delgado-Gaitan (1992) asserted that parents who seem to be disinterested may be just the opposite (as cited in West-Olatunji et al., 2010). For instance, from an outside perspective of limited knowledge, it may seem that Asian parents do not value education. As a generalization, Asian parents tend not to help their children with their homework or discuss school-related
matters with them in great frequency, but education is of high importance to these parents (Kao, 1995). It is possible that indirect shows of educational value may communicate the importance of education just as effectively. As Kao (1995) reports, Asian American children may have a designated study area at home, have a college fund in place from a young age, or can be restricted from watching television in order to maximize the time available for doing homework (Kao, 1995). These family practices may demonstrate to children that education has value, even though these pathways are not as direct as traditional forms of parental involvement.

**Parental Expectations**

Kao (1995) showed how traditional views of parental involvement may not be appropriate for all cultures of students. However, high levels of educational expectations were also shown among Asian parents (Kao, 1995), which could play a significant role in academic achievement. In fact, certain researchers have determined that parental expectations play an important role in the academic success of a child (Coleman, 1988; Fan & Chen, 2001; Lubienski & Crane, 2010).

As was said before, the NCES (1990) reported that Asian students attain average GPAs of 3.24 while white students average 2.96 (as cited in Kao, 1995). This may be due to Asian parents having high academic expectations for their children. For instance, the NCES (1990) found that 47% of Asian parents, compared with only 20% of white parents, expect their children to earn postgraduate degrees. Not all Asian subgroups are the same, however. Twenty percent of Pacific Islander students and 15% of their parents only expect a high school diploma (as cited in Kao, 1995). Kao
(1995) concludes however, that despite some discrepancies, most Asians have higher grades than whites and that this may be due to the difference in educational goals between the two ethnic groups (Kao, 1995).

Contributing to the body of research pertaining to the impact of parental expectations, Eccles-Parsons, Adler, and Kaczala (1982) found a relationship between “parents’ perceptions of and expectations for” their child’s performance and academic variables such as a student’s own academic expectations, perceptions of task difficulty, and self-efficacy (Eccles-Parsons et al., 1982, p. 320). The influence of parental viewpoints on self-efficacy in this case is an important focus. The researchers determined that the effect of a parent’s beliefs about his child’s abilities on her self-concept is more significant than the child’s past academic achievement (Eccles-Parsons et al., 1982).

Additional research, conducted by Weiser and Riggio (2010), found that a student’s expectations were predicted by a parent’s educational aspirations, involvement, and parent-child relationships. These factors were found to have a stronger link to student expectations than certain other variables, such as family structure (parents’ marital status) (Weiser & Riggio, 2010). Various other researchers contribute the idea that high parental aspirations “positively predict enrollment in more challenging classes, and higher test scores” (Astone and McLanahan, 1991, Catsambis, 2002, and Milne, Myers, Rosenthal, and Ginsburg, 1986, as cited in Weiser & Riggio, 2010, p. 369). Additionally, studies have concluded that “parental aspirations significantly predict whether students continue their education beyond high

While this section focuses mostly on the importance of parental expectations in general, Hoffer (1986) and Coleman and Hoffer (1987) determined that a mother’s expectations are of importance. The dropout rate for students whose mothers expect them to attend college is 11.6%. The dropout rate for students whose mothers do not expect them to go to college is 20.2% (as cited in Coleman, 1988). These researchers went further, determining “that sophomores with one sibling, two parents, and a mother's expectation for college...have an 8.1% dropout rate; with four siblings, one parent, and no expectation of the mother for college, the rate is 30.6%” (as cited by Coleman, 1988, p. S113). This suggests that parental expectations and parental involvement may work together to foster better academic outcomes.

**Influences of Significant People**

In line with the effects of parental expectations is the influence of significant people in the lives of school children. Miller-Cribs, Cronen, Davis, and Johnson (2002) researched factors that contributed to positive academic outcomes for African American children. They found that the opinions of parents or other important family members strongly influenced students. Thus, an important person in a student’s life was found to influence a student’s opinion about staying in school and graduating. While this study does not lend itself to direct correlations to parental expectations, it reinforces the idea that the opinions or mindsets of certain individuals were important
to the students in the study and could be true for larger populations (Miller-Cribbs et al., 2002).

Closely related to the work of Miller-Cribbs et al. (2002) is the work of Schneider and Lee (1990). These researchers found that East Asian students often worked hard to get good grades so that their parents would be happy. 51% of the students who participated in the study ascribed to this notion (Schneider & Lee, 1990).

**Conflicting Research**

The research that has been collected on this topic is largely in favor of parental expectations being a persuasive factor in students’ academic performance. A few arguments, however, contradict these findings. Gordon and Cui (2012) posited that school specific parenting was a stronger predictor of academic success than parental expectations. However, this research still indicates that parental expectations play a significant role in predicting student achievement (Gordon & Cui, 2012). In addition, Lubienski and Crane (2010) found that parental expectations were good predictors for initial kindergarten achievement, but not for long-term student achievement. Nevertheless, the researchers hypothesized that more long-term effects on student achievement may have been seen if certain variables were not controlled in their study (Lubienski & Crane, 2010).

Seyfried and Chung (2002) found that parental expectations were related to academic achievement. However, these researchers discovered that the effects of parental expectations were more pronounced in European American children than in African American children. That is, one African American and one European
American parent could have equally high expectations for their children, but the expectations of the European American parent may be more strongly associated with later GPA (Seyfried & Chung, 2002).

**Summary**

This chapter presented both current and relevant research on the topics of parental involvement and parental expectations and how they each relate to student success. Research concerning parental expectations seems to be mostly positive, suggesting that it may indeed be a predictor of school success. Alternatively, there are mixed conclusions regarding the effects of parental involvement. Some researchers argue that high levels of parental involvement are related to student achievement. Other sources of research have turned up inconclusive or maintain that parental involvement may not be relevant because cultures and people groups view their roles and responsibilities as parents of school-aged children differently. In the next chapter the methodology of the study will be discussed. Included within this discussion will be information regarding the research participants, a listing of the materials and instruments used, and an account of the processes used to collect and analyze data.
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The overall goal of this study was to discover the relationships between parental involvement and academic achievement and parental expectations and academic achievement. More specifically, this study examined measures of parental involvement and parental expectations via student surveys and interviews and how they corresponded with student grades. Chapter 2 provided information pertaining to recent research that is related to parental involvement and parental expectations. Chapter 3 will give detailed information about the methods used to answer the study’s research questions; it will provide information about the research participants, list the materials and instruments used, and give an account of the processes used to collect and analyze data.

Selection of Participants

Overall Demographics

The participants in the study were selected from a Northern California independent study school. This school, as a whole, is relatively small, having an approximate total of 180 students in grades K-12. However, students in grades 7-12 were targeted to participate in this study. The demographic information pertaining to the target population can be considered in terms of grade level distribution, English learner status, primary language, parental education level, and ethnicity. The majority of the school’s population is in grades 11 or 12. In fact, 64.6% of the students in 7th-
12th grade are high school juniors and seniors. In terms of English learner status, the majority of the students (57.3%) in grades 7-12 are classified as “English only,” which indicates that another language is not spoken in the home. Relatedly, many of the students’ primary languages are English (58%) and Russian (23.3%). In terms of parental education, the majority of the parents of students in the target population have finished some college or earned an associate’s degree (33%), did not pursue college but graduated from high school (22.6%), did not graduate from high school (19.3%), or graduated from college (18.6%). Finally, the ethnicities of the students are mainly white (56%) and Hispanic (32.6%). The complete set of percentages for each of the five demographic areas can be found in Figures 1-5.

Certain information was not portrayed in the figures, however. This information pertains to special education and credit deficiency. Twenty-two students at the school, or 14.6%, have an Individualized Education Program (IEP). These students have specific learning accommodations to aide their academic success and attend learning sessions with the school’s special education teacher. Concerning credit deficiency, 12% of the students are not on track to graduate. Further, all but one of the credit deficient students are seniors, which demonstrates that 30.3% of the school’s seniors are not likely to graduate on time.
Figure 1: Grade Level Distribution

Figure 1 illustrates the grade level distribution of the 7th-12th grade student population at the target school. As is evident, the majority of the 7th-12th grade students who attend the school are either high school juniors or seniors. In fact, 64.6% of the target students at the school are enrolled in these grade levels.
Figure 2: English Learner Status

Figure 2 provides an overview of the target students’ English proficiency status. The school has a small population of English Language Learners—14.6%, while most of the remaining 7th-12th grade students are reported to speak only English (57.3%) or were once considered English learners but have since been reclassified (19.3%).
Figure 3 clearly shows the primary language distribution of the school’s students. By far, it is reported that most students’ first language is English. The remaining portion of the student population whose first language is not English initially learned either Russian or Spanish.
Figure 4 is a representation of the education levels of the students’ parents. There is a somewhat even distribution between those parents who have graduated college, graduated high school, or have yet to graduate high school. However, the largest percentage of parents have attended some college or earned an associate’s degree, while the smallest percentages of parents have either declined to state or earned a graduate degree or higher.
Figure 5 is an illustration of the students’ ethnicities. The school, nearly in its entirety, is either white or Hispanic. The percentages of students who comprise these two ethnic groups total 88.6%. Specific ethnicities that consist of smaller amounts of the school’s population include American Indian/Alaskan Native and Black/African American, among others.
Survey Participants

Because independent study is a nontraditional school model, students do not attend school or classes every day of the week; based on their individual schedules, students are present at school for different amounts of time. One student may only come for one hour per week, while others may attend classes every day. With such a unique structure present in the target school, the components of this study required accommodation. These components included a survey that most of the students in grades 7-12 were invited to participate in and selective interviews that included only a small number of students. The necessary accommodation for this study was students being surveyed during their math classes. This was done because most students in grades 7-12 attend a math class. However, certain students were omitted from the study because they were either not taking a math class, taking math, but not attending class, or taking special education math which does not have a designated class time.

Interview Participants

Interview participants were chosen after the survey was given. Interviewees were chosen with help from other teachers and the decision to include each participant was based on their abilities to get the consent form signed, their likelihood of attending the interview sessions, their academic achievement (in some cases), survey completion (in some cases), and certain demographic information (ethnicity and grade level). Whether or not the student had participated in the initial survey was also considered, but this factor was only realized after the first two interviews had been conducted. Certain factors related to participant selection require explanation.
Demographic information was considered so that the interview participants reflected the overall population of the school, and academic achievement was considered so that data could be obtained from both high- and low-performing students. Academic performance was only considered in some cases; however, because it proved to be difficult to find participants who met so many specific requirements. Thus, academic performance was discontinued as an absolutely pertinent factor in choosing interviewees. Instead, ethnicity, grade level, survey participation, and special education status became focal points in the selection of interview participants.

A small number of students were interviewed by the researcher. The characteristics of the interview participants can be found in Table 1. “Academics” and “IEP” are included as categories in the table. Academics refers to the academic performance level of the student. There are three possible classifications for this category, including high, average, and low. IEP refers to whether or not the child has an Individualized Education Plan and therefore receives special education services.

Other information presented in the table includes grade level, gender, ethnicity, and survey completion. Demographic data pertaining to five of the interview participants is shown in the table. A sixth participant completed the interview process, but the information gathered in this interview was omitted from the final analysis and report because his participation resulted in an overrepresentation of several demographic factors. Therefore, this sixth participant was omitted from the demographics represented in Table 1.
Table 1

Interviewee Demographics

<table>
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<th>Totals for Students 1-5</th>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
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<th>IEP</th>
<th>Completed Survey</th>
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<td># of 12th graders-2</td>
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<td>Hispanic-2</td>
<td>High-1 Average-4</td>
<td>Yes-1</td>
<td>Yes-4 No-1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td># of 11th graders-2</td>
<td>Female-3</td>
<td>White-3</td>
<td>No-4</td>
<td>No-4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># of 10th graders-1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Due to the omission of the sixth interviewee, the remaining five participants collectively demonstrated a rough representation of the overall demographics of the target students at the school. While efforts were made to ensure interviewees were a representative sample of the target students, certain imperfections were still present. These imperfections were two-fold. First, it cannot be accurately determined whether or not the interview participants adequately represented the academic performances of the students at the school. This was due to academic performance data being unavailable to the researcher. The second limitation was that 11th graders were overrepresented by the interview participants. 40% of the interview participants were 11th graders while 27.3% of the students in grades 7-12 are in 11th grade.

Instrumentation and Materials

Instrumentation

The instruments used for this study included surveys and selective interviews. A survey was specifically crafted and used to measure aspects of parental involvement.
and parental expectations and how these variables relate to student grades. Student interviews were conducted for the same purpose, but were also used so that explicit rationale for the survey findings could be provided.

To measure items related to the research questions, the survey contained two parts: open-ended questions and several items that asked students to respond using a Likert scale. There were two different Likert scales used in the survey. The first had seven possible response categories. Six of the response options ranged from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. The seventh response option was *I’d rather not say or I don’t understand the question*. The other Likert scale used in the survey had six possible response categories. *I’d rather not say or I don’t understand the question* was again included as a possible response and the other five Likert options ranged from *never* to *always*.

The structure of the first Likert scale was chosen so that students would have to make a definitive decision about the question they were being asked. It was purposeful that *neither agree nor disagree* was omitted from the Likert scale. Instead, students were given the option to *kind of agree*, *agree*, or *strongly agree*. The same pattern was used for the opposite side of the scale, which included *kind of disagree*, *disagree*, and *strongly disagree*. The seventh option, *I’d rather not say or I don’t understand the question* was included so that students were clearly given the option to not answer a question that they were uncomfortable with or so that they did not haphazardly answer a question that they did not understand.
For the same reasons it was used in the survey’s first Likert scale, *I’d rather not say or I don’t understand the question* was used in the survey’s second Likert scale. The other five options in second Likert scale were *never, almost never, sometimes, almost always,* and *always.* This scale was used to measure the frequency with which students tended to experience certain events, such as receiving homework help from their parents.

Having established the structure of the survey’s Likert scales, the contents of the instrument will be discussed. Questions on the survey generally asked students about their parents’ expectations and involvement, as well as what types of grades that they normally attain. Specifically, there were 17 questions on the survey. The first two were open-ended, the next nine asked students to respond using the *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree* Likert scale, and the last six questions called for the students to respond using the Likert scale that ranged from *never* to *always.*

The open-ended questions asked students about their grades, as well as what activities their parents engage in related to their educations. The questions that made use of Likert scales again asked the students about their parents’ involvement, but also asked about their parents’ expectations.

The second instrument used for data collection in this study was student interviews. The interview questions were chosen based on the results from the surveys and sought to provide more insight into certain survey items. The interview participants were chosen purposefully and were selected based on the specific criteria mentioned in the previous section. Each interview session lasted between 10 and 45
minutes, with individual differences based on the students’ answer lengths, as well as other factors. It was intended that all interviews would last for a maximum of 30 minutes, but one interview exceeded this time frame due to the extensive detail the student provided in her answers, as well as some technical issues that arose that were outside the researcher’s control.

During the interviews, the students were asked a series of 14 questions and their responses were tape recorded for accuracy. In some instances, students were asked further questions to provide clarification or elaboration. However, the main 14 questions that were asked of the interviewees pertained to parental involvement and its effects, the effects of parental expectations, and other topics, such as those related to the results of the survey. A complete list of the questions used during the interviews can be found in Appendix A. Examples of the interview questions, however, will be provided and include:

- Would your grades get better if your parents/guardians were more involved in your education? Do you think other kids’ grades would get better if their parents/guardians were more involved?
- Many kids said that they would not get in trouble if they didn’t have A’s and B’s or higher. Why do you think they wouldn’t get in trouble?

**Materials**

The materials necessary for this study were minimal. For the entirety of the study, the only items needed were (a) paper, (b) printer/ink (c) pencils/pens, (d) a tape
recorder, (e) homework passes, (f) surveys, and (g) a computer for recording and analyzing data.

**Data Collection**

**Survey Procedures**

Students were invited to participate in the surveys during their math classes, which were administered by the researcher and the math teacher. The math teacher was trained on procedures before administration in order to ensure consistency. To account for students arriving late, the researcher began giving the surveys after the start of each class. The procedures used during survey administration were detailed and numerous. To begin, the students were introduced to the survey task, were read the consent form (in a few cases the students read the form themselves), which included the assurance that the surveys were anonymous and voluntary, and were offered homework passes as an incentive for their participation. Once the consent forms had been read, students were asked to choose whether or not they would like to participate. If the students chose to participate, they signed the consent forms and began completing the surveys. During most survey administrations, students were given the surveys before they signed the consent forms so they could peruse the survey and make educated decisions. Not all students were given this option, however, because the need was not made known until one student participant asked to see the survey. Once the need was made known, an attempt was made to allow all students see the survey before they signed the consent form, but this did not always happen, and it is unknown if the math teacher consistently did this. He was instructed to allow
students to see a copy of the survey if they asked, but was not given explicit instructions to pass out the surveys before consent forms were signed.

Further procedures associated with survey administration were dependent on class structures. The school has two types of math classes: college preparatory classes that are structured like traditional one-hour classes and math labs, which allow students to work on computers at their own paces with minimal teacher instruction. Both types of classes require students to attend twice per week. During college preparatory classes, the math teacher began instruction after students had finished their surveys, in most cases. There were one or two instances in which the math teacher began instruction before all students were finished, but this was necessary due to the fact that the classes of students only receive two hours or less of math instruction per week. However, students who had not finished their surveys by that time were allowed to continue working at their own paces.

During the math labs, students simply worked until they had finished the surveys. Because the math labs are computer-based and self-paced, there was no need to interrupt the survey process because formal instruction does not occur in these classes.

The researcher visited most of math classes more than once in order to include any students who had been absent. The math teacher followed the same procedure. In cases for which most of the students had already participated in the survey, the students who had not yet participated were pulled aside and were given instructions
and the option to participate. This procedure also occurred minimally during the college preparatory math classes when a student arrived late to the class.

In both administration scenarios, students took varying lengths of time to fill out the surveys. While students were allowed to work at their own paces, most finished in less than 10 minutes.

**Interview Procedures**

The students who were chosen to be interviewed were approached by the researcher and asked whether or not they would be willing to participate. If they were, a consent form was sent home (if the student was under 18) for the parent to sign and a time was scheduled for the interview to take place. On the day of the interview, the student read or was read the consent form and was invited to choose whether or not to participate. Upon the students giving consent, the interviews were initiated. During these interviews, students’ responses were recorded both on paper and on tape to ensure accuracy. While interviewees were being asked questions, some of the items were reworded or clarified for the benefit of the student. Additionally, some students were prompted to elaborate their responses by being asked other questions. Despite some differences, the substance of the 14 interview questions remained constant for each participant. At the conclusion of the interview the students were thanked for their participation and given a homework pass that they could utilize in almost any of their classes.
Data Analysis

Mixed-methods procedures were used in analyzing data. Quantitative information was obtained from the various survey items and qualitative data was collected through open-ended survey questions and interviews with students. A mixed-methods approach was chosen so that through the open-ended survey questions and interviews, the quantitative data could be explained, enriched, and triangulated. Also, in a number of cases, both the quantitative and qualitative data was examined together in order to interpret the findings of the study.

Analysis of Quantitative Data

Survey items that required a ranking on a Likert scale were analyzed through majority percentages. Respondent answers for the different survey questions were tallied and the total number of responses for each question was established. Percentages for each of the Likert scale categories were then calculated. For example, on survey question 3 “My parents or guardians are happy with the grades I get,” 2 people strongly disagreed, 8 disagreed, 6 kind of disagreed, 13 kind of agreed, 20 agreed, 11 strongly agreed, and 1 person either did not understand the question or decided that he would rather not answer. The number of responses for each of the seven Likert scale categories were divided by 61 (the total number of responses for that item) in order to find percentages. Thus, 3.2% of the respondents strongly disagreed that their parents or guardians were happy with their grades; 13.1% disagreed, 9.8% kind of disagreed, 21.3% kind of agreed, 32.7% agreed, 18% strongly agreed, and 1.6% did not understand the question or decided that they would
rather not answer. An important consideration relating to the data analysis of this last survey response option is that this category was only counted if a student chose it as his response. Thus, questions that were left blank were not automatically considered to fall in the category *I’d rather not say or I don’t understand* and were not counted as such.

During quantitative analysis, not every data set was divided by 61 to obtain response percentages because the total number of responses for each question varied. This variation was due to several factors, such as a respondent choosing more than one answer to a question, not answering a question at all, or marking the survey form in a confusing way. Relatedly, some completed student surveys were omitted from the data. Six students were seen talking with one another while completing their surveys. Four of those surveys were discarded; the other two surveys were not flagged before they were put with the rest of the completed surveys and therefore could not be extracted accurately. However, given that there were approximately 60 surveys included in the data analysis, the two student surveys that were unable to be taken out should not have greatly affected the validity of the survey.

After the percentages of responses for each question were determined, the researcher looked for trends in the data to help form interview questions and research claims. The analysis of the qualitative data was also used for the same purposes.

**Analysis of Qualitative Data**

Qualitative data was collected via the open-ended survey questions and interview sessions. This qualitative data was analyzed by looking for themes within
the answers. Once the themes were identified, the frequency with which responses were coded to each theme was assessed to determine those that were the most commonly occurring.

For the two open-ended survey questions, students were asked to describe how their parents are involved in their educations and what kinds of grades they usually receive. For the question posed about parental involvement, common categories were found within the responses, such as parental help with homework or parental provision of practical items, such as rides to school or supplies. In response to the question about grades, most participants listed a range, saying for instance, that they usually earn A’s, B’s, and C’s. In order to make concise generalizations about the grades students reported, each letter grade was tallied when it was mentioned by a respondent. Overall trends were then discovered which demonstrated the frequency with which each letter grade was reported. Detailed information about the percentages related to the number of times students mentioned letter grades can be found in Figure 6.

To compare and support the interpretation of the self-reported grades, the researcher also determined the average GPAs of her own students. This was done by recording student GPAs listed in the school’s grading program and calculating an average GPA for those who were in high school and had been attending the school for at least one full semester. Middle school students were excluded because cumulative GPAs are not calculated for this age group of students. Students who had been attending for less than a semester were also excluded because some did not have cumulative GPAs listed. Additionally, students who had been attending for less than
one semester were not as likely to have all of their previous grades in the system, which would yield less accurate information.

The procedures outlined above were those that were used for the open-ended survey questions. A discussion will follow that attends to the procedures used in the analysis of the interview questions. In analyzing interview responses, commonalities were determined and themes were formed. There was a deviation to this procedure, however, which was present in the analysis of the question that asked students to give examples and non-examples of parental involvement. For this question, the themes that were found during the analysis of the short answer survey question about parental involvement were used and responses were examined to determine to which of the themes they belonged.

In relation to the coding of this question, specifically in terms of the non-examples of parental involvement, it is important to note that such non-examples were not automatically placed in Theme 2: Lack of Parental Involvement. Instead, the content of the participants’ answers were examined to determine where they would fit based on their consistency with the initial statements in each theme. These responses were then used to provide more insight into the survey findings and to triangulate the data by looking for consistencies between survey and interview responses. As such, both quantitative and qualitative data were used together in several instances to interpret the research findings.
Comparison of Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis

The source of the quantitative data collected during this study was the student survey. Overall percentages for most survey items were established from this information. Qualitative data was gathered from both the surveys and interviews. It was analyzed by response coding, followed by theme identification. These two methods of data analysis are inherently different, but were used to compare, confirm, expand, or explain findings. For example, a significant portion of the survey participants confirmed that their parents do not attend open house or back to school night. This qualitative finding was explained by the qualitative information gathered from the interviews. Most commonly, the participants said that parents are too busy to come to these school functions and often listed work as a reason why the parent may not be able to attend. In another instance, students responded to survey items that asked about their parents’ expectations. The statistical data collected from these questions was used in conjunction with interview responses about the influences of parental expectations. Specifically, students were asked whether or not parental expectations influence student grades. The themes discovered in the responses to this question were compared with the parental expectations students reported on the survey. This information was then used to make a research claim, and consequently to answer one of this study’s research questions.

Validity and Reliability

As with all studies, efforts were made to ensure the study’s validity and reliability. No study is perfect, however, and certain conditions existed that should be
mentioned in relation to this study. First, the math teacher was instructed about survey procedures and given a list of directions. The researcher used the same set of directions, but did not follow it prescriptively because it was impractical to do so and the information was more easily summarized than read verbatim. It is unknown how the math teacher approached this issue, which was due to the fact that the researcher was unable to witness his administration of the surveys. However it is believed that there were no issues about validity and reliability related to this matter because the math teacher has experience as a researcher.

A number of procedural items can be seen as adding to the validity and reliability of the study. Both the researcher and the math teacher were careful not to allow students to take the survey more than once, thus eliminating the possibility of invalid or skewed results. Additionally, students’ answers were tape recorded during the interviews so that their thoughts could be accurately presented. Also, whenever possible, the interviewees were asked to review the interview notes and inform the researcher of any inconsistencies or items in need of revision. In fact, five out of the six interview participants reviewed the researcher’s notes pertaining to their individual interview sessions.

Despite these positive factors, cases in which human subjects are involved are particularly prone to creating inconsistencies or problems with validity and reliability. Beyond what has already been addressed, this study encountered some potential issues related to the study’s validity and reliability, which are addressed below.
• Some students were not listening carefully while the consent form was being read.
• Some students signed the consent form before it had finished being read.
• Most students were read the consent forms, but this was not true for all.
• When a student was absent or came in late to class, he was taken through the survey process alone or with a few other students, which may have caused feelings of discomfort or pressure. This possibility exists, but such negative feelings were neither verbally nor nonverbally exhibited by the students.
• In one case, there was a nearby teacher talking to students not involved in the survey process, which may have caused a distraction for those who were participating and impeded their abilities to hear the researcher discuss the survey procedures and the consent form.
• Two students talked while the surveys were being administered, but their surveys were not omitted because the researcher was unable to identify which surveys belonged to these students. However, as was stated before, it is unlikely that the usage of these two surveys skewed the results, as there was a pool of approximately 60 respondents who completed the survey.
• Not everyone was given the opportunity to look at the survey before they
signed the consent form, but students were advised that they did not have
to answer any question that made them feel uncomfortable, so it is believed
that this issue did not have any negative effects.

• One interview was rushed due to the student’s time constraints, which
could have affected his answers.

• Although it cannot be proven, it is possible that the students who
participated in the interviews may not have been completely representative
of the school’s population because they had to be responsible and proactive
in attending the interview sessions and obtaining parental consent. A
similar issue may exist regarding the surveys, in that there is a possibility
that the students who took the survey were among a grouping of
responsible students, who were more likely to consistently attend their
classes.

• As was addressed earlier, not all interviews were the same in their
entireties. All participants were asked the same 14 questions, but they were
reworded or paraphrased for simplicity at times. There were also
opportunities for the researcher to ask additional questions of the
participants in order to clarify or expand initial answers. This does not
prove to be a major problem, however, because the same 14 main questions
were asked and the researcher attempted to ask reasonable and related
follow-up questions.
There are several potential issues that could diminish the validity and reliability of this study that should be given credence when considering the study’s findings. However, it is not apparent that there are any major faults that would be compromising, rather the potential issues are speculative and may not have had any negative effect on the quality of the study.

Summary

Chapter 3 presented information regarding the methodology used in this study. The demographic information for the research participants was identified along with the process used in choosing the sample population. The materials and instruments used in the study were described, as well as the procedures utilized for both the surveys and interviews. An overview of the data analysis was then discussed, including the procedures used to evaluate both the quantitative and qualitative data. Finally, the overall validity and reliability of the study was considered. With the identification and description of the methodology complete, the next step in the progression of the study will be explored. Chapter 4 will explore this next step of progression, including a discussion and an analysis of the researcher’s findings.
Chapter 4

RESULTS

Introduction

Chapter 4 will present the results discovered within the interviews and surveys carried out for this study. Parental involvement will be defined via student survey responses; students’ self-reported grades will be discussed, along with their significance; detailed responses to interview questions will be given; and the study’s research claims will be exhibited, in conjunction with discussions of significance and evidence, as well as a presentation of analytical commentary. These discussions and research claim presentations will be given in relation to the major research questions of this study, which include the following:

- For students in an independent study school in Northern California, what is the relationship between levels of parental involvement and academic outcomes?
- For this same population of students, are the academic expectations parents have for their children related to academic outcomes?

Survey Results

As was discussed in Chapter 3, the survey was completed by approximately 60 students at the targeted school site. The survey consisted of 17 questions, two which required short answers and 15 that required participants to respond to statements using a Likert scale. Tables 2 and 3 present a comprehensive summary of the results with respect to questions 3-17 on the survey. Table 2 depicts those questions that required
an answer ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The percentages for which each Likert category was chosen for a question are represented in the table and the answers that were chosen most often are highlighted. Each of the survey questions are listed on the left of the table and the answers that the students gave are recorded in corresponding columns. In order to concisely summarize the findings for items 3-11, the term generally agree, as well as its converse generally disagree will be used. Generally agree will refer to the aggregate of student responses that demonstrate agreement and will include the Likert categories strongly agree, agree, and kind of agree. The term generally disagree will be used to include strongly disagree, disagree, and kind of disagree. The entirety of the data related to items 3-11 of the survey can be found in Table 2 and summative findings using the aggregate terms can be found in Figure 6. Before presenting all of the survey findings, however, the statements that follow will present data from survey items 3-11 while utilizing the aggregate terms generally agree and generally disagree.

- 72% of the respondents generally agreed that their parents or guardians were happy with their grades.
- 88.4% of the respondents generally agreed that their parents or guardians expect them to earn A’s and B’s or higher.
- 63.8% of the respondents generally disagreed that they would get in trouble if they didn’t earn A’s and B’s or higher.
- 97.9% of the respondents generally agreed that their parents or guardians expect them to graduate from high school.
87.9% of the respondents generally agreed that their parents or guardians expect them to graduate from college.

49% of the respondents generally agreed that their parents or guardians expect them to get a master’s degree or doctorate.

75.3% of the respondents generally agreed that their parents or guardians are strict in terms of school work completion.

64.9% of the respondents generally agreed that their parents or guardians help them with school work.

68.7% of the respondents generally agreed that their parents or guardians know when they haven’t done all their work.
### Table 2

**Survey Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Kind of Disagree</th>
<th>Kind of Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>I’d rather not say</th>
<th>OR</th>
<th>I don’t understand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. My parents or guardians are happy with the grades I get.</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>21.3%</td>
<td>32.7%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. My parents or guardians expect me to get A’s and B’s or higher.</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>34.4%</td>
<td>26.2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I would get in trouble if I didn’t get A’s and B’s or higher.</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>34.4%</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. My parents or guardians expect me to graduate from high school.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>81.6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. My parents or guardians expect me to graduate from college.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
<td>33.8%</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. My parents or guardians expect me to get a master’s degree or doctorate (Ph.D.).</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. My parents or guardians are strict when it comes to me getting my school work done.</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. My parents or guardians help me with my school work.</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. My parents or guardians know when I haven’t done all my work.</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
<td>34.4%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 displays the specific percentages for Likert categories on certain survey items. In particular, these items measured responses largely related to parental expectations, although there was a small sum of questions pertaining to parental involvement. Overall, the table illustrates that the 7th-12th grade students at the target school have parents whose expectations are unusually high. These parents are reported to expect their children to earn high grade marks and graduate from college, as well as earn postgraduate degrees.

The small number of items that assessed parental involvement show responses that are especially positive. Although more comprehensive information regarding parental involvement activities will be found in the next set of survey questions, the items in this portion of the survey suggests that students report their parents to have high levels of involvement.
Items 12-17 on the survey required answers using a different Likert scale than what was used for items 3-11. The Likert scale for questions 12-17 ranged from never to always. Table 3 contains a summary of the responses to each of these items. The table is structured similarly to Table 2, in that the rate for which each Likert category was chosen for a question is represented by a percentage and the answers that were chosen most often are highlighted. Also, each of the survey questions are listed on the left of the table and the answers that the students gave are recorded in corresponding columns.
The complete set of data pertaining to items 12-17 of the survey can be found in Table 3, while a comprehensive set of summative data can be found in Figure 7. This figure will show the percentages of student responses. Specifically, the response percentages will be categorized by the Likert category *sometimes*, as well as the Likert groupings *never or almost never* and *always or almost always*, However, in the immediate text below, the percentages of students who responded by marking *sometimes* for each item, as well as the highest ranked response grouping, will be offered. This will, in turn, serve as a concise overview of the findings related to this portion of the survey.

- 36.6% of the respondents said that their parents or guardians *sometimes* check to make sure that they did their work; 35% indicated that this *never or almost never* happens.

- 51.6% of the respondents indicated that their parents or guardians *sometimes* talk to their teachers; 29.9% said that this *never or almost never* happens.

- 40.6% of the respondents said that their parents or guardians *sometimes* talk to them about school; 45.7% said that this *always or almost always* occurs.

- 25% of the respondents said that their parents or guardians *sometimes* attend open house or back to school night; 58.3% indicated that this *never or almost never* occurs.
• 35% of the respondents said that when they were younger their parents or guardians sometimes read books to them; 50% indicated that this always or almost always happened.

• 35% of the respondents felt that their parents or guardians are sometimes very involved in their educations when compared to other students; 39.9% felt that this always or almost always happens.

Table 3
Survey Results, Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Almost Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Almost Always</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>I'd rather not say OR I don't understand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12. My parents or guardians check to make sure I did my work.</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>36.6%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. My parents or guardians talk to my teachers.</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
<td>51.6%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. My parents or guardians talk to me about school.</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>40.6%</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. My parents or guardians go to open house or back to school night.</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. When I was younger, my parents or guardians read books to me.</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Compared to other kids, my parents or guardians are very involved in my education.</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 provides a detailed listing of the responses related to survey items 12-17. The data presented in this table demonstrated that most survey participants answered questions related to parental involvement with the Likert term *sometimes*. This median answer suggests that parental involvement at the target school is average, except in the case of open house or back to school night attendance. The survey data suggests that parental involvement in these school-related functions is below average.

*Figure 7: Survey Results, Continued*

*Figure 7. Survey Results, Continued.*
In addition to the 15 items that asked students to rate a statement according to a Likert scale, questions 1-2 on the survey were open-ended and asked students about parental involvement and grades. The first question read, “How are your parents or guardians involved in your education?” The second question asked students to “Please describe the grades that you normally get on your report card.” Both of these items were analyzed by looking for themes, but the procedures used to discover themes for each individual question was unique.

Analysis of the first survey question, which asked students to describe how their parents are involved in their educations, was carried out by looking for themes within the written answers. Table 4 provides a list of the six themes that were discovered, a list of responses that were coded to each of the themes, and the number of responses that fell within each category. The six themes that were discerned from the students’ responses include homework/help, lack of involvement, provision of practical items, parental care, emotional support, and monitoring.

**Theme 1: Homework/Help- Parents often help their children or are involved in homework tasks**

The first and most common theme found within the answers to survey question 1 was that parents are involved by helping their children and by being a part of the homework process in some way. Some of the responses to this question included that the child’s parent helps him with homework, that the parent asks the child whether or not he has homework, and that the parent checks to make sure that the child’s work is done. These are just three examples among the 17 total responses that were
determined to correspond with this category. The survey participants responded to question 1 with answers that could be appropriately placed within this category 43 times. It should be noted, however, that some students answered this question in such a way that allowed their answers to be counted twice. For example, if a student said that his parent helps him with his homework, but also that his parent checks to see if he has missing assignments, his answer would have been tallied twice in the homework/help theme.

Theme 2: Lack of Parental Involvement- Parents do not engage in their child’s school experience

The second theme discovered within the participants’ answers was that there was a lack of parental involvement. When asked to describe how their parents were involved in their educations, some students remarked that their parents were not involved at all or that their parents could not help. Fourteen responses to survey question 1 corresponded with this category. It is important to note that responses in this category included explanations, at times. Some students expressed that they do not need their parents’ help or that their parents aren’t involved because of certain barriers, such as content difficulty, lack of availability, or being unfamiliar with English. A full list of responses that belong to this category can be found in Table 4.

Theme 3: Provision of Practical Items- Parents provide for tangible school-related needs

The third theme relates to parents providing practical items or resources to their children. Some of the answers that were classified within this category had to do
with parents providing rides to school or furnishing school supplies. Eleven participant responses were appropriate for this category, which can be found in Table 4.

**Theme 4: Parental Care- Parents are concerned with how their child is doing**

Theme 4 was difficult to define. Six responses were consistent with this theme and usually had to do with the parent asking how the student was doing or about how things were going. The responses that the students provided could refer to emotions and feelings, but could also refer to the parent checking on the student to make sure he is performing well in school and responsibly completing his work. Since the intent behind most of the students’ comments within this category are unknown, it is likely that some of the responses could fit into one of the other themes. In fact, it is known that some of the responses do fit into another theme because the respondents specify that their parents are inquiring about school-related matters. Even though some of the responses could be placed in another category, they were categorized in Theme 4 to maintain consistency. Because of this issue, however, definitive conclusions cannot be drawn based on the responses coded to this theme.

**Theme 5: Emotional Support- Parents provide positive emotional support in relation to their children’s educations**

Four student responses suggested that some parents are involved in their children’s educations by way of emotional support. Responses within this category included a parent encouraging a student, motivating a student, being happy for the student’s success, and not becoming upset if the student does not do well. This theme, however, is not particularly strong. This is due to the small number of responses that
could be coded to the category. Therefore, this theme is not suitable as an instrument to draw overarching conclusions.

**Theme 6: Monitoring- Parents follows their children’s work, progress, activities, or emotional well-being**

The sixth and final theme derived from the responses to survey question 1 was parental monitoring. This theme is addressed last because it utilizes many student answers that were already coded to other themes. Keeping in contact with a student’s teachers or school personnel and checking student grades are examples of actions a parent takes to monitor their child’s educational experience. However, a parent also could check to make sure her child’s homework is done or remind the child to do the work, which would demonstrate two aspects of parental monitoring that could simultaneously be categorized in Theme 1: Homework/Help. These examples, and various others, totaling twenty-nine student responses, were associated with this theme. A full list of responses related to this category can be found in Table 4.
Table 4

**Themes for Survey Question One**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Student Responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Theme 1: Homework/Help | Gets the child help  
Helps the child  
Helps the child study  
Is available to help  
Reminds child about homework  
Is strict with homework/work  
Checks if homework is done  
Helps when it is most needed  
Makes the child do work  
Asks if the child has homework  
Tells child to do homework  
Checks if the child has missing assignments  
Asks for an explanation about missing assignments  
Asks what the homework is  
Makes sure the child does homework  
Teaches the child  
Child can ask questions freely | 43 |
| Theme 2: Lack of Parental Involvement | Parent is not really involved  
Parent lets the child learn from his own mistakes - they are not involved  
Student doesn’t need parent involvement, he can do it himself  
Parents don’t help because they are foreigners but can help younger sister with her work because it’s easier  
Parent can’t help with homework because she can’t remember the content  
Child has to do work himself because no one (parents/sister) is available  
Parents don’t really check up on the child | 14 |
| Theme 3: Provision of Practical Items | Rides  
Supplies  
Parent gets child into school  
Will pay for college  
Nice home environment to work in  
If the child is sick the parent takes her to school to get make up work | 11 |
| Theme 4: Parental Care | Parent asks how the student is doing  
Parent is a constant support system  
Parent knows how the child is doing  
Parent asks how things are going | 6 |
Survey question 1 asked students to describe how their parents are involved in their educations. Table 4 provides a comprehensive list of answers to this question that were able to be categorized into a theme. Student responses organized in Theme 1 were moderately varied. Items such as a parent checking if homework was done or a parent helping with homework made up the contents of this theme. Student responses within Theme 2 were also moderately varied. These responses portrayed a lack of parental involvement. For example, some students said that their parents were not able to help or that parental assistance was unnecessary.
The responses in Theme 3 illustrate how parents provide for the tangible needs of their children. Some students listed that their parents buy them school supplies or give them rides to school. Themes 4 and 5 had the smallest frequency of student responses coded to them. Theme 4, the larger of the two, demonstrated aspects of parental involvement related to parental care, such as a parent asking a child how he is doing. Responses in Theme 5 were focused around emotional support. Items coded to this category included encouragement, motivation, and others.

Theme 6 was the final theme presented in the table. It consisted of responses that were related to parental monitoring. Examples of student responses within this category include a parent checking a child’s grades, asking for explanations for missing assignments, and checking if a child’s homework is complete.

The final element illustrated in Table 4 is frequency of responses. It has already been mentioned that Themes 4 and 5 were made up of the smallest frequencies of student responses. This indicates that the first survey question was answered in ways that were more consistent with the other three themes. Specifically, Themes 1 and 6 were those with the highest frequency of responses, indicating that students at the target school have parents who are most commonly involved in helping their children, being involved in homework tasks, or monitoring their children’s work, progress, activities, or emotional well-being.

The information gathered from the first survey question was dense and required much qualitative analysis. Analysis of the second survey question, however, was much more straightforward and required a combination of quantitative and
qualitative analysis. This question asked the students to describe the kinds of grades that they normally earn. Many students listed a range of grades, saying for instance, that they usually earn B’s, C’s, and D’s. Analysis of this survey item was carried out through tallying. The number of times each letter grade was reported by students was tallied to determine the most frequent grades reported by students. To further explain the analysis process, consider a student who wrote that he normally gets B’s and C’s. In this case, one tally mark was added both to the B category and to the C category. If a student listed specific grade information, such as A-, A, A+, B+, B+, B- and B, one tally mark was recorded to the B category and one was recorded to the A category. Each student, no matter how many times he listed a grade, could only contribute one tally mark to each letter grade category. This was done so that consistency was maintained between students who gave a simple grade range and those who specifically listed multiple grades. While this information cannot give an accurate representation of the grade attainment of the students at the school, it can give some general information about their performance. For instance, the letter grades B and C were reported most frequently by survey participants, which suggests that students at the school generally perform in the average to high-average range. The complete data set for this survey question, which illustrates the frequency with which each letter grade was mentioned by the survey participants (represented by basic percentages), can be found in Figure 8.
Figure 8. Self-Reported Grades.

**Interview Results**

As has already been mentioned, data from five student interviews was analyzed. The interviews consisted of 14 questions and the answers to questions 3-14 were examined for reoccurring themes. Data from questions 1-2 asked students about demographic information, which was presented in Table 1 and reasonably resembled the overall demographics of the school, with the exceptions of academic performance and number of 11th grade students. A discussion about the themes found within the interviews will follow. Each interview question will be presented along with the themes that were found within the participants’ answers; details and a discussion will additionally be presented when appropriate. Following the presentation of data, a
summary of the discovered themes to interview questions 3-14 will be illustrated in Table 5.


The interview participants tended to skip providing a definition of parental involvement and gave examples instead. This question was the most difficult for the participants to answer so the researcher did not pursue a definition in addition to the examples the participants provided. The examples of parental involvement that were provided were analyzed based on the themes created for the survey question that asked students to describe how their parents are involved in their educations. The following main themes were discovered within the students’ responses to interview question 3: Theme 1: Homework/Help and Theme 6: Monitoring. Examples of responses that were coded to Theme 1 include parents knowing what assignments their child is missing, helping with homework, and checking to be sure that the child is keeping up with his work. Examples of responses that were coded to Theme 6 include parents worrying about grades, knowing what assignments their child is missing, and asking the student how aspects of his life are going. As with the codes used for analysis of the short answer survey question related to parental involvement, Theme 6 overlaps with other themes, as is evidenced by the above examples.

The non-examples of parental involvement that the students provided fit into three main themes, including Theme 2: Lack of Parental Involvement, Theme 4:
Parental Care, and Theme 6: Monitoring. While including lack of parental involvement as a theme for student answers may seem redundant, this theme was actually only minor in comparison to the other two. Even though the question asked students to provide examples of how a parent would not be involved, these examples were not automatically placed in Theme 2. Instead, their content was examined to determine which theme the statements would fit into based on their consistency with the initial survey responses that were placed in this category. For instance, some students expressed that a non-example of parental involvement would be the parent not caring. While this is an example of a lack of parental involvement, it more closely resembles statements in Theme 4: Parental Care. Responses that were placed in Theme 2 were parents not having the chance to be more involved and not being involved in P.E. or other elective classes, among others.

A more common theme found within student answers to this interview question was Theme 4: Parental Care. Examples of statements coded to this theme include the parent not caring, the parent not knowing what the child is doing in or out of school, and not asking the child how school is going, among others.

Theme 6: Monitoring was the final main theme found to fit with the answers students gave. This category overlaps with the other themes, but is important nonetheless. Examples of responses coded to this category include not knowing how the child is doing in or out of school, not talking to the child’s teachers, and not checking if homework is complete.
Question 4: Do you think how much a parent/guardian is involved in their child’s education makes a difference in their grades?

Participants expressed that parental involvement does make a difference in a child’s grades. In fact, only one student did not answer in the affirmative, but even this student answered by saying sometimes yes and sometimes no. While the interview participants mostly agreed that parental involvement does influence grades, each of their explanations as to why this is the case was different. Because of the variety in the participants’ answers, themes were not able to be identified within the participants’ explanations. To provide some insight, however, some of the students’ explanations included that parental involvement gives a child hope, that parental involvement motivates a child, and that it causes a child to care about his education.

Question 5: Would your grades get better if your parents/guardians were more involved in your education? Do you think other kids' grades would get better if their parents/guardians were more involved?

Responses to this question were mixed. Three participants said that more parental involvement would not be helpful and two participants said that it would be helpful. The two students who believed that more involvement would be helpful to their grades said this to be true because they thought that their parents would push them to improve. Two of the students who were in opposition to this believed that more parental involvement would generally not be helpful.

In response to the second part of the question, students said that more parental involvement would help or would maybe help other students. Two students explained
that this would be true because of poor situations. For instance, one student said that parents need to give kids more attention and that this would help children’s grades. The second student expressed that if a parent does not give his child boundaries and allows him to do as he pleases, more parental involvement would lead to higher grades.

**Question 6: Most students said that their parents/guardians do not come to back to school night or open house. Why do you think they don’t come?**

The participants offered three main reasons why parents do not attend school functions such as back to school night or open house. They postulated that parents do not think that coming is useful or necessary or that the child may have failed to tell the parent about the event. Most commonly, however, the participants said that parents are too busy to come and often listed work as a cause for lack of event attendance.

**Question 7: Most kids said that their parents/guardians are strict when it comes to them getting their work done. What kinds of consequences have you had in the past for not getting your work done? Do you always have a consequence or do you think you would always have a consequence?**

Students expressed that the consequences they have received for not completing work were having their phones taken away, being lectured/yelled at, or being confined to their rooms, without any external privileges. The consequences that students received were not always a certainty, however; their parents did not give consequences every time that the students had unfinished work. Reasons why parents
did not always give consequences were not common amongst the participants. Thus, themes related to this issue cannot be offered.

**Question 8: Most kids said that their parents/guardians expect them to get A’s and B’s or higher in school. Do you think that a parent/guardian’s expectations make kids get higher grades?**

Participants expressed that a parent’s expectations only sometimes, or even never, push a child to earn higher grades. This was said to be true because of an issue related to obedience. Students said that if a child is yielding to his parents, he will also yield to their expectations, but if the child is rebellious, his parents’ expectations will not have a significant effect on academic performance.

**Question 9: Many kids said that they would not get in trouble if they didn’t have A’s and B’s or higher. Why do you think they wouldn’t get in trouble?**

Responses to this question generally demonstrated that students do not get in trouble for earning grades lower than A’s and B’s because parents can be content with such grades. The students further added that while a student may not earn these top marks, parents don’t push for or try to help their child get A’s and B’s.

**Question 10: What do you think makes someone successful? Please list other things besides grades.**

Students mentioned a wide range of items that they believe make a person successful. These items generally dealt with either physical performance or internal characteristics. Students expressed that working hard, putting forth a best effort,
desiring success, and having integrity made a person successful. They also mentioned that being dedicated and determined were important for success.

**Question 11: What does someone do to get good grades?**

Answers to this question included items that place the responsibility of grades on the student. Students did not say that someone needs good parents or a good home environment to get good grades, for example. Rather, students mentioned items such as paying attention, being involved in class, and performing well on tests as catalysts to academic achievement. Additionally, the most commonly mentioned ways to earn high grade marks were to study, complete the work, and work hard.

**Question 12: Is there a specific place in your house that is designated for homework?**

Students responded by saying that they generally do not have a designated place in their homes to do homework; they listed various different places that they utilize as work areas. However, the most commonly mentioned places that students work are in a bedroom or at the dining room/kitchen table.

**Question 13: Do you have a routine for doing homework? If so, what is it?**

Students responded to this question, demonstrating that they generally do have a routine for completing homework. Those routines, however, are quite different. Commonalities or themes within these routines are unclear because most of the participants’ answers were unrelated. For example, one student said that she completes her homework in the same order as it is listed on her weekly assignment sheet, while another said that he reviews his weekly assignments first and then chooses the most
difficult and time consuming one to complete first. If any theme is possible to be
derived from the list of student answers, it is that students complete their homework
within a short time span. For instance, one student said that, after a day of relaxation,
he does as much as possible until his work is done, while another student says she
procrastinates for most of the week and does all her homework in the two days before
it is due.

**Question 14: What things are needed for you to be the most successful in doing
your homework? Do you have those things? How often do you have them?**

In response to this question, students mentioned environmental aspects,
understanding assignments, and internal factors. Environmental aspects in relation to
this question refer to having a quiet place to work that is suitable for concentration.
The internal factors that students said were necessary for homework success were
being motivated and determined, which could be thought of as the same internal
factor. In other words, students expressed that they needed an internal force to be the
most successful in doing their homework. The second part of question 14 asked
students how often they have what they need in order to be successful in completing
their homework. Responses to this question were most commonly that the students
have what they need sometimes or most of the time.

Detailed data related to interview questions 3-14 was presented. For simplicity,
a summary of the discovered themes to these interview questions will be illustrated in
Table 5.
Table 5

*Interview Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Question</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.</strong> How would you define parental involvement? Give three examples of parental</td>
<td>Examples of parental involvement that were provided correspond with the themes defined during the survey, and include Theme 1: Homework/Help and Theme 6: Monitoring. Non-examples of parental involvement corresponded with three different themes, and include Theme 2: Lack of Parental Involvement, Theme 4: Parental Care, and Theme 6: Monitoring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4.</strong> Do you think how much a parent/guardian is involved in their child’s education makes a difference in their grades?</td>
<td>Parental involvement does make a difference in a child’s grades, but there were no identifiable themes within the interviewee’s responses that could offer a concrete explanation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5.</strong> Would your grades get better if your parents/guardians were more involved in</td>
<td>Three said no and two said yes their grades would be better if their parents/guardians were more involved. Two of the students who answered no included in their responses that if their parents were more involved, it would not be helpful. More parental involvement would help or would maybe help other students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>your education? Do you think other kids’ grades would get better if their parents/guardians were more involved?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6.</strong> Most students said that their parents/guardians do not come to back to school</td>
<td>Parents do not attend these functions because they don’t think that coming is useful or necessary, the child did not tell the parent about the event, or the parent is too busy to attend, especially due to work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>night or open house. Why do you think they don’t come?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7.</strong> Most kids said that their parents/guardians are strict when it comes to them getting their work done. What kinds of consequences have you had in the past for not getting your work done? Do you always have a consequence or do you think you would always have a consequence?</td>
<td>Consequences included students having their phones taken away, being lectured/yelled at, or being confined to their rooms, without any external privileges. The consequences that students received were not a certainty; they didn’t always have consequences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Most kids said that their parents/guardians expect them to get A’s and B’s or higher in school. Do you think that a parent/guardian’s expectations make kids get higher grades?</td>
<td>A parent’s expectations either sometimes or never push a child to get higher grades. This was said to be true because of an issue related to obedience. Students expressed that if a student is yielding to his parents, he will also yield to their expectations, but if the student is rebellious, his parents’ expectations will not have significant effects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Many kids said that they would not get in trouble if they didn’t have A’s and B’s or higher. Why do you think they wouldn’t get in trouble?</td>
<td>Students do not get in trouble because parents are happy with grades other than A’s and B’s; parents do not push for or try to help their kids get A’s and B’s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. What do you think makes someone successful? Please list other things besides grades.</td>
<td>Themes found in the answers to this question demonstrate both physical performance and internal characteristics, including dedication, determination, integrity, desire to be successful, working hard, and putting forth a best effort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. What does someone do to get good grades?</td>
<td>Answers include items that place the responsibility of grades on the student. Most commonly mentioned ways to earn good grades were to study, do the work, and work hard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Is there a specific place in your house that is designated for homework?</td>
<td>No; students usually do homework in various places; the places mentioned most commonly were in a bedroom or at the dining room/kitchen table.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Do you have a routine for doing homework? If so, what is it?</td>
<td>Generally yes; students have various different routines for completing their homework, but one common theme could be that students do all their work within a short period of time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. What things are needed for you to be the most successful in doing your homework? Do you have those things? How often do you have them?</td>
<td>Items needed for successful homework completion are a good environment, understanding the assignment, and internal factors (motivation and determination); students sometimes or most of the time have what they need.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5 provides a summary of the interview questions and answers. The information in this table shows aspects of parental involvement offered by interviewees that were found within the initial themes related to parental involvement discovered in the survey. The information in this table also provides students’ answers to questions related to the effectiveness of parental involvement and parental expectations. Responses demonstrated that parental involvement does influence grades, but that more parental involvement may or may not positively affect grades, depending on the situation. Other responses demonstrated that parental expectations are not a definite influence to student achievement. Various other topics were addressed in the interview response summaries provided in this table. These topics included explanations for lack of open house attendance, information about the types and consistencies of consequences for incomplete work, explanations for the absence of consequences when grade expectations are not met, listings of sources for success and good grades, and information about homework completion.

**Research Claims**

Based on the results from the surveys and interviews mentioned previously, certain research claims have been crafted. Five claims in total were found, each of which addresses the primary research questions, which examine whether or not parental involvement and parental expectations have effects on academic outcomes. Each claim will be presented and significance, evidence, and analytical commentary will be offered.
Claim 1: There is a discrepancy between perceived parental expectations, perceived parental satisfaction, and self-reported grades.

On the student surveys, participants reported their parents’ expectations for their grades. They also were asked about whether or not their parents were happy with the grades that they attain. Separately, they were asked to describe the grades that they normally earn. Claim 1 asserts that parents are satisfied with their students’ grades, but that these grades do not match the perceived expectations of the parents.

Self-reporting of grades on the survey revealed that B’s and C’s were reported to be earned by students most frequently. These grade marks suggest that the students at the school are performing at a high-average level. This performance is not consistent with the 88.4% of students who, on the survey, generally agreed that their parents expect them to get A’s and B’s or higher. This is also inconsistent with the average GPAs of the researcher’s own students. The researcher took the average of all her students’ GPAs who were in high school and had been attending the school for at least one full semester. Middle school students were excluded because cumulative GPAs are not calculated for this age group of students. The average cumulative GPA of high school student who had been attending the school for at least one semester was 1.97, about a C average. While the researcher’s own students do not accurately represent the entire student population, information regarding their grade point averages further reinforces the discrepancy that was found concerning parental expectations and student grades.
A second discrepancy within this first claim exists between the students’ grades and their parents’ satisfaction with those grades, in light of their expectations. As was previously mentioned, 88.4% of students generally agreed that their parents expect them to get A’s and B’s or higher. It has also been established that the grades students earn do not reflect their parents’ perceived expectations. An additional factor to be considered along with the previous two pieces of evidence is that 72% of the survey participants generally agreed that their parents or guardians are happy with their grades. These three pieces of data, when taken together, suggest a problem. Parents expect their children to earn A’s and B’s or higher, but the children are not earning these grades and their parents are still satisfied with their performances.

On the survey, it was determined that 63.8% of the participants generally disagreed that they would get in trouble if they didn’t earn A’s and B’s or higher. This finding does not prove anything in isolation, but it suggests that while parents expect their children to attain top grades, this expectation may not be strong enough for the parents to feel as though a consequence is necessary if their expectations are not met. During the interviews, students were asked to explicate why a child would not get in trouble for failing to earn A’s and B’s or higher. A provided explanation was that parents are happy with grades other than A’s and B’s and that they do not push for or try to help their children earn A’s and B’s. This insight further suggests that the parents do not have strong expectations for high grade marks.

The discovered discrepancy between perceived parental expectations, perceived parental satisfaction, and self-reported grades is significant because there is
an inconsistency between what grades parents expect and what they will accept, which begs many questions, one of which is why parents would have an expectation, but not remain consistent in it? It does not seem likely that the parents of the students at the school would collectively be inconsistent in their expectations. It does seem likely, however, that the students may be misinterpreting their parents’ expectations or that the parents may have two sets of expectations: one that is realistic and one that they believe their child is capable of meeting. It seems that the latter is more plausible, and in other words, indicates the possibility that parents’ expectations for A’s and B’s exist, but are not fervent.

Claim 2: Students perceive their parents to have high expectations for them, but student grades do not consistently reflect these expectations.

Various sources of research have surmised that the expectations a parent has for her child have an effect on academic performance. It appears that, based on the findings from this study, a parent’s expectations do not consistently influence the child to perform at the level the parent desires. This is significant because many different sources of research have suggested that parental expectations have an effect on student grades, and this finding raises many important questions.

It has been stated that 88.4% of the respondents generally agreed that their parents or guardians expect them to earn A’s and B’s or higher. However, B’s and C’s were listed most frequently among student-reported grades. Additionally, 72% of the survey participants generally agreed that their parents or guardians were happy with their grades. These pieces of data, when considered together, pose a problem. It
appears that parental expectations do not always influence students to perform at the level that their parents desire. Information derived from the student interviews provides some insight into this issue. Students expressed that a parent’s expectations either sometimes or never push a child to get higher grades because of issues related to obedience. Interviewees articulated that if a student is yielding to his parents, he will also yield to their expectations, but if a student is rebellious, his parents’ expectations will not significantly influence academic achievement.

On the survey, students were asked additional questions which specifically were designed to determine certain parental expectations. The survey showed that 97.9% of students generally agreed that their parents or guardians expect them to graduate from high school, 87.9% of students generally agreed that their parents or guardians expect them to graduate from college, and 49% of students generally agreed that their parents or guardians expect them to earn a master’s degree or doctorate. These perceived expectations are inconsistent with the expectations of a nationally representative sample of students, collected by the NCES (1990), which cited that 20% of white parents expect their children to earn degrees beyond a bachelor’s (as cited in Kao, 1995). While the statistics Kao cites are not recent and not all of the students at the focus school are white, the data is suggestive. The majority of the students at the focus school are white and there is a large discrepancy between 49% and 20%. There is also an inconsistency with the school’s demographic information and the parents’ expectations. 18.6% of the parents have earned college degrees, yet 87.9% of students generally agreed that their parents expect them to graduate from
college. Additionally, only 4% of the parents have earned postgraduate degrees, but 49% of students generally agree that their parents expect them to earn this type of degree. This contrasts research in the field that found that a parent’s education level is related to student education level. Specifically, according to a study conducted by Dubow, Boxer, and Huesmann (2009), when a child was 8 years old, his parent’s education level played a role in the child’s educational success later in life. Additionally, when the parent had a higher education level, the child’s education level at age 19 was positively influenced, and in turn led to higher levels of education later in life (Dubow et al., 2009).

These findings imply a couple of different scenarios. The latter finding suggests, as was said before, that the children may be misinterpreting their parents’ expectations or that their perceptions of their parents’ expectations are correct, but that these expectations are not particularly concrete. The former finding suggests that a parent’s expectations do not affect a child’s grades consistently. That is, perhaps expectations do not effect a student’s grades at all or the expectations influence the child positively, but not to the point in which they meet their parent’s expectations. Gordon and Cui (2012) provide a counter argument to the idea of expectations influencing academic success by concluding that school specific parenting was a stronger predictor of academic success than parental expectations. Lubienski and Crane (2010) add to this counter argument by their findings that parental expectations were not good predictors for long-term student achievement, but rather initial kindergarten achievement.
Astone and McLanahan (1991), Catsambis (2002), and Milne et al. (1986) offer a separate idea. These researchers have found that high parental aspirations affect class enrollment. That is, children who have parents with high educational aspirations will enroll in classes that are more demanding (as cited in Weiser & Riggio, 2010). The survey revealed that students do believe that their parents have relatively high expectations for them, including grades of A’s and B’s or higher and college degree attainment. A significant portion of the students also feel as though they are expected to earn postgraduate degrees. Such high expectations imply that many of the students at the target school would be enrolled in challenging classes. However, the observations of this researcher contradict this implication; there appears to be a larger number of students at the school who are enrolled in regular or basic classes, rather than those that are academically demanding. This information supports the previous conclusions that give possible explanations for the discrepancy, including that the effects of parental expectations are not as far-reaching as other research has found, that what students perceive to be expected of them is accurate, but that these expectations are not resolute, and that students at the focus school are misunderstanding their parents’ expectations. Another possible reason for this discrepancy that has not been suggested is that the parents’ expectations do have an effect on the students’ grades. That is, perhaps the self-reported B’s and C’s are a result of high parental expectations and the target students would achieve even lower grades if their parents didn’t have such high expectations.
A distinct explanation for the mismatch between parental expectations and student grades cannot be provided, but the most reasonable explanations can be offered. Some have already been presented, but three will be given attention as they are thought to be the most plausible. Firstly, parental expectations may not have a strong effect on student achievement in this case. Secondly, the expectations that the parents have for their children may not be unwavering or absolutely strict, and finally, parental expectations could be positively influencing student grades, but the evidence of these effects are not easily seen because students are not meeting their parents’ expectations.

**Claim 3: Students at the school commonly define parental involvement in terms of helping or being involved with homework, monitoring, and parental care.**

On both the survey and in the interviews, students were asked several questions related to parental involvement. On the survey, students were asked to describe the ways in which their parents are involved in their educations. They were also asked to rate nine items related to parental involvement on a Likert scale. During the interview, students were asked five questions relating to this topic. The questions on the surveys and in the interviews that did not require a Likert scale uncovered the specific ways in which the students at the school identify and experience parental involvement. The main themes found within students’ answers had to do with parents being involved with homework, monitoring their children, and caring. The way students identified parental involvement is significant because its specific definition for this school site allows for a plausible measure of parental involvement.
To begin, students' open-ended survey and interview questions pertaining to the topic will be considered. On the survey, students were asked to describe their parents’ involvement in their educations. These responses yielded six different themes, including homework/help, lack of parental involvement, provision of practical items, parental care, emotional support, and monitoring. Of these six themes, homework/help and monitoring had the most response items credited to them. During the interviews, students were asked to give both examples and non-examples of parental involvement. The students’ answers reflected four different themes, including homework/help, monitoring, lack of parental involvement, and parental care. The strongest themes in this case were homework/help, monitoring, and parental care. With these three main themes and homework/help and monitoring being the two strongest themes discovered during the survey, it was decided that homework/help, monitoring, and parental care were the ways in which students most commonly identified and experienced parental involvement.

Claim 4: Levels of parental involvement are average and appear to reflect self-reported grades.

Overall, B’s and C’s were reported most commonly in student responses, which suggest that the students are performing in the high-average range. The survey data also revealed that students’ parents are involved at an average to high-average level. This is significant because some researchers have concluded that parental involvement influences student grades (Gordon & Cui, 2012). Nevertheless, parents and families have different views about their roles in their children’s educations. Some
may view education as the entire responsibility of the school while others may give
great importance to staying abreast of the happenings at the school (Epstein, 1995).
Some parents believe that they should be involved in helping their child with
homework and supporting their education through parent conferences and PTA
meetings. Other parents cannot help their kids with homework or go to parent
conferences and even see school activities as inappropriate when outside of the
classroom (Allington & Cunningham, 2007).

It is important to take into account that different families have different
definitions of parental involvement. In order to adequately consider this issue, the
survey data will be interpreted alongside the students’ descriptions of activities in
which their parents participate. It was previously mentioned that students wrote about
parental involvement that was categorized into three main themes: homework/help,
monitoring, and parental care. The survey items that encompassed one or more of
these themes will be considered for interpretation. For instance, survey questions 9,
10, and 12 are considered to be a part of Theme 1: Homework/Help. Survey question
14 is part of Theme 4: Parental Care. Finally, survey questions 11 through 15 are a
part of Theme 6: Monitoring. The remainder of the survey questions were either about
parental expectations or will not be included in this interpretation. One specific
question that will not be used that is worth mentioning is question 14. This item will
not be used because it does not belong to one of the major themes found within
students’ descriptions of how their parents are involved. However, question 17 will be
used even though it does not fit within a theme because it asks the students directly
about the levels at which their parents are involved. As a reference, the survey questions that have been mentioned in this section will appear in Table 6. Bolded items indicate those questions that will be a focal point of the interpretation of results.

Table 6

Survey Questions Used to Interpret Levels of Parental Involvement

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>My parents or guardians are happy with the grades I get.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>My parents or guardians expect me to get A’s and B’s or higher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I would get in trouble if I didn’t get A’s and B’s or higher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>My parents or guardians expect me to graduate from high school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>My parents or guardians expect me to graduate from college.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>My parents or guardians expect me to get a master’s degree or doctorate (Ph.D.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td><strong>My parents or guardians are strict when it comes to me getting my school work done.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>My parents or guardians help me with my school work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>My parents or guardians know when I haven’t done all my work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>My parents or guardians check to make sure I did my work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>My parents or guardians talk to my teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>My parents or guardians talk to me about school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>My parents or guardians go to open house or back to school night.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>When I was younger, my parents or guardians read books to me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td><strong>Compared to other kids, my parents or guardians are very involved in my education.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The survey results revealed that students’ parents are involved at an average to high-average level. Survey items 9 through 11 reflected a high-average to high level of parental involvement. On item 9, 75.3% of students *generally agreed* that their parents or guardians are strict when work completion is concerned. On item 10, 64.9% *generally agreed* that their parents or guardians help them with school work. Item 11 showed that 68.7% of students *generally agreed* that their parents or guardians know when they haven’t done all their work. Items 12 through 14 reflected an average level
of involvement, as all of these questions were most commonly answered with the Likert category *sometimes*. Item 15 disclosed that the largest percentage of students expressed that their parents *almost never* attend open house or back to school night. Item 17 asked students to rate their parents’ levels of involvement compared to other kids’ parents. The most commonly chosen answer was *sometimes*, revealing an average level of involvement.

When considering all of this data, it can be seen that three survey items reflect a high or high-average level of parental involvement. One item reflects a low-average level of involvement, and four items depict an average level of involvement. Taken together, this information shows that, overall, parents at the target school are involved at an average to high-average level, which is consistent with the grades students self-reported on survey question 2.

**Claim 5: It appears that parental involvement influences student academic outcomes.**

The data collected in this study and previous research conducted on the same topics provide for a conclusive outcome. Students’ self-reported grades reflect the levels at which parents at the focus school are currently involved. Additionally, past research and the information relating to this topic from the student interviews support the research claim. This is significant because it is important to know what types of things will encourage better student achievement. If parental involvement is an important factor related to student success, it should be a focal point for teachers—that
is, teacher’s efforts would be well-spent by encouraging parental involvement because it can produce positive academic outcomes.

During the interviews, students were asked whether or not they felt parental involvement makes a difference in a student’s grades. Overall, the interviewees agreed that parental involvement does indeed make a difference in a student’s grades. Students were also asked whether or not their grades would improve if their parents were more involved. Two of the five interviewees said that their grades would improve if their parents were more involved. Also, the interview participants said that, as a whole, other students’ grades would either increase or might increase if their parents were more involved.

As it has been demonstrated, the interview question that asked students whether or not their grades would improve if their parents were more involved yielded mixed responses. The affirmative answers to this question have already been mentioned. In contrast, three students also said that more involvement would not better their grades. These students said that more involvement would not be helpful. One student said this because he feels his parents are already involved to an adequate extent. Another student explained that education is his responsibility so more parental involvement wouldn’t make a difference. The third student said that more parental involvement wouldn’t improve her grades because her parents are content with her grades and don’t push her to do better than she is already doing.

Another survey question asked students what consequences they have had in the past for not completing their work. This question was a measurement of parental
involvement because it is consistent with parental involvement Theme 6: Monitoring. Students expressed that they usually had their phones taken away, were lectured/yelled at, or were confined to their rooms, without any external privileges. The consequence portion of this question was not as important as the second part of the question, which asked students about the consistency of the consequences they received. The students’ answers showed that the consequences they received were not a certainty. That is, they didn’t always have consequences. Consistency of consequences and academic performance level were examined to determine if there was any correlation between the two. Namely, it was investigated whether or not high performing students received consequences more consistently than other students, or vice versa. When consistency of consequences was compared to the individual student performance levels, no correlation was able to be derived. Evidence of this is demonstrated in Table 7. In this table each of the interview participants is listed, along with their academic performance levels, which range from high to low. The consistency of consequences is also listed for each participant.

Table 7

Comparing Performance Level and Parental Consequence Consistency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Academic Performance Level</th>
<th>Consequence Consistency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student 1</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Only when parents received a report card</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 2</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 3</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Never had a consequence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 4</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Not all the time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 5</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Most of the Time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7 shows that no correlation can be found between the performance level of a student and his parents’ consistency of consequences for work not completed. An important caveat to this information is that one student offered past information about consistency of consequences. This is important because it is not known whether or not his performance level was different in the past than it is currently. Therefore, his academic performance cannot accurately be compared with his parents’ consistency of consequences. Nevertheless, the data indicates that there was not a correlation between academic performance level and consistency of consequences for this group of students.

When considering the information taken from both the surveys and interviews, it would be possible to surmise that a concrete conclusion could not be drawn about the impacts of parental involvement on a student’s grades. It is possible that, as Epstein (1995) remarked, not all types of parental involvement necessitate school achievement. Rather, different types of involvement could influence a child’s attitudes and behaviors instead of achievement (Epstein, 1995). It may be that students are affected by their parents’ involvement in ways besides those related to achievement. However, it seems unlikely that academic achievement would not be impacted because even if parental involvement influenced child attitudes and behaviors, these outcomes could indirectly influence academic achievement. Other researchers have suggested similar ideas.

Grodnick and Slowiaczek (1994) found that parental involvement and academic performance were related through motivation. Behavior and cognitive/intellectual
involvement were predictors of the motivational aspects of a child’s self-efficacy and control understanding. These factors, in turn, predicted better academic outcomes.

One study found that parental involvement is related to self-efficacy and that greater self-efficacy is linked to academic success. This exhibits an indirect relationship between parental involvement and academic success (Weiser & Riggio, 2010).

In considering the data taken from this study, the evidence in opposition to the positive effects of parental involvement should be considered. However, past research presents a compelling argument for the importance of parental involvement and its influences on academic achievement. Additionally, and more importantly in terms of this study, the larger body of data points to the conclusion that parental involvement does have an effect on student grades. Given the consistency between self-reported grades and measured levels of parental involvement, as well as the interview responses which mostly support the importance of parental involvement, it appears that higher levels of parental involvement positively affect academic performance.

**Summary**

This chapter gave detailed information regarding the results gleaned from the study. This data was then analyzed and research claims were formed in light of the research questions. The research claims put forth in this chapter posit that

1. there is a discrepancy between perceived parental expectations, perceived parental satisfaction, and self-reported grades;
2. students perceive their parents to have high expectations for them, but student grades do not consistently reflect these expectations;
3. students at the school commonly define parental involvement in terms of helping or being involved with homework, monitoring, and parental care;
4. levels of parental involvement are average and appear to reflect self-reported grades; and
5. parental involvement appears to influence student academic outcomes.

In the following and final chapter, the a summary of the study will be presented, overall findings of the study will be reviewed and discussed, methodological issues and limitations of the study will be acknowledged, and areas for further research will be explored.
Chapter 5

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine how parental involvement and parental expectations influence or affect student grades. Related research in the field was reviewed, a study was conducted that aimed to add information to a growing body of educational research, and the study’s findings were analyzed and interpreted. Chapter 5 will be devoted to discussing the components and findings of the study, acknowledging research limitations and issues found within the study’s methodology, and making suggestions for future research.

Summary of the Study

Numerous researchers have found that parental involvement has an effect on student grades (Gniewosz & Noack, 2012; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001; Weiser & Riggio, 2010). However, other researchers have said that parental involvement is only influential to grades in certain situations (Hill & Craft, 2003; Seyfried & Chung, 2002) or that it’s not a significant predictor of success (Lubienski & Crane, 2010). Research relating to parental expectations has been more positive, and many studies have shown that parental expectations play an important role in the academic success of a child (Coleman, 1988; Fan & Chen, 2001; Lubienski & Crane, 2010).

These aspects of educational research appeared to be potential influences to the success of the students at the researcher’s school site. Because of this, these two items
became the focus of this study, and the topics of the primary research questions, which were:

1. For students in an independent study school in Northern California, what is the relationship between levels of parental involvement and academic outcomes?

2. For this same population of students, are the academic expectations parents have for their children related to academic outcomes?

Students in grades 7-12 at an independent study charter school in Northern California participated in surveys and interviews related to the research questions. The surveys consisted of two different types of questions: those that required a Likert scale rating and those that were open-ended. The students were given surveys during their math classes so that the highest number of students might participate. These surveys were voluntary and anonymous and the students were asked to sign a consent form to participate. Students who chose to participate received a homework pass for their cooperation.

Upon completion of the surveys, potential candidates for interviews were approached. The researcher strove to have the demographics of the interviewees closely resemble those of the overall student population. Thus, data from one out of the six total student interviews was omitted because its inclusion would have resulted in an overrepresentation of certain demographic areas.

After survey and interview administration, the information gathered from these instruments was analyzed. Analysis of the data included both quantitative and
qualitative elements. The survey questions that required responses using a Likert scale were counted and percentages of each response were determined. The terms *generally agree* and *generally disagree* were used to make concise generalizations about the findings. The overall findings of this portion of the survey suggest that the students’ parents have high expectations and are involved in their children’s educations to an average degree. The open-ended survey questions were analyzed by looking for commonalities between responses. Themes were found which summarized the responses to the first open-ended question and tallying was used to analyze the responses to the second survey question. Analysis of the first open-ended question revealed that students’ parents are involved in their educations in two main ways: through involvement in the students’ homework and through monitoring their school-related activities. Analysis of the second open-ended survey question showed that students most commonly reported that they earn B’s and C’s in school.

Analysis of the interview questions yielded large amounts of information. Because of this, a quick summary of only the answers to most pertinent questions will be provided. A detailed discussion and complete summary of the interview results can be found in chapter 4.

- Students were asked to give both examples and non-examples of parental involvement. Examples of parental involvement that were provided by the students could be categorized into two of the themes defined during the survey, including Theme 1: Homework/Help and Theme 6: Monitoring. Non-examples of parental involvement were consistent with three different
themes, including Theme 2: Lack of Parental Involvement, Theme 4: Parental Care, and Theme 6: Monitoring.

- Students were asked whether or not parental involvement makes a difference in a student’s grades. Interviewees said that parental involvement does make a difference in grades, but there were no identifiable themes within the interviewee’s responses that could offer a concrete explanation.

- Students were asked whether or not their grades would improve if their parents were more involved. Three students said no and two said yes their grades would improve if their parents/guardians were more involved. Two of the students who answered no included in their responses that if their parents were more involved, it would not be helpful. Students were also asked whether other students’ grades would improve if their parents were more involved. The interviewees stated that more parental involvement would help or would maybe help other students.

- Students were asked what consequences they have received for not doing their work. They were also asked about the consistency of these consequences. Students usually had their phones taken away, were lectured/yelled at, or were confined to their rooms, without any external privileges. The consequences that students received were not a certainty. That is, they did not always have consequences.
Students were asked if parental expectations make a difference in a student’s grades. Interviewees explained that a parent’s expectations either sometimes or never push a child to earn higher grades. This was said to be true because of an issue related to obedience. Students stated that if a student is yielding to his parents, he will also yield to their expectations, but if the student is rebellious, his parent’s expectations will not have a significant influence.

Interviewees were asked why students would not get in trouble if they failed to earn A’s and B’s or higher. They responded by saying that parents are content with grades other than A’s and B’s and that they don’t push for or try to help their children earn these grades.

The full set of analyzed findings from the interviews, not just those summarized above, helped enrich and explain the information that was provided by the student surveys. This data, when taken together, provided ample information for interpretation. The next section will discuss the interpretation of the data and the research claims that were produced by these interpretations.

**Discussion of the Findings**

Once all of the research findings had been analyzed, they were examined to interpret their significance and construct research claims. These claims, along with their relationships to the research questions, will be the focus of this section.
Research Question 1

The first research question that will be considered is, “For students in an independent study school in Northern California, what is the relationship between levels of parental involvement and academic outcomes?” Three of the five research claims identified in chapter 4 relate to this first research question. Each of these three claims will be reviewed in isolation, followed by a discussion that answers the research question.

The first claim related to this research question deals with the definition of parental involvement. This claim states that students at the school commonly define parental involvement in terms of helping or being involved with homework, monitoring, and parental care. Looking at the data from both the survey and interviews support this claim. As was discussed in chapter 4, information from the survey was compared with information from the interviews. This collective information resulted in three main themes related to parental involvement, including involvement in homework or helping the child in some way, monitoring the child’s school-related activities, and caring for the child. Parental care was not identified as an aspect of parental involvement by the researchers cited in this paper, but its lack of identification does not diminish the existence of this type of involvement at the target school. Conversely, the remaining two aspects of parental involvement — homework/help and monitoring—are consistent with the past research discussed in Chapter 2. Epstein (1995) identified six types of parental school involvement, including parenting, volunteering, communication, decision making, learning at home,
and community collaboration (Epstein, 1995). The fifth type of parental involvement, learning at home, is one that encompasses the involvement themes found in this study. According to Epstein, the type of parental involvement called learning at home consists of both homework and other learning tasks and could include a parent helping a child through means such as guiding, monitoring, and encouraging (Epstein, 1995).

The second claim related to this study’s first research question was that levels of parental involvement are average and appear to reflect self-reported grades. This claim is also supported by the data, specifically the data from the student survey. In forming this claim, open-ended survey question 2, which asked students to describe their normal grades, and various other Likert scale survey questions were examined. As a whole, students reported B’s and C’s most often. This information was used to make a generalization that students’ self-reported grades are in the average to high-average range. Additional data taken from the survey showed that overall, the target students’ parents are involved in their educations at an average degree. This evidence supports past research that has asserted that parental involvement positively influences student outcomes (Gordon & Cui, 2012; Houtenville & Conway, 2008).

The third and final claim related to this first research question is that parental involvement appears to influence student academic outcomes. Information from both the survey and the interviews were used to form this claim. The interviews resulted in data that was somewhat mixed concerning the effects of parental involvement. The participants said that parental involvement makes a difference in grades and that other students would do better academically if their parents were more involved, but three
out of the five interviewees expressed that their grades would not get better if their parents were more involved. The data used in claim 2 was also used in the formation of this claim. The data from claim 2 suggests that parental involvement influences grades because students’ self-reported academic performance levels matched their parents’ levels of involvement. Given the data gathered from this study, it appears that parental involvement influences academic performance. This claim is also supported by research, which has postulated that the level at which a parent is involved in his child’s education has an effect on the child’s grades (Gniewosz & Noack, 2012; Grolnick & Slowiacek, 1994; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001; Weiser & Riggio, 2010).

The conclusions drawn in association from the previous three claims, especially that of the third claim, led to an answer to the first major research question associated with this study. The research question asked what the relationship was between levels of parental involvement and academic outcomes for students in an independent study school in Northern California. The answer to this question, for this study in particular, is that there appears to be a positive relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement.

**Research Question 2:**

The second major research question posed in this study was “For this same population of students, are the academic expectations parents have for their children related to academic outcomes?” Two of the research claims made in chapter 4 can be related to this research question. These claims will be reviewed in isolation, followed by a discussion that answers the research question.
The first research claim related to this research question was that there is a discrepancy between perceived parental expectations, perceived parental satisfaction, and self-reported grades. The surveys showed that students perceive that their parents have very high expectations for them, including the attainment of college degrees, and in some cases, the attainment of postgraduate degrees, as well as grades of A’s and B’s or above. However, self-reported grades revealed student grade attainment to be below perceived parental expectations.

Additionally, most students said that their parents were happy with the grades they receive and that they would not get in trouble for failing to get A’s and B’s or higher. Explanations taken from the interviews, as well as the survey results that showed students would not get in trouble if they were unable to get A’s and B’s or higher, suggest that the expectations that parents have for their children are not absolute. These findings are consistent with a small body of research that states that parental expectations are not the strongest predictors of academic success (Gordon & Cui, 2012), are not good predictors of long-term achievement (Lubienski & Crane, 2010), or have effects that are more pronounced in certain ethnic groups (Seyfried & Chung, 2002). However, most of the research found on this topic says just the opposite; many studies have shown that parental expectations play an important role in the academic success of a child (Coleman, 1988; Fan & Chen, 2001; Lubienski & Crane, 2010). Thus, there is a discrepancy between perceived parental expectations, perceived parental satisfaction, and self-reported grades, and this discrepancy is
thought to be caused by students misunderstanding their parents’ expectations or wavering parental expectations.

The second claim related to this research question was that students perceive their parents to have high expectations for them, but their grades do not consistently reflect these expectations. As was said in the last research claim, and was evidenced in the data collected for this study, student grades do not match the expectations of the parents. Additionally, related research done by the NCES (1990) shows that the students in the target school perceive parental expectations at levels well above those listed in a nationally representative study (as cited in Kao, 1995). Even though the evidence taken from the study only speaks of white students, the information is suggestive, despite being inconclusive. Additionally, data from a second study shows that parental education level is directly and indirectly related to student education level in certain situations (Dubow et al., 2009). This research also contradicts the findings of the current study, in which many parents have not graduated from college or earned postgraduate degrees, but expect their children to do so. While the information from these studies does not prove anything, it supports some of the researcher’s proposed explanations for the discrepancy.

A distinct explanation for the mismatch between parental expectations and student grades cannot be provided, but the most reasonable explanations can be offered. Firstly, parental expectations may not have a strong effect on student achievement in this case. Secondly, the expectations that the parents have for their children may not be unwavering or absolutely strict, and finally, parental expectations
could be positively influencing student grades, but the evidence of these effects are not easily seen because students are not meeting their parents’ expectations.

When considering the data related to the previous two claims, there are two possibilities that most likely explain the conflicting data found in this study. First, parental expectations for the students at the focus school do not consistently influence grades to an extent that will allow students to meet their parents’ expectations, and second, the expectations that parents have for their children are not unwavering or absolutely strict. With this information in mind, an answer can now be provided for the second research question, which asked if the academic expectations parents have for their children are related to academic outcomes. The most plausible answer to this question, based on the data collected from this study, is that parental expectations do not influence students to perform to a level that meets their parents’ expectations.

**Unexpected Results**

The answers to the two major research questions associated with this study, as well as certain results from the student surveys and interviews were unexpected. Both parental involvement and parental expectations were expected to have strong correlations to academic achievement. Parental expectations do not appear to have a strong link to grades for the students attending the target school. Also, although parental involvement was found to influence grades, it was expected that this influence would be much stronger. Responses to various other survey and interview items were also unexpected, such as the grades students self-reported and the parental expectation levels that were provided by the survey respondents.
These unexpected results may be due to factors such as sampling and instrumentation. First, the sampling of students who participated in the interviews was relatively small. It would have been more ideal to interview a larger number of students. Also, within this small sample size, 11th grade students were slightly overrepresented by the interview participants, which could have had an effect on validity.

The instrumentation used could have also been the reason for the unexpected data collected in this study. In retrospect, some survey items would have yielded clearer results if they had been reworded or changed. Additionally, inclusion of an open-ended question that asked students to describe their parents’ educational expectations would have been useful in triangulating some of the unexpected data. Certain aspects of the interviews could have also been improved. For instance, some of the interview questions were not particularly pertinent to the study and should have been replaced with more pointed questions that addressed the unexpected survey findings. As it stands, it is suspected that the unexpected findings of the study may have been due to unreliable instrumentation. That is, the student survey may not have adequately presented the intended questions.

Unfortunately, a final possibility for the unexpected results is researcher bias. The researcher encounters the target population on a daily basis and had some preconceived ideas about the student population and issues related to parental involvement and parental expectations.
Suggestions for Future Research

This study provides a starting point for future research that can be conducted on both the topics and the specific population. Both parental expectations and parental involvement are worthy subjects of further research and additional information about the specific population of students will be helpful in order to determine influences to student achievement.

Future research that focuses on parental involvement should be more in-depth. This study merely determined that parental involvement is influential to student achievement. Future studies should look at various aspects of parental involvement and the strength of the effects of each of the types of involvement. Additionally, parent interviews or surveys should be added to the sources of data collection. Information taken directly from parents would give an additional layer by which the data from student surveys could be confirmed.

Future studies that focus on parental expectations should also include parents. The feedback from parents in future studies can serve to not only help confirm findings provided by students, but to explain student responses. For instance, it would have been beneficial to interview or survey parents in the current study about their actual expectations. This information would have been highly valuable in interpreting the data that was deemed inconclusive.

In regards to the study’s instrumentation, it is suggested that a survey be used that has been approved and previously utilized by various other researchers. The use of a different survey would function as a way to heighten the reliability of the study.
However, it is suggested that students still be asked to define parental involvement so that measures of this can be accurately found based on the respondents’ definitions.

In terms of this study’s specific population, it would be highly valuable to extend the current study and obtain parental feedback as well as actual measures of student achievement, rather than self-reported grades. These two changes would dramatically improve the validity of this study by providing an additional measure of triangulation, as well as explanations for the unexpected outcomes.

**Conclusions**

The topics of this study were inspired by the findings of previous researchers. This study used the conclusions drawn by previous researchers to test the target population and the influences to achievement defined in the past research. This study found that parental involvement has an effect on student achievement. This conclusion was drawn based on the collective data from student surveys and interviews. The findings related to parental expectations were not clearly defined, but a conclusion was able to be drawn based on the research data. Specifically, this study found that parental expectations do not influence students to perform to levels that meet their parents’ expectations. The former finding is consistent with many related research studies, but the latter is contradictory. Nevertheless, the data collected from this study adds an important layer to previous research and it is hoped that this new research it will enhance that which already exists.
APPENDIX A

Interview Questions
Interview Questions

1. What grade are you in and what is your gender?

2. What is/are your race(s) or nationality?


4. Do you think how much a parent/guardian is involved in their child’s education makes a difference in their grades?

5. Would your grades get better if your parents/guardians were more involved in your education? Do you think other kids’ grades would get better if their parents/guardians were more involved?

6. Most students said that their parents/guardians do not come to back to school night or open house. Why do you think they don’t come?

7. Most kids said that their parents/guardians are strict when it comes to them getting their work done. What kinds of consequences have you had in the past for not getting your work done? Do you always have a consequence or do you think you would always have a consequence?

8. Most kids said that their parents/guardians expect them to get A’s and B’s or higher in school. Do you think that a parent/guardian’s expectations make kids get higher grades?
9. Many kids said that they would not get in trouble if they didn’t have A’s and B’s or higher. Why do you think they wouldn’t get in trouble?

10. What do you think makes someone successful? Please list other things besides grades.

11. What does someone do to get good grades?

12. Is there a specific place in your house that is designated for homework?

13. Do you have a routine for doing homework? If so, what is it?

14. What things are needed for you to be the most successful in doing your homework? Do you have those things? How often do you have them?
APPENDIX B

Student Survey
Student Survey

1. How are your parents or guardians involved in your education?

2. Please describe the grades that you normally get on your report card.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Kind of Disagree</th>
<th>Kind of Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>I'd rather not say or I don't understand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. My parents or guardians are happy with the grades I get.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. My parents or guardians expect me to get A’s and B’s or higher.</td>
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<td>5. I would get in trouble if I didn’t get A’s and B’s or higher.</td>
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<td>6. My parents or guardians expect me to graduate from high school.</td>
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<td>7. My parents or guardians expect me to graduate from college.</td>
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<td>8. My parents or guardians expect me to get a master’s degree or doctorate (Ph.D.).</td>
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<td>9. My parents or guardians are strict when it comes to me getting my school work done.</td>
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<td>10. My parents or guardians help me with my school work.</td>
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<td>11. My parents or guardians know when I haven’t done all my work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Almost Never</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Almost Always</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>I'd rather not say OR I don't understand</td>
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<td>12. My parents or guardians check to make sure I did my work.</td>
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<td>13. My parents or guardians talk to my teachers.</td>
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<td>14. My parents or guardians talk to me about school.</td>
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<td>15. My parents or guardians go to open house or back to school night.</td>
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<td>16. When I was younger, my parents or guardians read books to me.</td>
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<td>17. Compared to other kids, my parents or guardians are very involved in my education.</td>
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</table>
REFERENCES


