Parents’ Perspectives in their Child’s Education

in Two-Parent Households

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the research study was to explore the perceptions of Navajo mothers and Navajo fathers in the development and childrearing practices of their children and to what extent each parent was involved in their children by gender and age. The objective of the interviews was to capture the perceptions of each parent as to child development and childrearing practices as well as the beliefs that they have on parental involvement. In the current study, the interviews provided information regarding attitudes and perceptions of parental involvement from the Navajo mothers and the Navajo fathers who participated in the study. By using probing questions, deeper insights into the understanding and perceptions of parental involvement were obtained.
To all my children,

Have faith and it will be true.
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My acknowledgment goes far and near as I journeyed through this work, which has truly impacted and shaped my life to whom I am today, a Diné woman. This work has shaped not only the values I have as a parent but also the necessity of having a belief and having faith that prayer will overcome anything that comes before me. I learned that through this journey.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Educational systems and programs today are under enormous pressure to show evidence that they are providing every child with an equal and effective education through a viable and comprehensive parental involvement program. The evidence of a guaranteed and viable parental involvement program for these students is further mandated through the enactment of the No Child Left behind Act of 1991. This act, along with other state and federal mandates, has been developed in the belief that these acts will reverse the many years of failure to educate our children through the support of parents being involved in their children’s educational process. Wright and Willis (2001) pointed out that while schools are attempting to increase parental involvement, the level of participation tends to decline at a steady rate from early years to middle school grades, during which it is almost absent. Izzo, Weissberg, Kaspprow, and Fendrick (1999) also reported that parental involvement in a child’s education tends to change over time and this change is related to school functioning. As a result, the purpose of this qualitative study was to examine parental perceptions in their involvement in their children’s education, especially in how they viewed child development and child rearing practices.

Over many decades, factors associated with student academic achievement have consistently been examined ranging from socioeconomic status, family structure, home environment, parental involvement, parenting styles, peer association, to school environment, teachers, or lack of emotional, social and
physical resources provided to students. Whether independently or collectively, educational researchers have found that many factors contribute to student academic achievement. However, research studies provide contrasting views as to which factor may contribute the most. Ongoing debates among parents, politicians, educators, and researchers continue as to which environment, home or school, has the greater influence on student academic achievement. Halawah (2006), for example, argued that both school climate and the family environment have a strong, direct influence on academic achievement.

**Psychological and Sociocultural Factors: Family Environment**

Academic achievement has been linked to several influences distinctive to the home environment, such as parental involvement, family cohesion, parent control and discipline strategies, parenting styles, and affective warmth. Therefore, it is difficult but necessary to consider the role of parents and their influences when tackling such a problem as low academic achievement. Jacobs and Harvey (2005) recognized parental involvement and parenting style as two variables being significantly important contributors to student academic success in school. Parental influences, specifically parental involvement and parent, are crucial.

According to Alliance for Excellent Education (2006) billions of dollars are lost nationally because students are not prepared to succeed in life after high school and the workforce. With the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, schools are held more accountable for student achievement than in past years. However, one key component relating to student academic
achievement may have been inadvertently omitted, the family environmental piece. Fan and Chen (2001) suggested the family environment inspires students to perform better in academics as well as to develop types of behavior that lead to success in school. Due to this, the family environment, specifically parental influences, is an important factor in student academic achievement. It is imperative for schools to form a partnership with parents to enhance student academic achievement. Without this partnership, it is possible academic achievement will continue stagnating or decline leaving students unprepared for life after high school.

Hammer, Miccio, and Wagstaff (2003) found parental involvement and parenting styles, which promote high levels of student performance, as important factors in student academic achievement. Unfortunately, parents may feel they lack the knowledge and skills needed to aid their children in the successful matriculation through school. Additionally, parents may not realize the contribution they are able to provide comes through parental involvement and methods in which they raise their children.

Parents are present in their children’s lives on a daily basis and they have valuable information to offer educators about their children, yet the body of the research on parental involvement only tells the side of the story from the educators’ and the perceptions of the educational systems (Pelletier & Brent, 2002). Research further states that although there is compelling research evidence that states the many benefits that parental involvement has in schools, the research literature notes that barriers exist that separate parents from the school (Abrams &
Gibbs, 2000; O’Connor, 2001) and that parental involvement in schools define how they can bring parents into the schools to assist the schools’ efforts with their children’s education (Barton, Drake, Perez, St. Louis, & George, 2004). Current research does very little to allow the voices of parents to be heard about their involvement in their children’s education.

Halawah (2006) stated that educators voice their concerns regarding the lack of motivation students have about their learning process and parents are just as bothered and echo the concern. Strangely, educators and parents blame one another for the students’ detachment from learning, although each has a major role to play in the academic achievement of the students. Thus, a greater understanding is needed in the attempts to form a correlation between parental involvement and academic achievement.

The issue of family environment may be especially critical in the case of American Indian children’s academic achievement. Lomawaima (1999) found what happened when American Indian children were not taught in an educational system designed by American Indians. This implies that cultural perspectives as transmitted through parental and community involvement have a crucial impact on children’s attitudes and preparedness to go to school and focus on academic learning.

The same is true for American Indian children who are being taught in an educational system that was not designed by American Indians (Lomawaima, 1999). This could be due to cultural differences. Trotman (2001) reported that cultural influence was an additional factor that may affect parental involvement in
schools or their child’s education. He stated that it is important to understand cultural views and individual perceptions of what constitutes parental involvement. The importance of considering parents’ perceptions of involvement when attempting to understand and increase their participation is crucial to an effective parental involvement in schools. This may hold even truer among Navajo schools throughout the Navajo reservation, where the educational system is a combination of public, religious, and Bureau of Indian Education operated and funded schools.

Increased parental involvement continues to challenge schools in public and Bureau of Indian Education funded and operated schools, despite a mandate from the federal government such as the No Child Left Behind initiative. Research also states that successful parental involvement positively increases student achievement, student behavior, and increased attendance rate. However, many schools continue to struggle with this component of the NCLB without much success. The parents’ perspectives are given very little consideration in research on parental involvement; therefore, parents still remain misrepresented in the research world, despite the different mandates for increased parental involvement (Spring, 2006) and many different programs focused on increasing parental involvement, again, developed by educators (Allington & Cunningham, 2007).

**Statement of the Problem and Research Questions**

Epstein (1995) found that regardless of race, culture, and class differences, parents can make a difference by making a significant contribution to their
children’s education and lives. She went on to state that parents are an integral part of their child’s overall development and that interactions between parents and schools are important in order for them to have successful school and life experiences. Parents are the most powerful and influential part of their children’s lives and they hold valuable information about how their children’s life experiences and individual needs in education can be met.

However, there is a general concept within the westernized society about what comprises parental involvement, including specific parenting and strategies that are more beneficial than others. The specific ways which individuals are socialized to parents are influenced by various factors such as culture, religion, family history, social support and geographic location. Research suggests that beliefs about childrearing are adopted from one’s culture or origin and are often resistant to change. Childrearing practices, potentially a source of tradition, are often based on shared beliefs within a culture about the proper way to raise a child, where the decisions made on childrearing affect the child’s development (Sigel, 1996).

Instead of parents becoming and being equal partners in their children’s education, they are blamed for their children’s academic failure because the perception that education has of parental involvement is different from the perceptions of parents’ involvement with their children’s education. The traditional and obligatory role that parents are expected to play in schools assume that parents know little and educators know best. Programs that offer opportunities for parental input are often designed so that school officials operate
as leaders and parents act as followers (K. C. Adams & Christenson, 2000). Many strides have been made in organizing parental involvement programs through administrative mandates and through program development, yet programs designed to inform and empower parents have traditionally met with resistance (MustiRao & Cartledge, 2004).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine how parents understand their involvement in their children’s education from their perceptions, especially in childrearing and child development. Many studies have been conducted on parental involvement from the school’s perspective but very few studies have been done that explore parental involvement from the perspective of Navajo parents. More particularly, the study examined the parental involvement from the perspective of Navajo parents, particularly perceptions of Navajo mothers’ roles and Navajo fathers’ roles of childrearing and child development.

Qualitative methods were used for data collection and analysis in order to finally bring parents’ voiced perceptions on parental involvement into the research literature. A deeper understanding of the mother’s and father’s perceptions entailed open-ended, follow-up questions. The study focused on gathering data from interviews that permitted the answering of the following questions:

1. How does the Navajo mother understand parental involvement?
2. How does the Navajo father understand parental involvement?
3. What is the Navajo mother’s role in the development of her child?
4. What is the Navajo father’s role in the development of his child?

5. To what extent is the Navajo mother involved in her child by age?

6. To what extent is the Navajo father involved in his child by age?

7. To what extent is the Navajo mother involved in her child by gender?

8. To what extent is the Navajo father involved in his child by gender?

9. How does the involvement of the Navajo mother change by the age of her children?

10. How does the involvement of the Navajo father change by the age of his children?

The study was limited to a small sample of Navajo two-parent households on or in the area of the Navajo Reservation. This allowed the mothers and the fathers in each sample household to tell their stories of parental involvement on child development and childrearing with their children and to what extent the involvement was based on the gender of the child and the age of the child from their perspectives as mothers and as fathers.

**Significance of the Study**

The study was significant because although there has been a vast amount of research conducted on parental involvement in education, very little has been conducted from the point of view of parents, particularly Navajo parents. My hope is that the results of this study will serve as one of the preliminary bases for parental involvement for school districts and Bureau of Indian Education schools that serve Navajo students. The results should also be useful to educational systems serving Navajo students by assisting them to understand the perceptions
of parental involvement through parents’ eyes and to truly begin forming partnerships between the schools and the parents to effectively educate their children. Benefits of this study are listed as follows:

1. Schools throughout the Navajo reservation and those schools that serve Navajo students will become more aware of the Navajo parents’ perceptions of and understanding of parental involvement, which would provide insight to educators about whether or not their current parental involvement programs are effective for Navajo students and parents.

2. Parents will finally have their voices heard by providing insightful and valuable information as to their roles of being involved as a parent; and the ways they support their children’s education that might be overlooked, ignored, not recognized, or valued by school officials and teachers. The perspectives shared by the parents will hopefully begin the process of forming a true partnership between the parents and the school, taking into consideration the cognitive, emotional, social, and spiritual development of Navajo students.

3. School districts that serve predominantly Navajo students will begin to see the importance of and hopefully begin to reinforce the need for a specified Navajo parental involvement program for their Navajo students because Navajo cultural knowledge of child development and childrearing for Navajo parents differ from the westernized society. The information as to the perceptions of Navajo parents will provide better insight and offer a
different implementation of parental involvement strategies for Navajo parents to become more involved with their children’s education.

Organization of the Study

This dissertation consists of five chapters. This first chapter has introduced and provided a rationale for the research topic, research questions, and the basic methodology. Chapter 2 provides a review of barriers to parental involvement, the history of parental involvement in education and on the Navajo Reservation, and Navajo metaphysical perspectives regarding parental involvement in their children’s education. The third chapter describes the research methodology, and Chapter 4 presents the research findings of the study. Chapter 5 consists of the discussion of the research findings, conclusions, and recommendations for further research of this study.
Chapter Two

Literature Review

For decades, many researchers have studied the importance of parental involvement being a significant factor that influences student achievement in the educational process and academic success of a child (Hickman, 2007). Positive relationships between parents and staff also help students to identify with and to accept teachers (Comer, 1988, cited by Swap, 1990). In addition, parental involvement leads to improved school attendance and classroom behavior (Epstein, 1984; Peterson, 1989, cited by Flaxman & Inger, 1991; Swap, 1993). Lower dropout rates were also reported by Peterson (1989). In effect, student achievement is positively influenced as well as affecting self-esteem, attendance, behavior, pregnancy rates, and home-school relationships. The support of parents of their children’s success in all components of their development in school is crucial despite their socioeconomic status, race, culture, or class (Epstein, 1995); however, parents still remain underrepresented as equal partners in their children’s education (Allington & Cunningham, 2007). Parents are required to serve in the schools in pre-determined ways as defined by the school. Because schools define parental involvement by the activities the parents engage in at the schools, the question might be asked, How does that fit or not fit with the educational needs of the children or the educational goals of the school? (Barton et al., 2004).

As Connors and Epstein (1994) noted,
The nation’s schools must do more to improve the education of all children, but schools cannot do this alone. More will be accomplished if families and communities work with children, with each other, and with schools to promote successful students. (pii)

Parental involvement has become increasingly more important as decades of research have documented the effects of parental involvement on academic achievement. Relationships with families have come embedded in education from early childhood through high school. For schools to develop a partnership with parents in ways to improve student success requires new ways of thinking about the role and activities of parental involvement at the schools. As a result, schools need to work diligently designing a purposeful partnership program that involves families to contribute to students’ school readiness, academic success, and positive attitudes and behaviors (Epstein & Jansorn-Rodriquez, 2004).

Legislators have also recognized the importance of increasing parental school involvement as it has become a significant part of major local, state, and national educational goals (National Education Goals Panel, 1994). One of the unique features of the No Child Left Behind Act (2002) is that the legislation accentuates the important role that parents play in educating their children by giving them a greater role. The expectation for the school district is to have well-planned programs of family and community involvement to support student achievement and to communicate clearly with parents. Under the No Child Left Behind Act, one of the terms of parental involvement requires schools to spend a portion of its Title I allocation for different types of programs, such as promoting family literacy and parenting skills. This act also requires that schools utilize Title
I money for parental involvement activities. Furthermore, school policies regarding parental involvement are designed in cooperation with parents and communicated in understandable language. A parent compact must also be developed mutually to ensure that parents and educators are knowledgeable of their Title I responsibilities. The No Child Left Behind Act exhibits high expectations for schools to communicate the importance for educators, parents, and the community to work together, to plan and to implement a comprehensive program of involvement to create a school environment to help students succeed.

This was even more true when the Educate America Act of 1994 (National Education Goals Panel, 2000) was developed because that act specifically stated that every school will promote the social, emotional, and academic growth of children. The objective for Goal Eight of this act declared that every state will develop policies to help local schools and local educational agencies build programs. These programs are designed to increase partnerships that respond to the varying needs of parents and the home, including parents with economic constraints, who are bilingual, or who are classified with a disability.

**Barriers to Parental Involvement**

Positive relationships between parental involvement and student achievement do exist in research throughout the country which document communication and other strategies that will help improve school-parent connections. Such well known authors like Epstein have types of parental involvement documented; yet, barriers from the parents’ perspective that do exist, from both the school and the parents, that prevent them from forming effective
relationships are not well documented. Such factors that hinder this relationship with parents include educators’ and administrators’ perceptions of parents and the educators’ level of training in effectively establishing and implementing positive connections with parents. Factors that impact whether a parent chooses to engage in their child’s education includes the parents’ relationship with school staff and the parents’ own prior school experiences, such as the boarding schools where thousands of Native American children were abused in attempts to “take the savage” out of these children through assimilation. Other factors include the parents’ values and beliefs regarding education (Lareau & Horvat, 1999), such as culture, which is especially true for poor, working class parents as well as Navajo families (O’Conner, 2001).

**Educator and Parent Relationships**

Educator and parent relationships are important in establishing partnerships that promote student achievement, but many times this does not happen. Participation involves not only parent involvement in the form of school activities like bake sales and parent-teacher conferences occurring at the school sites, but also a sense of embracement and sincere welcoming. One of the major concern or issues is respect. Narcode et al. (1994) stated that “parents are put off by schools that have no visible provisions for parents and where staff are too preoccupied to greet them. Schools set up only to deal with problems are difficult to relate to” (p. 14). More frequent positive communication with the school is greatly needed because of fears parents deal with when called by the school over situations or problems that arise with their children. Along with positive
communication, parents also need some type of shared decision-making on issues such as placement, curriculum, assessment, scheduling, as well as wanting a voice in other school-related issues. In effect, “They appreciate being called for ideas and preferences” (Narode et al, 1994, p. 16).

This leads to the notion of community involvement and participation in school issues and concerns, especially in community schools where Navajo students are enrolled. There is a desire and concern about having a school that addresses those issues of providing cultural capital, but at the same time keeping the school’s community involved. Narode, Rennie-Hill, and Peterson (1994) stated that parents expect schools to have community role models be involved in the school where parental voices are heard. The community role models do not only exemplify what parents are trying to show their children what they must strive for, but there is also a need to have the school reflect values that are “near and dear” to the community.

Primarily, the interests and concerns of parents are frequently ignored. It has been noted that some models of parental involvement do not reach those parents who need to be involved the most, and do not take the interests and concerns of those parents into consideration (Flaxman & Inger, 1991; Swap, 1990). Another barrier of parental involvement has been the lack of energy, time, and/or appropriate time scheduling on the part of the parents. This in turn leads to another barrier to parent participation. When parents do not come to parent-teacher conferences they are immediately regarded by teachers as being
uninterested. Negative perceptions by the academic institutions of those parents who do not come to conferences further polarize the home-school connections.

In a study conducted by Gary Dabrusky (2007) to investigate how student achievement is related to the perception and practices of economically disadvantaged parents based on Epstein’s six types of parental involvement. Using a variety of ethnicities, comments from the participants from the study expressed support for four out of the six parental involvement practices. Many of the parent participants also described frustrations with the school or teachers because negative comments were made about specific teachers and administrators. Because of the nature of the respondents’ statements, there was a drift away from the parental involvement issues towards reasons why things go wrong within the schools. According to Dabrusky (2007), one possible conclusion for the reasons that the participants’ children are not enjoying school is because of the social or academic reasons that parents can control, but has a lot to do with how the school system is failing their children. Dabrusky (2007) stated that most of the participants were reacting to how a particular teacher responded negatively to them or to their child, or how an administrator wronged them in some way. Perhaps one of the reasons that the schools are in need of improvement academically is because of its failure to empower parents and to work together to solve problems.

The results of the study also illuminated some obstacles that prevent effective parental involvement within the schools. Some examples included frustration about how teachers communicate with parents, lack of opportunities to
volunteer, and lack of involvement with decision-making. In general, parents indicated that they believed these were some of the issues that prevented them from having an effective school partnership. Parents also indicated they felt uncomfortable developing a partnership with their child’s school because of past experiences of being bombarded with vocabulary they do not understand, belittled by not being treated respectfully, and intimidated because of a lack of understanding of school protocol.

Conclusions from this study indicated there was a great need to identify and to establish effective programs for increasing partnerships between teachers and parents, including economically disadvantaged parents. Schools need to recognize the needs of the parents and understand the home setting before a parental involvement program can be developed. Another potential barrier impacting parental involvement may be that the dimensions of parental involvement are currently no longer practical. Perceptions of parental involvement only measure how and what the parents believe they should do. What parents believe is the direction the appropriate path should take, using advantages of ever-changing opportunities that appear to be available.

**Educator Perceptions**

Teachers’ feelings or perceptions of parental involvement also bring a negative impact on the active participation of Navajo parents. Although there are some teachers who welcome parents into their classrooms and welcome participation of parents, Epstein (1983) stated that in spite of the benefits of parent
involvement techniques, teachers only tend to use these techniques for students who need extra help.

Swap (1993) and Ascher (1987) noted that teachers only favor parents who attend conferences and other school functions regularly; that they consider those parents who do not respond as uncaring. Furthermore, Swap also stated that although parents were eager to participate in school activities and functions, teachers were more content to have parents remain in the “bake sale” roles. Even when teachers and administrators see having more parental involvement as desirable, they do not see it as a complete necessity in achieving common goals (Swap, 1991). In addressing the social politics surrounding this issue, it has been argued that parent-teacher relationships are cordial but distant, in that teachers who usually demand more parent involvement seldom raise the issue at meetings (Todd, 1992).

Many educators and administrators feel that parents have failed their children in meeting the responsibilities of their educational needs and that it is not the responsibilities of the schools to attend to these parents (Swap, 1993). Davies (1987) revealed that many teachers consider low-income, minority parents to be deficient and lacking in primary needs. If teachers and administrators showed more sincere and genuine concern for parents, then there would be more intervention programs for parents to provide assistance as to basic needs for families of students. Providing assistance would be a parent-school connection. These programs would only be effective if educators were committed to the idea, which is not the case. This holds true for Navajo schools throughout the
reservation. The notion that low-income, minority parents are deficient needs to be revised. The deficiency, or lack of concern, is a concept or understanding of the perspective that all parties bring.

As a result, parent involvement has become a national priority to assist in the increase of student achievement in the schools. Federal and state mandates have been developed to dictate to schools throughout the country to develop programs and policies that invite parents to the school; consequently, there is much in the literature that speak to these types of parent involvement. However, very few studies show parents as equal partners in their children’s education. Fewer studies exist that examine involvement of parents from the parents’ perspectives, particularly with Navajo parents.

**History of Parental Involvement in Schools**

It is important to give an overview of parent involvement in America’s schools, especially in Indian education, and the changes that took place over the past century. The emerging alliance between the home and the school comes from the recognition that not only are schools important to parents and families but that schools also need parental support in order for them to achieve the best possible success (Berger, 1991). It is also crucial to give an overview of the Navajo philosophical and metaphysical creation and history of parenting that provides the vital empowering values and principles of what is defined as traditional parenting skills.

Fuller and Olsen (1998) have a general historical perspective of parent involvement in the changes in families and how parents prepared their children to
become members of societies and their community. This also hold true with Native America. It is paramount to understand the holistic psychology of child development through the stories, indoctrinations, and teachings that are being passed down from generation to generation of the Navajo people. These stories are taught through modeling in daily life where the attainment of knowledge and skills as a Navajo male and Navajo female are developed through the many stages of life.

Dualism and balance are two of the fundamental components in the Navajo philosophy of what constitutes parental involvement. The concept of dualism is expressed in the language itself, the sacred words of S’ah Naghai (SN), male concept; and Bik’eh Hozhoon (BH), the female concept. The two concepts do not exist in isolation, but rather they complement one another. One cannot go without the other. According to Navajo philosophical principles, everything in life always has a male and a female, thereby creating duality and balance. The sacred words of SN/BH represents the Holy People as a whole, which represents the male and the female eternal beings. This is what makes up parenting; parenting begins with Mother Earth and Father Sky. They are the parents to all natural things on earth and in the universe. The analogy given here holds true because the earth and the sky create and sustain life. Life is created each spring when rain falls from the sky and impregnates the earth with the moisture from the rain, resulting in the beginning of life for plants, animals and all living beings on earth. The earth then gives birth in summer when plants grow, trees turn green, and animals come out of hybernation. This is the balance and the dualism of parenting. If there
is unbalance in the universe or on earth, then the continuation of life will either be impaired or ceased. There is also a need for balance, in Navajo philosophy, within the family, in that there is a need for a father and a mother to create and sustain life for children.

Prominent Navajo scholar Dr. Wilson Aronilth (2010) defined parenting in Navajo as a man and a woman legally married through a traditional Navajo wedding ceremony, united as one person; having one fire, one prayer, one faith, one hope, one love and trust for one another and understanding that both husband and wife will share Sa’ah Nagháí Bik’eh Hozhoón, and walk the Corn Pollen Road of Life. Through the sacred union of love, trust, understanding, and faith, conception and the raising of children are made. This definition comes from many generations of marriages and parenting.

The metaphysics of Navajo philosophy states that parenting began with First Man and First Woman in the First World of the Navajo Emergence. This is where the spiritual, social, and sacred knowledge of Navajo parenting was created. It is said that they found each other through a sacred holy light. First Man had a crystal light that carried the spiritual life for a vision of parenting and an ear of perfect white corn which symbolizes the purity of what being a parent is. First Woman had a turquoise light that obtained the purpose and mission for being a parent, and she held to the light an ear of perfect yellow corn to symbolize the acknowledgement of parenting as husband and wife. That is why today, during traditional Navajo wedding ceremonies, both white and yellow corn mush is used as a unity between the two lights of First Man and First Woman. The joining of
the two lights signifies your home as husband and wife where your home thereby becomes the beginning of the unity of the development and growth of what will later become the heart and life of your parenting.

The increasingly high rate of parental involvement failure among our Navajo students has resulted in the loss of the whole self that identifies them as Navajo individuals and the developmental processes entailed in instilling their cultural identities, mentally, emotionally, socially, morally, and spiritually, which results in the “Whole Child.” These components make up the person; however, the children who walk through the doors of our schools are lacking these components.

According to Mary Catherine Daly (2004), the present educational system devalues students with its emphasis on the individual, on competitiveness, and on achievement. The educational system we expose children to is not helping them grow up to have a sense of well-being; daily they feel the negative consequences of individualism. Providing children with a holistic education, which prioritizes all areas of development but emphasizes in particular emotional, social, moral, and spiritual development, will help children develop optimally. They are vital to each child’s development and must be prioritized by parents and educators alike. The optimal emotional, social, moral, and spiritual development of each and every child is of paramount importance for the survival of the human species. Yet, these aspects of development are seldom highlighted or given the recognition and acknowledgement they deserve.
Today’s experience of childhood can include violence, child abuse, stress, pressure, fear, anger, shame, poverty, family breakdown, homelessness, parental drug and alcohol abuse, and conflict over religious beliefs. How do we as an educational system help children to cope with such experiences as they walk through our doors each day? The disparity between the academic achievements of Navajo students, known as the achievement gap, is revealed in grades, standardized test scores, dropout rates, and graduation rates. A major part of this achievement gap may stem from the value that Navajo students have in being Diné: What Navajo cultural identity do they have and how can they use this valuable source of teachings and knowledge to assist them in becoming more motivated and focused in the classroom? How can they use vast amount of resources to begin closing the achievement gap? While research has offered many different interventions to close the achievement gap, very little is known about the impact of involving parents in their children’s education, particularly Navajo parents.

**Poverty**

Children do not begin school with equal chances of benefiting from it and for several reasons some children are disadvantaged on entering school. In particular, a significant proportion of children, particularly Navajo children, come from poverty; and there is widespread agreement that children from poorer backgrounds do not derive the same benefits from their schooling as do children from more comfortable backgrounds (Daly, 2004, p. 78). Failure in school can have life-long implications, increasing the risk of experiencing unemployment in
low-paying or insecure jobs. It can also curtail personal development, the development of independence and self-confidence. These problems can become more pronounced over time, reinforcing an intergenerational cycle of poverty (Boldt, Devine, Mac Devitt, & Morgan, 1998). Today, schools are not relevant to many children and thus they continue to experience school failure, or in reality, schools fail them. Success in education and training is defined in terms of fairly limited forms of academic achievement, which the educational system, training agencies, and those responsible for recruitment are generally agreed on (Kellaghan, 1985).

**Intelligence**

Hyland (2002) believed many children do not flourish in school because their abilities do not fit in with the traditional idea of *intelligence*. Students who do not excel at academic subjects are immediately disadvantaged, if not alienated, from the whole formal education process from its earliest days, because reading and other subject areas continue to be the cornerstone of the educational programs. This is even more true for Navajo students. Fawcett (2000) criticized the conventional school curriculum and stated that it stresses adult work opportunities and the need to train children for participation in competitive work environments rather than focusing on children’s rights and the need for all around development. Fawcett also claimed that the school system disregards research findings in psychology, sociology, and education that advocate the development of the whole child.
Emotional development

Emotional development is one of the most fundamental areas of human development. Yet it is also one of the most elusive, as much emotional growth and change occur at a level that are not readily observable. Emotions are at the very heart of children’s lives; they impact on the child’s well-being, on his or her sense of self, and on his or her understanding of the world. Emotional development is about the development of the emotions and the ability to express them. To understand and regulate emotions is a very crucial element in children’s functioning and is vital to their overall development (Dworestzky, 1994). Optimum emotional development can aid children on their journey to self-actualization. On the other hand, when emotional development is interrupted or ignored at school or at home, it can lead to a diversity of problems and thus it is imperative that children are taught to deal with their emotions in constructive and creative ways. A frequently heard complaint among Diné elders and educators is that many Navajo children’s and adults’ emotions are out of control today.

Statistics indicate that increasing numbers of people, including young children, are suffering from depression and aggression.

According to the Youth At-Risk Survey with the Indian Health Services (2010), in 2009, about 8% of Navajo children and teens from ages 12 to 17 reported incidents of Major Depression Episodes (MDE) during the course of the year. In the years 2004 to 2009, the number of youth experiencing depression was twice as high among females in comparison to males. Other childhood depression statistics within the Indian Health Services indicate that about 72% of Navajo
youth with depression reported that their depression was causing major problems in their day-to-day life and with family members and friends. The amount of youth with MDE that were receiving treatment for their depression indicated that they were seeing or speaking with a professional therapist on a regular basis or taking some kind of antidepressant medication. However, that number has declined down to 35% from 40% in 2009.

Emotional development is about the awareness, recognition, and regulation of emotions. Because it so much a part of our daily lives we tend to take it for granted. We seldom think about the ways in which children’s, especially Navajo children, emotional abilities evolve, despite the fact that this aspect of development is in many ways one of the most important, because it establishes the critical foundation on which every other mental skill can flourish. All the brainpower in the world will not guarantee success if a child lacks the emotional skills and maturity to put it to use (Eliot, 1999). Psychologists and psychiatrists recognize that emotions are one of the most complex and intricate parts of development. Navajo medicine men, parents, and elders also hold this to be true. They have their own timing and rhythm and cannot be hurried; growing up emotionally is complicated and difficult.

Navajos believe that a person’s emotional competency or development is a key factor in determining and predicting future success in all aspects of life. The ability to understand and manage emotions resourcefully, to communicate effectively, and to self-coach are essential to every child and are what emotional development is all about. An education that fosters emotional competency would
be much richer, not only for the individuals within but for the whole community. There is a persistent call for the development of emotional competency in children (Bocchino, 1999).

Emotional development is characterized by the ability to monitor feelings. An emotionally developed child may be conscious of the physiological responses that accompany certain emotions. The child may purposely take time to record these emotions or may carefully track daily which emotions are present at different times and circumstances. This self-awareness is the vital step towards managing emotions in a useful and healthy way. The child in this setting who can identify his feelings of frustration, who can weigh up a range of choices in dealing with feelings, and who manage through self-talk to proceed in a useful way is seen as being emotionally developed (Daly, 2004, p124). Because emotional competency is *developable* it is a vital area of education.

Emotional regulation means being able to alter, adjust, manage, and control one’s emotional state, whether maintaining or changing it. It is a developmental process that is influenced by individual differences among children and is also influenced by the environmental context within which the child is developing. Self-regulation is the process by which children are expected to control their own behaviors and emotions in accordance with the standards and desires of parents and communities, and thus is an important aspect of emotional development. Emotion regulation provides important links with later peer relations and coping strategies; and, if unregulated, emotions can put children at risk (Koplaw, 1996).
Doing the best for a child comes down to building and nurturing self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-reliance. Lack of self-esteem is given increasingly as a reason why so many people get themselves into trouble with the law, why so many people commit suicide, and why there is such an increase in mental and stress-related illnesses. Low self-esteem can cause great anguish, heartache, under-achievement, bad behavior, and depression in children. Having good self-esteem means that children will have confidence in themselves, will know who they are, will like who they are, and will be content to face the world as they are. A confident, trusting child, secure in his belief in his own particular abilities and what it is that makes him unique, will play, concentrate, love, give and communicate better. Childhood is by far the best time to develop the emotions, as they are much more difficult to develop, regulate, and recondition in later years (Hartley-Brewer, 1998).

Social Development

The process of social development involves the development of an awareness of oneself as well as an awareness of others. Humans are social beings and need the company of others from birth in order to survive. Attachments to others are sought very early, and it appears that such attachments can lay the foundation for later social relationships. Friendship is a very important part of social development as it allows children to be democratic, affectionate, and tolerant. It also enhances self-esteem and develops an awareness of other’s needs. If social development is considered a vital component of all activities in which children are engaged, then development in all areas of children’s lives can be
enhanced. The relationships and connections we form with others through our lives are the network of our social world and to a large extent measure the success we have in life, in that they tend to determine how happy our life will be (Wood, 1981). Yet, a sizable portion of Navajo children, including young children, do not have a sense of belonging or connection, but instead feel marginalized and excluded.

One of the most disturbing failures of this society is the sense of isolation and loneliness expressed by so many children and young people, especially in the Navajo population. Moreover, there is an epidemic of feelings of isolation, loneliness and extreme shyness, and anxiety in all age groups throughout the Navajo reservation. Today’s society is experiencing higher rates of crime, cruelty, and violence than in the past, and these rates have led to an increasing interest by the academic community to combat these trends by discovering how to develop social competence and caring behavior in children. Schweinhart and Weikart (1997) claimed that the priority of academics over social objectives during the setting within the early is a contributor to these social problems and leads to longitudinal disadvantages, as highlighted by their long-term research. Lack of personal contact and social development is cited as aiding the breakdown of community life, and many believe that the social fabric is falling apart.

Social development is about developing the social aspects of humanity. One of the main reasons that children need to develop socially is so that society can continue to exist. Societies are founded on their social structure, that is, the relatively stable patterns of social behavior that underlie them. Each element of
social structure such as the family, religion, childhood, politics, and the economic system has specific social functions or roles to fulfill in order for civilization to continue. Babies are born into a highly complex social world with its intricate underlying social structures and functions. From birth, they are active participants in a world of other people and quite early on they must begin to understand the intentions, feelings, and actions of others, as well as understanding the social rules of the world if they are to develop socially (Malonis, 1989). The whole basis for living and working together is founded on good relationships and on social development.

According to Malonis (1989), socialization is a vital aspect of social development, is based on all social experiences, and occurs everywhere. It is not a simple process of learning, but is a complex balancing act in which children encounter a huge range of ideas in the process of forming their own distinctive personality. Socialization shapes how we think, feel, and act; and children learn a myriad of social skills through interacting with others. Through socialization they also learn the values and behaviors accepted in their society. Children’s social contact with others assists their learning, and such social experiences hopefully provide the child with qualities and capabilities that are associated with being a fully integrated, socially competent human being (Dowling, 2000).

Social development is a double-sided process in which children become integrated into the larger social community, while at the same time becoming differentiated as distinctive individuals. Being accepted into the community comes about through a process of socialization. Through socialization, children
come to know the standards and values of their society. Through personality formation, the individual child gets a sense of himself or herself and develops a distinctive way of thinking and feeling. Personality development is closely aligned and intertwined with socialization (Damon, 1983).

Through social development, children come to adopt, as reasonable and even necessary, the rules by their social groups. By the time children reach six years old, many of them will have learned a great deal about the roles they are expected to play and how to behave in accordance to them. Some enter school being used to warm loving relationships within the family and will have had many and varied chances to meet a wide variety of different adults and children. Other children will have had few opportunities to develop socially. They will have experienced few social contacts that are needed in order to take part in the social world. Studies suggest that the first six to seven years of development are critical for the development of social skills, so it is vital that children are helped to develop socially in the early years, both at home and at school (Parker & Asher, 1987).

Social development impacts on all areas of development and is also impacted on by all other areas. Moral development, values taught, and socialization processes used by parents and other adults influence whether children develop in pro- or antisocial ways. Emotional development also impacts on social development and how a child feels about himself and others, which has huge repercussions as to a child’s social growth. Spirituality allows the child to transcend the gap between self and others, giving him an understanding of who he
is and what things and people mean to him. Cognitive development also impacts on social development and vice versa.

Theorists such as Vygotsky (1896-1934) explored the idea of the child as someone who negotiates meaning and understanding in a social context, emphasizing the intricate and reciprocal relationships between the individual child and the social context. Vygotsky (1978) argued that it is as a result of the social interactions between the growing child and other members of that child’s community that he acquires the tools of learning and thinking. Vygotsky claimed that it is, in fact, out of this cooperative process of engaging in mutual activities with more expert others that the child becomes more knowledgeable. Thus, it seems that developmental areas such as cognitive, moral, social, spiritual, and emotional development are all deeply intertwined and equally important.

**Additional Factors**

**Moral development.** Morality and moral development are very broad concepts which in essence are about valuing self, relationships, the environment, and society. Valuing these enables children to live together more cooperatively, peacefully, and contently. Valuing the self and developing the self entails each person, including the self, as a unique being of intrinsic worth with potential for development and change. It puts the onus on the child to try to understand his or her own character, strengths, and weaknesses. It involves developing a sense of self-confidence and self-reliance and is about discovering meaning and purpose in life and deciding how life ought to be lived. It is about living up to a shared moral code, making responsible use of rights and privileges and striving for knowledge
and wisdom. It also entails taking responsibility for one’s own life within one’s capacities. Valuing relationships involves respecting others not for what they have or what they can do for us. Children must value others, as relationships are vital to their development and for the good of the community. Children must earn loyalty, trust, and confidence; and they must work and play cooperatively with others and be mutually supportive. They must respect and acknowledge the beliefs, lives, privacy, and property of others; and they must try to resolve disputes peacefully. Valuing the environment means children must value the natural world as a source of wonder and inspiration; they must accept their responsibility and duty to maintain a sustainable environment for future generations. The onus is on us as human beings to preserve the beauty and to understand the rightful place of human beings within the world. Valuing society means children value truth, human rights, the law, justice, and collective endeavor for the common good of society. Thus, children understand and accept their responsibilities as citizens. In the past, morality used to be a list of do’s and don’ts. For every moral question there was a clear solution or at least fixed principles to be applied in the case of doubt, often a case of “do as I say,” not “as I do.” However, morality is based on the belief that morality is about the ability of humans to live together. Morality is important for the organization of society and epitomizes people coming to grips with the inevitable conflicts that arise between their own needs and their social obligations, how and why they come to see some things as good and others things as evil. Morality deals with humans experiences. It is about the ordinary cares and concerns of everyday life; and living morality must be truly
human, emphasizing the importance of people and their relationships to one another. A person’s definition of being moral has as much, if not more, to do with belonging as it does with defining what is right and wrong. Morality is really the tendency to think in terms of relationships, and questions of care and the quality of the relationships are crucial. Morality is about living together in love, and it takes a long time to develop morally and to learn about being a truly moral human being (Hoffman, 1988).

Coles (1997) claimed that “moral intelligence and strong values are the basis for a balanced and happy life” (p. 20). He goes on to say that morality incorporates a sense of fairness; a respect for others; and a commitment of mind, heart, and soul to one’s family, neighborhood, nation, and world. He asserted that moral knowledge is intimately bound up with the ability to make judgments about the nature of behavior and its ethical basis and appropriateness. Being moral and having values are the foundation of education and of healthy development, and morality is in many respects a social phenomenon.

**Spiritual development.** Spirituality is needed by people today, probably more than ever before, as modern man is depicted as hollow, devoid of a personal center of strengths and values (Hammes, 1998). Robinson (1977) claimed that a great deal is extinguished in the experience of children, because the adults they come in contact with are spiritually obtuse. The problems and limitations that many people experience come from a loss of connection to their souls and harmony. Social problems impact heavily on the daily lives of children and emphasizing spiritual development can help address the balance. Spirituality has
to do with living life to the fullest and is about discovering how to become more fully human. It is about self-discovery, discovery of others and of the world. It is not synonymous with religion nor it is opposed to it. It covers a wide range of human experience and can be experienced in awareness, in response, and in ways of life that are vital to every child’s development. It is important to create and incorporate spiritual habits into the lives of young children, particularly since “an individual can no more flourish in a spiritually dead environment than could a tree in the midst of an ecological disaster” (Mott-Thornton, 1996). Therefore, it is vital that spiritual development is prioritized, as many children are not living life to the full today.

Neglect of this vital area of development has led to a “massive denial of spiritual energy, of intellectual enquiry, of aesthetic beauty and public virtue” (Abbs, 1994). The stunting of spiritual development is essentially a state of lacking spontaneity. All levels and forms of being spiritually stunted bring pain and hurt. Ultimately, this loss of spontaneity and response cripples our ability to take responsibility for our lives and actions. Irish medical consultant, Dr. Michael Keary, calls lack of spiritual development soul pain. He says it arises when a person becomes cut off or is at odds with the deepest part of himself. Just as connectedness with soul may bring wholeness and a sense of significance, soul pain results in an experience of fragmentation, alienation, and meaninglessness. Kearney claims that lack of spiritual development is both at the root of and a cause of physical pain and illness (Kearney, 1996).
Children are deeply spiritual, yet this aspect of child development is almost totally ignored. Dowling (2000, p. 96) pointed out that “there has been almost no study of young children’s spiritual development and little guidance on how it should be fostered” (p. 96). Home is the place where children first learn about themselves and their role in life; they start to learn about relationships and others’ roles and begin to ask questions and find answers about the world in which they live. Situations and events that they may have encountered in their young lives include birth and death, love, trust, joy, sadness, hurt, special occasions and religion. All these have a spiritual depth. Rizzuto (1979) stated that despite secularization and religious fragmentation, spirituality is still widely present in our society.

Yet, the issue of children’s spiritual development is rarely mentioned. There is little published in developmental terms about how children develop spiritually. Many books on child development do not even mention it. Lindon (1999) is one of the few authors who tackles the subject and defines spirituality as “an awareness of the connectedness to that part of human existence that does not have an answer to rational analysis” (p. 89). It incorporates, according to Lindon, an inner life of feelings and encompasses a sense to the infinite, powers, and forces beyond human experiences or control and gives life a meaning and purpose.

The debate about spiritual development needs to be located within the overall view of educational aims and purposes. There should be a vision of education as a whole, and spiritual development needs to be considered in close
relation to the other areas of early work such as education for citizenship and a moral and social development (McLaughlin, 1994). Spiritual development relates to that aspect of inner life through which children acquire insights into their personal experiences. It is characterized by reflection, the giving of meaning to experience, valuing a non-material dimension to life and intimations of an enduring reality.

Spiritual development also entails affiliation and commitment to a large moral ecology beyond individualistic concerns. It embodies a social ethos, a consensus on the common good and on notions of responsibility and loyalty to the community as a whole, as well as a framework of wider beliefs and values. This claim, that spiritual development be seen as part of the process of education of the whole child, raises questions that touch upon some of the central issues related to the value basis of education and has, is, being ignored by many of the powers that be (McLaughlin, 1994).

Scott Peck (1990) claimed that spiritual development is a complex, arduous, and lifelong task. He related the truth was that life is hard; and once people truly know, understand, and accept this, then life is no longer as difficult as it could be. Scott Peck cited life as being an endless series of problems, which include difficulties and pain, as well as joy. Yet, he proposed that it is the process of meeting and solving problems that gives life its meaning. Facing problems directly and experiencing pain achieves spiritual growth. Delaying gratification, accepting responsibility, being dedicated to the truth, and balancing one’s life are the tools of spiritual development. Scott Peck contended that the tool or process of
delaying gratification can be learned by children quite early in life. However, he
stressed that while some children have a well-developed ability to delay
gratification, some others, including adults, lack the capacity entirely. For
children to develop this capacity, it is necessary for them to have self-disciplined
role models, to have a sense of self-worth and a degree of trust in the safety of
their existence. This is where parents come in. They are the role models. Adults
have a key role in supporting and befriending the young on their spiritual journey
(Gallegher, 1998). To be dedicated to spiritual development means being
dedicated to the human race and includes personal development as well as caring
for others. It is impossible to love another unless you love yourself first, and it is
not possible to forsake one’s own spiritual development in favor of someone
else’s. Spiritual development pursued is effortful not effortless.

Though we do not have a clear scheme of spiritual development, there are
a number of generally accepted characteristics of mature human spirituality, and
providing children with contexts which support the development of these can
foster spiritual growth, insight, and understanding. Zohar and Marshall (2000,
p. 15) set out the indicators of a highly developed spirituality as having the
following:

- The capacity to be flexible
- A high degree of self-awareness
- A capacity to face and use suffering
- An ability to face and transcend pain
- The quality of being inspired by vision and values
• A reluctance to cause unnecessary harm
• A tendency to see the connection between diverse things (being holistic)
• A marked tendency to ask *why, what if* questions and to seek fundamental answers
• A facility to be what psychologists call *field-independent*, possessing an ability to go against convention when necessary.

Spiritual development entails taking in the goodness and wonder of the world. It is about people’s thoughts and beliefs and is very important for the creativity of the child. It is developed by discovering that special, hidden part of the human and involves a feeling of cosmic connectedness. Spiritual development is about having a belief in something that while not visible or explainable gives a person a sense of peace, well-being, and purpose. It is about having a respect for the unknown and for that which cannot be explained and involves consciously turning into and nourishing that part of us that acknowledges something mysterious, mystical, and powerful beyond everyday things. It is gradually increasing awareness of elements beyond our control, the ability to believe what we do not entirely understand, and the realization that we are part of the greater scheme of things. It involves the development of the whole person and is different for every child, but yet is a fundamental need of every child. Spiritual development is enhanced by contemplation, reflection, and meditation. Being spiritually developed provides a life-time resource towards peace and tranquility in an otherwise crazy materialistic world. Spiritual development is nurtured by helping children to love, respect, and appreciate themselves and others in the
world. It is about tapping into what is deepest within them and is a life-long process that gives meaning and depth to life: taking time out, stopping and looking at things, being quiet and thinking, and learning to appreciate all help in spiritual development (Daly, 2004).

Bradford (1978) proposed that children possess certain spiritual rights:

- The right to the best of the spiritual heritage of the culture into which he is born
- The right to express his spiritual belief in private and/or public without discrimination
- The right to deepen, doubt, or alter the spiritual commitment into which he is being nurtured or educated
- The right to schooling, family life, and other institutional support complementary to his spiritual development
- The right, especially in early life, to such protection from spiritual damage as is reasonable and appropriate

In a similar vein, Gallegher (1998) argued children have six basic spiritual needs:

- To believe that life has a meaning and purpose
- To have a sense of community as a place for deepening relationships
- To be appreciated and loved; to be listened to and heard
- To experience spiritually as a journey and an adventure of growth
- To have practical help in developing a mature spirituality.
Prioritizing spiritual development could make such a difference in a child’s life. Neglect of this vital area in the past has led to severe negative repercussions for children. There is no reason why it has to continue to be ignored.

**Consequences of American Indians’ Academic Achievement**

Throughout the United States, parents of underachieving students feel helpless to close what we have come to know as the achievement gap—the disparity between the academic achievements of different groups. In the U.S., a gap exists between White students and students of color (African American, Hispanic and Native American). According to the National Indian Education Study (Moran, Rampey, Dion, & Donahue, 2008), which produces our “National Indian Report Card,” the gap is fluctuating but presently increasing: In 2005, only 48% of the Native American students tested in Grade 4 scores at or above the basic level that their White counterparts who scored at 64%. In Grade 8, 59% of the Native American students’ scores were at or above the basic; whereas, 73% of the White students scored at this level. At the same time, Native American students in Grade 4 scored at 49% at or above the basic level in 2007 and Grade 8 students scored at 56%. In comparison, White students scored at 67% in Grade 4 and at 74% in Grade 8.

As students of color proceed through middle and high school, they, particularly Native American students, perform below their current grade level in comparison to the performance of White students in the same grade (Moran, Rampey, Dion, & Donahue, 2008). This performance lag results in low college access and high attrition rates for students of color.
Allington and Cunningham (2007) stated that schools have raised the standard of the parental involvement expectations in many schools today, even though some schools have very minimal success with getting families involved. They further reported that American education is expecting more family involvement in their children’s education; but at the same time, many children are coming into the schools from poverty stricken, single-parent, and working class homes. Although family involvement expectations are increasing, parental resources are decreasing.

The “Whole Child” in Western and Navajo Teaching and History

Berger (1991) identified Comenius, Locke, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, and Frobel as key theorists of parents in education. These theorists had various beliefs on how children should be educated and the role parents played in educating students. One theme that was consistent with all of them was the fact that parents were important to the process of student learning. According to Berger (1991), in older times children were not formally educated. Parents were the teachers and taught their children how to survive. The practice of intergenerational teaching and learning began a cycle. One generation taught the second generation and the second generation taught the third.

In Rome, the belief that parents were the children’s first and most important teachers took root. The mother taught the children to read and the father taught some physical skills (Berger, 1991). Woodson (2000) informed that Comenius (1592-1670) believed that education begins at home and provides a detailed description of just how children should be educated and how parental
involvement is needed for students to truly achieve. John Locke (1632-1744) proposed the concept of the *tabula rosa*. He believed that children were born with a mind that was like a blank slate and that the slate be filled based on their experiences. Mental ability was not innate; the family provided experiences in order for kids’ minds to develop (Berger, 1991). Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) emphasized freedom of children. He wanted the mother to cultivate minds of kids, nurture with knowledge. He proposed that children would only be as successful as the depth of education they received.

Like these theorists, Navajo perception of education and how their children would be developed relied upon the parents being the first and foremost crucial teacher for every child. However, in our nation’s past, the role of the father and the mother have been forcefully taken away through cultural and educational assimilation, which dramatically affected every American Indian in this country, while at the same time the federal government was promising the concept as a positive way to solve the “Indian problem” in America (Williams, 2009). Before American Indian children were forcefully ripped from their parents and sent to boarding schools to *civilize* them through American education, parents were the central part of the home and they were the role models for their children. In Navajo homes, children were the spirit of the home.

“Kill the Indian, save the man” policy of the federal assimilation process was very destructive to the well-being of every American Indian in America, yet at the time people in America applauded the action and believed that destroying the culture, religion, language, and ways of Native people was the best thing that
could happen to the first Americans. By keeping the American people ignorant of
the true intent of the federal policy and how it destroyed the American Indian
families and their ways of life, Indian children, particularly Navajo children, were
forcefully taken from their parents’ homes or stolen while they were out herding
sheep, to never be heard of again. Through this policy, more than half of the
Navajo children who were taken to boarding schools to become *civilized* lost their
sense of self-worth within their emotional, social, physical and spiritual
development, which today, has resulted in increased drop-out rates, high truancy,
and an achievement gap that remains evident in test scores.

Yes, intervention strategies have been attempted to assist in closing the
achievement gap; however, the true spirit of teaching and learning, which Navajo
people believe they have been born with as Diné, Child of the Holy People, and
which the mother and the father begin to instill in a child from the time of
conception to the age of puberty, are no longer evident in the homes across the
Navajo reservation. These teachings and knowledge that the Navajo people
believe were given to them by the Holy People become the central part of a
child’s development, which in turn, instills the teaching and learning of strength,
endurance, love, compassion, and hope. These components are supposed to be the
stronghold of the Navajo child as he/she enters academia and learns and
completes the White man’s education. According to Navajo elders in my
community, this is no longer taught and instilled in the home by parents. Navajo
elders today believe that this is why there is a lack of parental involvement in the
educational systems.
Prior to the coming of the White man and the imposition of the Euro-American educational system, the many Indian nations, including Navajos, had their own very diverse educational systems, but all were geared to giving education informally through parents, relatives, elder members of the tribe, and religious and social groups (DeJong, 1993). The differences in the Euro-American and traditional Indian approaches to education amount to more than method or emphasis; they reflect disparate philosophies. The Euro-American education binds its students to possessions, where the students become slaves to the goods they seek. The more education a person accumulates, the more real freedom is lost as he falls into the trap of materialism. According to DeJong (1993), in *Promises of the Past: A History of Indian Education in the United States*, a Mescalero Apache chief cadet was well aware of the gulf between the Euro-American and traditional educational philosophies when he spoke to Captain John C. Ceremony in the mid-nineteenth century. He explained,

You desire our children to learn from books, and say, that because you have done so, you are to build all those big houses, and sail over the sea, and talk with each other at any distance, and do many wonderful things; now let me tell you what we think. You begin when you are little to work hard, and work until you are men in order to begin fresh work. You say that you work hard in order to learn how to work well. After you get to big houses, big ships, big towns, and everything else in proportion. Then after you have got them all, you die and leave them behind. Now we call that slavery. You are slaves from the time you begin to talk until you die; but we are free as air. We never work, but Mexicans and other work for us. Our wants are few and easily supplied. The river, the wood and plain yield all that we require, and we will not be slaves; nor will we send our children to your schools, where they only learn to become like yourselves. (DeJong, 1993, p. 181)
On the other hand, traditional Indian educational philosophy, and particularly Navajo philosophy, stemmed from several characteristics that are common among all tribes. Indian children learned by application and imitation rather than memorization of principles. Great value was placed on sharing and cooperation, which contrasts sharply with the American values of competition and individualism. Traditional education covered tribal history, including origin and great deeds; physical science, as seen in the love and care of the natural world; physical education and athletic ability; etiquette, including respect for elders; hunting or learning to provide for one’s family; religious training and fasting, which connotes self-discipline; and death and health care. In short, traditional education provided the skills needed for any society to function.

Traditional education was fostered by the child’s parents and elders with ever-increasing sophistication; knowledge and understanding came not by intuition but by training. Although there were cultural differences, some fundamental assumptions shared by tribes were reflected in their child rearing practices. For example, in no traditional child rearing was there a discrete endeavor to separate the child from the parents to force education in a separate institution. It was always woven into everyday patterns of living and took place informally in daily interaction between children and their parents. As in all traditional societies, children learned from example and informal lessons as well as by participation in more formal ceremonies and rites. This type of training came from the parents, from the home. Education started in the home and continued in the home (Fear-Segal, 2007).
Ceremonies of all kinds were essential to the educational process. All children learned about their own traditions and were embraced within them by participating in ceremonies of both a public and personal nature. Individual ceremonies marked and celebrated the stages of life and initiated the child into his/her people’s guiding principles. For example, there were ceremonies to celebrate the first laugh of a baby to honor the life of the child and to commit the child to generosity, although these celebrations involved great personal sacrifices. This was to teach the baby that although he/she may go through great sacrifices, that the sacrifices made are only materialistic losses and that the thought and feeling behind the sacrifices came generosity and love and compassion for relatives.

Furthermore, the Navajos also celebrated the puberty rite of a male and female, which were four-day ceremonies held to mark the passage from childhood to maturity and initiate into the knowledge and mysteries of manhood or womanhood. This celebration was to teach the male and female the rights and responsibilities of adulthood as well as the initiation of adult life. This ceremony, along with many others with its own separate elements, were widely misunderstood and condemned by Whites during the 1800s.

Underpinning all ceremonies was a complex system of human relations—the kinship system which all Navajo children were progressively initiated. The pattern of relationships and duties associated with them varied but attachments always extended far outside the nuclear family of parents and children and carried a catching network of responsibilities. Through the kinship system a child was
taught good manners as well as respect and courtesy towards all relatives, to say
thank you when receiving a gift or when returning a borrowed article; to use the
proper and conventional term of relationship when speaking to another; and never
to address others by his or her personal names, but to use the kinship terms of
sister, auntie, uncle, grandfather, nephew, friend.

The ethnic cleansing, relocation, and forced assimilation of many Navajo
people serve as reminders of a person’s place in the hierarchies of society (L. A.
Whitbeck, Chen, Hoyt, & Adams, 2004, p. 416) that has greatly damaged the way
Navajo parents perceive parental involvement today. As a result of this ethnic
cleansing, the whole concept of parent-child relations are massively changed
forever. The indoctrinations of self-identity through the development of the
emotional, social, moral, and spiritual concepts of being a male/female Navajo
became confusing due to the assimilative concepts of child rearing practices
Navajo people experienced while in boarding schools.

As Phinnery (1996) noted, there are three factors of ethnicity that may be
important to one’s mental health, including ethnic identity, the individual
experience of being a minority and the unique aspects of one’s culture. These
three factors must be understood and taken into account when addressing the
mental, emotional, social, moral, and spiritual health needs of Navajo people
whose experiences in American history are unique and often overlooked, As the
quest for economic fortune and independence grew among immigrants to what
would one day become the United States of America, so did the desire to possess
lands that were inhabited by the indigenous peoples of North America. As a result
of greed, ethnocentricism, and lack of human compassion, Native American
people were systematically dispossessed of their culture, which includes their land,
language, lifestyles, family systems, and spiritual practices (D. Adams, 1995).

As more and more immigrants arrived in North America, the lands
inhabited by the indigenous peoples became desirable and many policymakers of
the time believed that “only a society built upon the broad foundation of private
property could guarantee public morality, political independence, and social
stability” (D. Adams, 1995, p. 5). As a result, the United States government
created policies and propaganda that were intended to relieve America’s original
inhabitants of their real estate. Essentially native people had two options:
civilization or extinction (D. Adams, 1995).

The ethnocentric views of 19th century policymakers created such policies
as the Civilization Fund in 1819 and the appointment of the nation’s first
superintendent of Indian Affairs (D. Adams, 1995). However, there was not
enough money to address, or control, the behaviors of the “civilized land-hungry,
Indian-hating frontiersmen” (D. Adams, 1995, p. 6); nor did the creators of policy
take into account that perhaps the civilized ways of Whites would be rejected by
the savages. When these initial endeavors proved to be unsuccessful, ,
philanthropists, assimilationists, reformers, and policymakers agreed that perhaps
moving the Indians to lands west of Mississippi would allow them to live
peacefully away from overzealous land mongers and would give them an
opportunity to perhaps more fully embrace the lifestyle of the more powerful and
dominant culture. Unfortunately, this idea failed as well, as would-be gold miners,
settlers, and frontiersman continued moving westward who continued to ignore the rights of those indigenous to North America. This continuous encroachment severely disrupted many tribes’ nomadic lifestyles as food supplies were depleted, followed by the advancement of the railroad, telegraph, and military outposts at the end of the Civil War (D. Adams, 1995). By 1871, following years of bloodshed and with the almost extinct animals used as a food source, the reservation system was created and Native Americans became a colonized group of people who had become wards of the U.S. government (D. Adams, 1995).

According to D. Adams (1995), the reservation system created even more problems. Although it helped to maintain some sense of tribal community, it created a dependence upon the government for rations and commodities, and it reinforced the reduction of any motivation to farm the land. Experience had taught the Native Americans that no sooner would they cooperate with the most recent government policy that it would be time to move further westward at the surge of White settlers besieging Congress to obtain more land.

The late 1870s brought about the first extensive funding that was to go towards the education of Native American children; boarding schools were opened with the idea of educating Indian children in the ways of the White man (D. Adams, 1995; Lomawaima, 1994). The removal of Indian children from their homes and placement in boarding schools also served the purpose of weakening the family systems and cultural practices of Native American people. The opportunity to mourn the loss of family, language, and way of life was not given to those taken from their families and placed in boarding schools. These losses...
were minimized and not seen as important. Boarding schools, based on military ideas and principles, did not allow for individuality or the speaking of one’s language (Colmant et al., 2004).

The idea behind the boarding school system was to give Indian people the skills such as farming for men and training in the domestic arts for women (Ellis, 1996). Presently, in the 21st century boarding schools still exist (Colmant et al. 2004).

So, how did these historical events affect traditional Navajo family systems and parent-child relations? How did these events change the way that parental involvement is perceived by today’s parents? As a result of the U.S. government’s attempts at assimilation through upholding forced removal from ancestral lands, initiating reservation systems and land allotments, enacting urban location programs, and requiring boarding school attendance, many Native American, including Navajos, have been far removed from their communities and traditional cultures, resulting in experiences of loss, acculturative stress, racism, and increased feelings of distress. The affects of loss that many Native American people experienced at the attempts of assimilation has resulted in many health, social, and psychological ills today. These are what parents and children alike witness daily, affecting parental involvement in all aspects.

Historical loss, or grief over the loss of Native American culture, is a relatively new concept and area of study (L. A. Whitbeck et al, 2004). In addressing the overall health needs of Native people, it is important to understand how unresolved grief is related to experience of acculturation, discrimination, and
emotional distress. It is important to understand the unique experiences of Native people, as these are also many of the factors that influence behaviors such as different coping mechanisms, which many lead to alcoholism, substance abuse, depression, and ultimately leading up to suicide.

Native American removal from ancestral lands was an arduous process where many people died along the way and those in charge did not allow for the proper burial of those who died en route. Upon arrival at their new homes, culturally accepted rituals or mourning were banned. The inability to participate in culturally relevant mourning rituals is a component of historical loss among Native Americans (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). Emotions associated with historical loss are those feelings of unresolved grief that have been passed down from those who initially experienced trauma, related to the many historical events mentioned above, to current generations of Native American adults (L. A. Whitbeck et al., 2004).

The westernization or acculturation process has been a painful one for many Native people, including Navajos (Glendinning, 1994). Psychological or emotional distress is found in over 30% of Navajo people presenting for mental health services. Many researchers (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Coleman et al., 2004; L. A. Whitbeck et al., 2004) have tried to capture the essence of the emotional distress and psychological wounding Native people, including Navajos, have experienced.

Several researchers have made attempts to capture the meaning of emotional distress based on the experiences of Native people. The term soul
wound is described by Duran and Duran (1995) and described as being the result of over 500 years of suffering and neglect that has contributed to the high rates of alcoholism, suicide, anxiety, depression, and school dropouts among Indian people. Other researchers define this emotional/spiritual experience as one of post-colonial stress (Schultz, 2006). This psychological distress oftentimes becomes externally manifested in the form of violence or internalized in the form of self-hatred. These feelings of self-hatred may be acted out in overindulgence of alcohol, substances, or ultimately acts of suicide. The experiences of historical trauma lead to depression, anger, and others such as Brave Heart (2003) considered—historical traumas experienced during forced assimilation resulting in the inability to express emotion, the symptoms of which may be passed from one generation to the next because they are never truly resolved. These feelings of unresolved grief are known as historical loss (L. A. Whitbeck et al., 2004). The current generations of Native adults, including Navajos, have thoughts related to perceived historical losses and experience the same symptoms from the generation before such as anger, depression, and anxiety (L. A. Whitbeck et al, 2004). In their attempts to numb the pain of their losses, many Native American individuals and families have turned to substances (Cain, 2007) resulting in further emotional, physical, and spiritual health problems. Pain numbing substances include not only alcohol and drugs, but food as well.

The ability to maintain close ties to one’s culture has been shown to be an important buffer against the physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual effects of being exposed to White culture and assimilation efforts. As Native
people attempt to live more acculturated lifestyles, they often encounter discrimination or experiences of racism that can be described as “beliefs, attitudes, institutional arrangements, and acts that tend to denigrate individuals or groups because of phenotypic characteristics or ethnic group affiliation” (Clark, Anderson, Clark, & Williams, 1999, p. 805). Perceived racism is the “subjective experience or prejudice or discrimination while attitudinal racism is represented through attitudes and beliefs” (Clark et al., 1999, p. 808). Behavioral racism “denies equitable treatment” to people based on a perceived association with an ethnic group based on appearance (Clark et al., 1999, p. 805). Among Native American people racism has been associated with feelings of loss (L. A. Whitbeck et al, 2004).

The disparities of Native American people, including Navajos, may be influenced by a number of factors including culture, genetics, socioeconomic status, and behaviors/choices (Osvold, 1993). As a result of these disparities, it has become difficult for parental involvement to truly be evident in the lives of their children. It is also as a result of these factors that many parents have lost the traditional Navajo child rearing practices as well as the parent-child relationship and disciplining practices to be taught to their children. Our parents today are products of these factors, which I describe below.

**Acculturation.** For Native American people, environmental risk factors to health in all aspects, such as poverty, can be correlated to the political and historical events that have influenced the geographical location of many tribes (Glendinning, 1994). Geographical location often dictates the availability of
economic resources to be stable and have mental, emotional, social and spiritual well being. For example, approximately 33% of Native Americans live on reservations or historic trust lands, limiting financial or job opportunities that could provide the economic resources necessary to have a stable life. Those relocated to urban areas may be far removed from their tribal communities; living in mainstream culture espouses them to potential stressors related to acculturation such as discrimination and/or racism. These types of forced acculturation, which for Native Americans has meant losing aspects of their culture, including their traditional diets, along with experiences or racism, can create feelings of distress, which may lead to use of different substances as a coping mechanism. The historical events of the removal and relocation of Native American tribes not only changed the traditional habits, such as parenting within the many tribal communities, but these events also placed Native people at higher risks for stress and experiences of racism. Moving entire tribes or nations of people also impacted their ability to normalize their lifestyles and decreased their ability to engage in economically profitable activities.

**Racism.** Racism has been associated with a number of psychological and cultural problems for oppressed groups of individuals and can have direct and indirect influences on well-being in all aspects. Direct racism causes personal suffering and psychological distress and may also limit access to products that promote healthy lifestyles. Indirect racism affects health in more institutionalized ways such as hiring practices and segregation. Clark and colleagues (1999) defined racism as “beliefs, attitudes, institutional arrangements, and acts that tend
to denigrate individuals or groups because of phenotypic characteristics or ethnic group affiliation” (p. 805) and perceived racism as the “subjective experience of prejudice or discrimination” (p. 808). Within the scientific literature, racism has been conceptualized as being attitudinal or behavioral in nature. Attitudinal racism is represented through attitudes and beliefs while behavioral racism “denies equitable treatment” to people based on a perceived association with an ethnic group based on appearance (p. 805).

L. M. Whitbeck, McMorris, Hoyt, Stubben and LaFromboise (2003) found three factors linked to depression and depressive symptoms among a sample of 287 Native American adults in the Upper Midwest. First, those who experienced discrimination were two times more likely to indicate symptoms of depression. Secondly, attending powwows, speaking their traditional language, and participation in traditional activities reduced susceptibility to depressive symptoms. Third, depressive symptoms were reported more frequently by those who participated with less-than-average frequency in traditional activities and had weaker cultural ties than those who participated with above average frequency and had above average ties to their cultures. Therefore, the psychological effects of discrimination can become more harmful as participants in traditional activities decrease and emotional distress may increase in relation to stress induced by conflicting cultural values (p. 412).

**Culture and socioeconomic status.** Ethnic minority groups are more likely than non-ethnic groups to live at or below poverty level. This also includes the intake of food and nutritional dietary foods. From a historical perspective, the
removal from ancestral lands affected the native people that were once a part of
traditional diets. As part of the relocation policy, tribes were supplied with
monthly rations that were not nutritional, but rather low in nutritional value. As D.
Adams stated (1995), rations provided to the tribes were oftentimes spoiled; these
rations were used as trade for Native parents, including Navajo parents, to give up
their children to attend boarding schools. When parents did not give up their
children to attend school, rations, which were their only source of food, were
withheld. Commodities that were typically high in fat such as butter, lard, whole
milk, and powdered eggs and cheese were later supplied to tribes. So, instead of
being able to access the natural resources provided by their natural habitat, Native
people were forced to prepare foods that were conducive to the use of
commodities.

**Emotional distress.** Native American adults are two to five times more
likely to experience severe psychological distress, or to have felt hopeless or
worthless, most or all of the time, compared to White, Black, Asian, and Hispanic
adults (National Center for Health Statistics, 2005). Correlates to the soul wound,
post-colonial stress and historical trauma, include alcoholism, anger, obesity,
racism, discrimination, and suicide.

For Native American people, emotional distress has been defined in many
ways. Duran and Duran (1995) defined experiences and psychological distress as
a *soul wound*, while others termed this concept *post-colonial stress* (Shultz,
2005). To fully understand the meaning of soul wound, one must first understand
the holistic worldview of many of the indigenous people of North America. Duran
and Duran (1995) defined this as “unified awareness or perception of the physical, psychological, and spiritual phenomena that make up the totality of human existence or consciousness” or “to experience the world as a totality for which they are an integral part” (p. 44). In other words, Native people tended to view life as being in harmony with their surroundings and to accept their existence simply as being part of the mystery of the universe, a direct contrast to the Western logical positive worldview. This awareness of being centered in the universe is the core from which the soul, psyche, myths, dreams, and culture of Native people emerges. When this core was wounded through the processes of genocide, removal, assimilation, acculturation, and loss of culture, these processes became a collective soul wound for all Native people.

Brave Heart (2003) labeled the experiences of genocide, removal, assimilation, and acculturation as historical trauma. She defined trauma as being massive group trauma experiences that Native Americas people experienced over several generations, resulting in an accumulation of emotional and psychological wounds. The experiences of historical trauma, generation after generation, have led to an Historical Trauma Response defined as difficulty recognizing or expressing emotions, suicidal thoughts and gestures, and self-destructive behaviors. Historical Trauma Response may also include feelings of depression, anxiety, anger and a low self-esteem. As it relates to self-destructive behaviors of Native people, there is an abundance of literature on the use of alcohol and its detrimental effects upon the physical and mental well-being of Native
communities. An inability to express emotions, a symptom of Historical Trauma Response, can be an affective trait Brave Heart called historical grief.

**Historical loss.** The historical trauma and the generational transmission of trauma responses, which have been documented in other cultures, such as survivors of the Jewish Holocaust, ancestors of World War II, Japanese internment camp survivors, have also occurred for American Indian people (Brave Heart, 2003). *Historical loss* is another term given by L. A. Whitbeck and colleagues (2004) to the phenomenon of European contact and colonization, which resulted in loss of land, lives, and culture. The first generations of Native Americans who initially experienced removal from their homeland experienced many personal, social, and cultural losses including separation from their families and tribal members, loss of languages, and spiritual practices which resulted in significant post-traumatic stress. Some theorists (Brave Heart, 2003; Duran & Duran, 1995) suggested that through the intergenerational transmission of post-traumatic stress disorder and its associated symptoms of depression, anxiety, dissatisfaction, and hopelessness, these losses have never been properly mounted by Native people, including Navajos.

Brave Heart (2003) suggested that historical unresolved grief or unmounted loss is a result of the Historical Trauma Response to the historical trauma experiences by Native people. The grief literature describes this type of grief as disenfranchised grief. Disenfranchised grief occurs when a loss cannot be publicly mourned or acknowledged, which may result in more intense emotions such as anger, guilt, sadness, and helplessness (Doka, 1989). In any culture, there
are spiritual practices associated with dying. In the United States, the rituals related to death such as funerals and burials are mostly prescribed by the beliefs of the dominant culture. When European contact occurred many of the spiritual practices used to facilitate the mourning process were banned, making the resolution of grief impossible (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). In addition to the loss of these spiritual practices, Native Americans also became stereotyped or socially defined as “stoic” or as people who had no feelings, which added to the notion that perhaps they did not want to or need to mourn their losses. Thus the dominant society “disenfranchised the legitimacy of grief,” which contributed to the inhibition of emotional expression and created an atmosphere of shame and guilt for being Native American, which is sometimes associated with, and relieved through, the grieving process.

Feelings of helplessness and powerlessness can result in inferiority that causes disorders in the identification of the self, which result in grief, shame, and guilt (Kaufman, 1989). Disenfranchised grief occurs when previous experiences of grief are not recognized, or are unsanctioned, by the dominant culture. Unsanctioned grief is feeling as though one’s loss is not sanctioned by mainstream society. In other words the loss is minimized as being unimportant and is not acknowledged or valued by society at large. Thus losses are not fully mourned, which introduces the idea of a historical unresolved grief that is passed on for generations (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998).

Transposition is defined as a means to convey the influence of major historical events through generations. It is experiences as living in the present as
well as the past and is transferred to other generations through culture and identity (Kestenburg, 1989). One study found that “the current generations of American Indian adults have frequent thoughts pertaining to historical loss and that they associate these losses with negative feelings” (L. A. Whitbeck et al, 2004, p. 119). The researchers in this study also found that feelings of anger and depression increased when the perceptions of historical loss were strongly felt. The prevalence of perceived historical loss was remarkable among those who survived, demonstrating that these thoughts influence the current generation of adults, not just the elders. The study also found that there appears to be a relationship between emotional distress and thoughts about historical loss, with the most noted emotional responses being anger/avoidance and anxiety/depression (L. A. Whitbeck et al., 2004).

Historical loss is one of the four contributing factors to alcohol abuse among Native American people (L. A. Whitbeck et al., 2004). A sense of historical loss may occur for those who experience discriminatory acts—being discriminated against may prompt memories of events leading to loss of traditional Native American culture. While discrimination is not eliminated by the level of participation in traditional cultural practices, being more involved in traditional Native American culture may serve as a buffer against reminders of loss. However, those who are highly involved in their culture report increased levels of historical loss as immersion in the culture may make one more sensitive to cultural losses (p. 416). The strong association of alcohol abuse with historical loss in the 2004 study appears to support L. A. Whitbeck and colleagues’ findings
that negative emotional responses are attributed to thoughts of historical loss among Native American adults (p. 416). These findings suggest that some may use alcohol to numb or reduce intrusive thoughts or feelings about historical loss. Overall this study suggests that many stressors experienced by Native Americans may be “culturally specific nuances” (p. 417) that need to be taken into account when addressing risk and resiliency factors associated with stress.

Research indicates that responses to trauma are less debilitating when there are traditions in place that encourage mourning and healing (Doka, 1989). It needs to be acknowledged that Native communities who were relocated or whose children were sent to boarding schools were not allowed to fully mourn their losses. In the case of Native Americans, there was no culture in which to mourn loss. Cultural practices for mourning that were still in existence were not accepted by the dominant culture and were therefore minimized and discouraged. When one’s culture is minimized, this can lead to feelings of shame and guilt over wanting to mourn, which can lead to feelings of depression. This may have meaningful implications for culturally appropriate counseling for Native Americans. As a result, the social ills such as substance and alcohol abuse; domestic violence; and school failure such as decreasing achievement scores, high dropout rates, and high negative behavior in Navajo students are rampant with the Navajo people today.

Parental Involvement” from Parents’ Points of View

Minority parents who come from poor, less educated and whose cultural and social backgrounds that differ from school perceptions often find it most
difficult to become involved in the schools, let alone form partnerships with the schools (Henderson, Jacob, Kernan-Schloss, & Raimondo, 2004). As a result of these differences, schools view them as being different and lacking the necessary skills and competence to help in their children’s education (Epstein, 1995). Parents are then viewed from a deficit perspective by school officials, but deficit explanations do not account for the achievement of students who come from impoverished backgrounds yet are able to achieve at high levels (Nieto, 2004).

The lack of respect of parents in educational systems is also shared by many parents, especially low-income minority parents. The dialogue below begins with a voice from the shadows of urban indifference. Ms. Deborah “Debbie” Curley is one of the many low-income, urban parents and an active participant in a study that was conducted on parents’ perspective in science education:

So I mean, if you want parents to be involved, why is it that when we walk through your door, we’re not treated like kings and queens, considering we are the mothers and fathers of these children who are paying your salary? We should be getting bowed down to—we shouldn’t have to curb tail and kiss rear ends. (Ms. Deborah Curley, “A Voice from Urban Shadows”)

According to Curley, respect may be demonstrated in many ways including giving recognition, acknowledging one’s perspective, and focusing on the strengths of one’s contribution, not one’s deficiencies. Our society as a whole has been guilty of not respecting low-income, minority, especially Native Americans, populations. The use of the word *shadow* is apt as we hardly look to the shadows
(and the voices therein) as places of relevance and perspective. Indeed, they are viewed as areas “void of light.”

In education, in particular, the lack of respect has been manifested in many ways, including top-down curriculum development and implementation, educational reform initiatives by the privileged for an assumed all, not to mention a lack of provision of adequate facilities.

Academic institutions are also guilty of not respecting low-income populations by not acknowledging strengths or contributions, but deficits (Valdes, 1996). In the past, research concerning low-income, minority populations have used terminology such as underclass and culturally deprived in their descriptions. Bloom, Davis, and Hess (1967, p. 4) referred to the culturally deprived or disadvantaged as those with the roots of their problems traceable to their experiences in the home. He described the experiences as the sorts that do not transmit the cultural patterns necessary for the types of learning characteristics of the school and the larger society. A significant amount of this research has focused on the “short-comings” of “these” people and has essentially put them in positions of helplessness.

It is not enough to simply uncover the educational needs and concerns of parents, especially Navajo parents. It becomes necessary to attempt to come to some understanding of how their personal histories have informed or influenced their positions on education, schooling, and culture. It becomes necessary to try and recognize the areas of tensions between the concerns expressed by parents
and those of the educational institutions. Michelle Fine noted, in discussing the political ironies of parental involvement,

Across the chasms of race, class, and gender parents were aware that they were not seen for who they were, and could not say what they felt. But they held tight to the ship of public education, from which their hopes would sail or sink. To challenge the captain when one’s hold felt so precarious would probably have been foolish. So they continued to sit at the ambivalent boundary of community and school, mostly to remind the school that there was a constituency, but not to raise difficult questions that could have shut them, or their children, even further out. And so silencing reigned in yet another domain. (Fine, 1991, p. 223)

The above statement recognizes that parents realize the vulnerability of their position. That realization comes from spending a life there, in the shadows. It comes from an acknowledgement and acceptance of the lines of demarcation between themselves and others, and between the shadowed spaces versus the “open ground” of general society. There exists an unwritten, largely unspoken creation of a social caste system. Each one has her space and place. To challenge and question one’s location is difficult by virtue of one’s location in that shaded space, and to be able to straddle those same line, as Fine (1991) suggested in the above statement, is a necessary measure for survival.

Navajo parents today are plagued by many social, economic and psychological ills such as alcohol and substance abuse, suicide, domestic violence, child abuse, and other problems which their children witness and live in on a daily basis. These ills are a result of generations of forced assimilation, enculturation, and oppression set forth by the federal government, which “has weakened their cultural and spiritual identity, fractured social cohesion, low levels of education and training, and lack of economic development opportunities”
(Leonard, 2008) for our Navajo people. Through this enculturation in western society, many Navajo fathers and mothers have lost the traditional Navajo parenting skills they were raised with and taught as young children. The forced enculturation into western society has also greatly diminished Navajo parents’ sense of self-worth and resiliency because they were assimilated through a western educational program that tried to convert and civilize them into mainstream America (Webb, 2005) by cutting their cultural ties with their families and to be forbidden the use of their Native language in schools. This is where the philosophical teachings of the Hozhooji and Naayee’ji parenting skills that develop cultural and spiritual identity of Navajo people were lost. The very same values and principles that are instilled into a Navajo child so the “Whole Child” can be developed were diminished and contemporary, westernized parenting skills replaced these values.
Chapter Three

Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the perceptions of Navajo mothers and Navajo fathers in the development and childrearing practices of their children and to what extent each parent was involved in their children. A sample size of six households consisting of two-parent homes and children of multiple ages were interviewed regarding their attitudes and perceptions about parental involvement and their views of child development as well as childrearing practices in each of their families. The purpose of this chapter is to present and discuss the research methodology that was employed during the research to achieve its objectives and answer the research questions. The following subsections are dedicated to this purpose. The subsections below explain the study’s general research approach and research design. Included is a discussion of the data collection process, methodology, procedures, analysis, research participants, confidentiality, and validity.

Interviews were used to address the research question. These interviews allowed participants to express their perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, and ideas in an open non-confrontational manor (Epstein & Jansorn, 2004; Epstein, 1996; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003).

Research Questions

The main research question that guided this study was as follows:
How do parents understand their involvement in their children’s education from their perceptions, especially in childrearing and child development? The following ten questions related to the main research question:

1. How does the Navajo mother understand parental involvement?
2. How does the Navajo father understand parental involvement?
3. What is the Navajo mother’s role in the development of her child?
4. What is the Navajo father’s role in the development of his child?
5. To what extent is the Navajo mother involved in her child by age?
6. To what extent is the Navajo father involved in his child by age?
7. To what extent is the Navajo mother involved in her child by gender?
8. To what extent is the Navajo father involved in his child by gender?
9. How does the involvement of the Navajo mother change by the age of her children?
10. How does the involvement of the Navajo father change by the age of his children?

**Research Design**

Merriam (1998) stated that “qualitative research is an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that help us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible” (p. 5). Yin (2003) proposed the following:

Every type of empirical research has an implicit, if not explicit, research design. In the most elementary sense, the design is the logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study’s initial research questions and, ultimately, to its conclusions. Colloquially, a research design is a logical plan for getting from here to there, is some set of conclusions (answers)
about these questions. Between “here” and “there” may be found a number of major steps, including the collection and analysis of relevant data. (p. 20)

Merriam (1998) further noted that in qualitative research the researcher is the instrument used to collect data in an effort to understand the meaning people have constructed in order to make sense of their experiences in the world. Patton (1985) contented:

Qualitative research is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there. This understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily but to understand the nature of that setting, what their lives are like, what’s going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in that particular setting and in the analysis to be able to communicate that faithfully to others who are interested in that setting. The analysis strives for depth of understanding. (p. 6)

Morse and Richards (2002) stated that “qualitative research is best learned by doing and talking about the experience” (p. 8). They asserted that simply teaching qualitative methods without benefits of data collection and analysis does little to develop one’s competence as a researcher. They added that qualitative inquiry requires that the researcher be grounded in the theoretical context of the study. They affirmed that “qualitative research is an intellectual activity firmly based on the cumulative intellectual activities of those who have come before their respective disciplines” (p. 8).

Merriam (1998) described the investigator in a qualitative study as “the primary instrument for gathering and analyzing data and, as such, can respond to the situation by maximizing opportunities for collecting and producing meaningful information” (p. 20). Additionally, a qualitative researcher “must have
an enormous ‘tolerance for ambiguity.’” Merriam further stated that it is “the very lack of structure is what makes this type of research appealing to many, for it allows the researcher to adapt to unforeseen events and change direction in pursuit of meaning” (p. 20). Lincoln and Guba (1985) asserted that qualitative research requires reflexivity from the researcher to tell the story in a new or unexpected way. Knowledge of the self and consciousness about how this self is inserted into the test is imperative. Thus, “the writing effort begins with self, not with the effort to describe that which has been discovered” (p. 314). The researcher must engage in continuous reflection and discernment about the motivations that influence these decisions and the influence of their own identities on assumptions and interpretive lenses, and be explicit about how these influence all aspects of the research design.

For Deloria (1969) the distinction between pure and applied research is one of the footnotes, with relevancy of subject matter never addressed in either. He suggested that it is traced to the origin; that “behind each policy and program with which Indians are plagued” one will find an anthropologist. He further condemned the type of research done on Indian people as useless knowledge “attempting to capture real Indians in a network of theories,” and this has “contributed substantially to the invisibility of Indian people today” (p. 81). Researchers and their scholarly community have completely buried Indian communities beneath a mass of irrelevant information to the extent that many Indians parrot the ideas of researcher who appear to know everything about Indians. The often fossilized caricatures presented as “real” Indians are remote
from Indian people today, yet their impact is to make Indian people “feel that they are merely shadows of a mythical super-Indian” (p. 82).

Deloria (1969) continued his point asserting that Indians have been defined, explored, tested, and observed with the conclusion reached that Indians must be redefined in terms that white men will accept, even if that means re-Indianizing them according to a white man’s idea of what they were like in the past and should logically become in the future. (p. 92)

Researchers have made Indians their victims, throwing them into a conceptual prison with tribes competing with scholars for funds.

In the final section of their comprehensive chapter covering research on American Indian Education, Deyhle and Swisher (1997) addressed several issues relevant to the shifting needs in American Indian communities, including research. They acknowledged that shift has occurred from the period Deloria (1969) described when “Indianness” was defined by whites and when researchers and sociologists acted as if Indians “couldn’t do anything if they [Whites] didn’t first understand it and approve of it” (p. 265). Deyhle and Swisher (1997) highlighted the fact that much like everything else in American Indian communities today, research is increasingly controlled by Indian people who are seeking their own solutions to their own problems. This does not preclude non-Indian researchers, “given the right intent and integrity” for producing useful research (p. 181).

According to Deyhle and Swisher (1997) the dominant emerging perspective among Indian people is that “the assimilation objectives of American education are detrimental to the social, economic, and political well-being of their
Indian people feel that not only have the material resource of their lands been exploited by corporate American but their cultures have also been exploited by non-Indian scholars, and it is time to erect barriers to safeguard cultural domains against incursions. Indian scholars must become involved in producing research from Indian perspectives and not remain merely subjects and consumers of research.

Stanfield (1994) suggested that it was essential to develop ‘indigenous qualitative methods that draw from the cosmos of people of color, such as African-descent populations” (p. 177). Ethnicity defined in racial terms is viewed as normal in numerous multiracial/multiethnic nation states, as is the idea that “the culture of the dominant group is universalistic rather than particularistic” (p. 177).

The question of how to develop indigenous “ethnic” models of qualitative research remains, even though some researchers are attempting to build participatory bridges between themselves and the subjects. Indigenous cognitive maps are necessary to interpret indigenous worldview. As Deloria (1969) has pointed out for Native Americans, Stanfield (1994) reiterated with reference to research done in Africa by westerners; that Western knowledge production has often deceived African researchers, often rationalizing and reinforcing eurocentric domination. Stanfield stated that indigenous models for phenomena “such as time, space, spirituality, and human relationships with nature” (p. 27) are culture bound and culture produces the cognitive maps we all use.
Stanfield (1994) elaborated that there are differences between the ways Africans and Westerners “socially construct interpretations about themselves and others” (p. 184). Much has been written about such differences between Native Americans and Euro-Americans. For purposes of paradigm construction, particularly for oral-based cultures, holistic representations of how people construct their realities need to be collected. Stanfield proposed:

As so many non-Westerners view social, the emotional, and the spiritual as integral parts of a whole person linked to a physical environment, it would also be crucial for such a qualitative methods epistemology to be grounded in holistic rather than fragmented and dichotomized notions of human beings. (p. 185)

This is precisely what Deloria (1994) described in his forward to Indian Education in America. “The educational journey of modern Indian people is one spanning two distinct value systems and worldviews” (p. 7). This meeting ground between the two worldviews, the Native American sacred view and the pragmatic material view of the larger American society, allows each group to teach and learn from the other. Deloria pointed out, discussing American Indian metaphysics, that the knowledge of American Indians has been scorned by Whites for centuries while their own worldview was seen as “the highest intellectual achievement of our species” (p. 9). However, in recent years, there has been a growing understanding of the fact that Indian tribes possessed considerable knowledge about the natural world, much of which is already gone.

Native American communities have no need for theories about themselves but have a substantial need for research that attempts to provide useful information applicable to existing problems. Deloria (1969) asserted that there are
very few researchers who have provided anything useful to Indian people despite their professional claims. Deloria felt that researchers could be essential “in helping American society to understand the concepts involved in equality-real equality.” He believed that researchers “should offer themselves as volunteers to the various tribes and apply their skills in research to real problems” (p. 275).

Merriam (1998) identified important characteristics that must be understood about the participant’s perspective when conducting a qualitative study. Merriam noted the first concern as understanding the participant’s perspective from the emic or insider’s perspective as opposed to the etic or the outsider’s perspective or view.

I am both an insider and an outsider in this study. As a parent, I was an insider because I listened to the interviews as the parents in this study shared their experiences. Many of the parents’ responses from the interviews resonated with me. In contrast, through my lens as a Navajo, I interpreted the parents’ responses and frustration surface between the deficit perspective and what I heard from these parents.

As the primary instrument for data collection, a second characteristic that the researcher must possess is the ability to be responsive to the context, adapt techniques to circumstances, and process data immediately by responding to the nonverbal aspect of the context. The ability to clarify and summarize data as it unfolds and as the study evolves are important characteristics of a qualitative research. A third characteristic requires the researcher to be available to physically go to the participants’ sites, wherever that may be, in order to observe
the behavior occurring in its natural setting. Finally, the product of a qualitative study is richly descriptive in using words rather than pictures to explain what has been learned about a phenomenon and focuses on process, meaning, and understanding.

In order to better understand parental involvement for Navajo parents, it was important to study the parents’ perspectives. The predominant model of parental involvement comes from the existing theories of Epstein’s (1995) model, which are currently present in the body of literature on parental involvement. Epstein’s (1995) model of parental involvement assumes a deficit view of parents. Epstein has dominated the research literature on parental involvement for decades with little significant changes in the way parental involvement is conceptualized or understood. Furthermore, there are little to no literature on parental involvement for Native American parents, particularly Navajo parents.

The Educator’s Deficit Model of parental involvement has been identified in the literature as the parents being able to support their children’s education in limited ways, which are defined by the school’s perspectives as needing to be fixed through parent training programs or to have the parents be on site at the schools. The school’s perspectives on parental involvement are based on what the schools believe or perceive what parental involvement should be. This study sought to broaden the perspective of parental involvement to understand parental involvement from Navajo parents’ perspectives. Parents were able to tell their story outside of the school setting about their experiences with their involvement, and the resources and relationships they draw upon in order to support their
children’s education. By allowing parents the opportunity to tell their story about their involvement with their children’s education, a better understanding of parental involvement was provided as well as an opportunity to change existing theoretical conceptions of parental involvement for Navajo parents.

**Geographic Location, Population**

**Geographic Location**

This study was conducted in the northern part of Arizona in the town of Flagstaff, Arizona. The parents who became part of the study reside in this town and have children attending school in the nearby Flagstaff Unified School District, Winslow Public School, or Kin Lani Dormitory, which is a Bureau of Indian Education school. Ten percent of the total population of 60,611 consists of Native Americans. This is primarily attributable to the city's proximity to several Indian reservations, including the Navajo, Hopi, Havasupai, and Yavapai.

According to the 2009 census count, the median income for a household in the city was $37,146, and the median income for a family was $48,427. About 10.6% of families and 17.4% of the population were below the poverty line, including 17.6% of those under age 18 and 7.0% of those ages 65 or over. Out of the 17.4% of the population below the poverty line, 10.3% are Native American.

**Population**

The qualitative descriptive research was limited to a purposeful small sample of Navajo two-parent households in the Flagstaff area. The population consisted of both male and female parents. The parents in the study varied by age, income level, and educational level; however, these variations were not used for
the purpose of selection of participants. This collection of data was for demographics considerations.

The two-parent households selected had multiple children of different age groups and a mixture of female and male children attending schools within the Flagstaff area. There was a total of six households in the study with each household being one case study.

Interviews with parents were conducted using a combination of theoretical and purposeful sampling. Parents were first theoretically sampled using the recruitment flyer (see Appendix A). The sample participants needed to reflect the study population and needed to be able to articulate their attitudes and perceptions regarding their perceptions of parental involvement in child development and childrearing practices. Once contact was made, each parent volunteer filled out a demographics survey that included specific demographics pertaining to each parent volunteering. A diverse group of parents were then purposely selected from the completed demographics who met the prerequisites. According to Merriam (1998), “The researcher needs to consider where to observe, when to observe, whom to observe and what to observe” (p. 60).

Merriam (1998) conceded that the questions of how many people to interview, how many sites to visit, or how many documents to read can be answered only by determining whether or not the initial research questions have been fully answered. Merriam affirmed that “the purpose is to maximize the information, and the sampling is terminated when no new information is forthcoming from new sampled units, thus redundancy is reached” (p. 67).
Instrumentation

A set of open-ended, semi structured interview questions (Appendix B) were used to conduct the initial interview of the participants. Both mother and father were interviewed together by giving each parent time to respond to each of the interview questions related to their experiences and beliefs about child development and childrearing. The amount of time spent interviewing each participant varied dependent upon the participants’ understanding of the questions as well as their level of willingness to openly share their experiences. The parents’ perspective was the only perspective sought after for this research study; therefore, only the experiences of parents were included in this study. The interview protocol that was developed aligned with the purpose of this study, as the goal was to allow patterns and themes to emerge from the participants’ responses.

The following five questions were warm-up questions:

1. How many children do you have?
2. What grades are your children?
3. What ages are your children?
4. How long have you been married/with your partner?
5. What language would you like to use for this interview?

The following 15 questions were interview questions:

1. What does being a parent mean to you?
2. What are your goals for raising your children?
3. What are some things you strongly believe in for raising your children?
4. What does parental involvement mean to you? How would you describe parental involvement?

5. Is there a difference in the way you talk to and discipline your children based on their ages? Do you talk to your (age) differently than the way you talk to your child who is (age)? Do you discipline to your (age) differently than the way you discipline your child who is (age)?

6. What type of teachings do you instill in your children? Why those teachings?

7. Would you say that the way you raise your children and the teachings you instill in your children are the same as what your spouse believes? Why or why not?

8. What do you think and believe should be learned in school?

9. What do you see as the gaps between you, as the parents, and the school when it comes to parental involvement?

10. What do you believe are the responsibilities of the school?

11. What do you believe are the responsibilities of you, as the parents?

12. What do you believe is the role of the school in your child (ren’s)’s education? Why?

13. What role do you play in your child’s education?

14. What do you believe should be the role that parents play in their children’s education?

15. Is there anything else you would like to add?
Data Collection

The primary mode of data collection was through a semi-structured interview protocol with parents. Interviews were conducted at a mutually agreed upon date, time, and place convenient for both the participant and the researcher. All interviews were recorded with informed consent of each participant. In order to protect the identity of each participant, each parent was given a pseudonym.

The following procedure was used to conduct each interview:

1. A pre-interview statement was read aloud to each of the parents, which consisted of a brief introduction of the researcher, the purpose of the interview, and to address any issues that the parents may have prior to the beginning of the interview.

2. The Dissertation Study Information was read aloud to each of the parents and any issues that each participant had were addressed. Verbal consent was then given by each of the participants before beginning the interview.

3. The demographics sheet was then given to the participants to fill out. Since the interviews were conducted with both the father and mother together, one demographic sheet was completed at each interview.

4. The interview was conducted using the semi-structured protocol, which had a list of the open-ended questions. Both mother and father took turns answering each of the interview questions before going on to the next question.
The interview questions were not given to the participants before the interview was conducted because of the possibility of participants coming to the interview with their answers already prepared. The interviews were recorded with the verbal consent of the participants and notes were taken by the researcher during the interview using a laptop. All the interviews were transcribed using a laptop, labeling each transcription with the pseudonym given for each participant.

Data Analysis

A three-step process was used in this qualitative research study. The first step was semi-structured, open-ended interviews of ten (10) participants to discuss their perspectives on parental involvement in their children’s education, particularly in their child development and childrearing practices as parents. Open-ended, semi-structured interview questions allowed interviewees to respond freely, using whatever words they wanted, allowing for their thoughts, feelings, and experiences to be described.

Participants were informed that the interviews would be recorded in order to clarify details or to ensure accuracy in analysis. The interviews were conducted in person, at a site, time, and date determined by both researcher and the participant, digitally recorded, and then transcribed into a textual database. The results of the interviews provided the information needed for the next step of the study, which was to analyze the information and organize it into groups based on common threads. Those threads represented similar words and phrases expressed by the participants. The process of analysis was conducted manually, using poster board and cards. Once the groups and common threads were realized, the results
were used to draw conclusions and inferences regarding the perspectives of parents of their involvement in their children’s education.

**Summary**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine how parents understand their involvement in their children’s education from their perceptions, especially in childrearing and child development. To achieve this purpose, a qualitative research study was conducted using an open-ended, semi-structured interview method to obtain insights and understanding of the parents’ perceptions. The methodology was appropriate to the problem because the type of data to be collected is best explored by those who have experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2005). A purposive sample of ten participants were selected to be interviewed, for the research study.

Participants submitted consent forms and were assured of confidentiality regarding their interview accounts and anonymity. The processes of data collection and analysis were carefully followed to strengthen reliability of the study. Validity was strengthened by member checking and ongoing self-reflection of the researcher. Chapter 4 includes the findings of the current research study.
Chapter Four

Results

Six Navajo couples of Navajo students were interviewed for this dissertation. Each of the participants was randomly chosen and each varied by age and reflected diverse socioeconomic and educational background. Two of the couples interviewed reported they were new parents and had one child who had not yet entered school. Five of the couples had children in junior high and high school. Three of the couples had children who had gone through high school and were either currently in college and/or had families of their own. There were more responses shared by the women out of two of the couples who were interviewed; whereas, the men answered generally and/or just agreed with their wives. Out of four of the six couples, the men spoke more with specific responses to the questions asked; whereas, the women either just agreed or they gave one-to-two sentence responses that were very general. This chapter provides a narrative description of the data findings from the experiences and perspectives of the parents to their involvement in their children’s education.

Narratives

Interview Couple 1

The first couple I interviewed was a young couple, ages 22 and 21 years old, Noami and Jake (pseudonym names). Both were currently attending college, majoring in nursing and electrical engineering. The couple had a 22-month-old daughter who spent most of her days at a nearby daycare center. Because they were students, their income was from financial aid and scholarships they received
at the beginning of each semester, totaling a combined income of $7,500.00 per semester. During the interview, the couple was very eager to discuss their expectations and goals for their 22-month-old daughter. They were very open and felt comfortable responding to the questions I posed to them. The wife responded more from a traditional Navajo perspective, whereas the husband responded with more contemporary perspectives, but they both agreed with each other’s answers.

**Interview Couple 2**

The second couple I interviewed had been married for 14 years, Sally and Robert. Both husband and wife were in their late 30s. The wife had been an elementary teacher for the past 10 years, while her husband was working as a substance abuse counselor for the Navajo Nation. Both had master’s degrees in their field of work. The couple had four children—a set of fraternal twins who were 13 years old and in middle school, a 6-year-old son who just started kindergarten, and a 23-month-old daughter. The couple shared childhood experiences, which determined how they were raising their children. They kept expressing how they each came from different family backgrounds but they tried not to have that interfere with their lives today. Although the couple shared comments and stated they agreed with what the other person was saying, they made four comments about the other person’s statements, especially when it came to speaking about their childhood. There were also at least five times when the wife seemed to become annoyed with the negative comments her husband was making about her responses.
Interview Couple 3

The third couple I interviewed, Edith and George, were in their early 30s and had been married for six years. They had a 6-year-old son who just started kindergarten. The husband was still going to college majoring in business administration. Prior to this, he worked as an assistant manager for six years in a grocery chain. His wife graduated with a B.S. degree in Native American Studies from Dartmouth College, as well as an A.A. degree in Culinary Arts from Scottsdale Cordon Blue. She owned a catering business for the past two years, where both she and her husband cater to local businesses and private individuals on a regular basis. The husband gave very brief responses to each of the questions; whereas, the wife elaborated more on what the husband responded to. She also shared her experiences from her childhood and how her parents were very influential in the decisions she has made thus far. The husband agreed each time and asked his wife each time, “Is that right?”

Interview Couple 4

The fourth couple I interviewed were in their 50s with the husband being 59 years old and the wife being 57 years old. The husband’s name was Danny and the wife’s name was Marie. The husband was a retired public school teacher and the wife was currently working as a certified nurse assistant at a local Indian health service facility. The couple had been married for 36 years. They had five grown children, all out of high school, and four grandchildren. Three of the five children finished college and were living on their own. One of the children just finished eight years in the Army and had gone back to school. The youngest of the
five children just started college at the University of Arizona. The five children were ages 36, 33, 27, 26, and 24 years old. Both of them stated that only one of their five children had difficulty in life. She did not finish high school, but later obtained a GED, after which she obtained an A.A. degree. She was now working towards her B.A. degree. It was the husband who responded to the interview questions and gave details to the responses; whereas the wife just smiled and nodded during the times that her husband was providing the responses. When the wife was given the opportunity to make a response, she said, “I agree with him,” or she would give three-to-four word responses. When the couple was responding to Question 3, the wife stated that because her husband was older than she was “he does all the teachings and the talking in the family, and I support what he says and does.”

**Interview Couple 5**

The fifth couple I interviewed has been married for the past 45 years. Their names were John and Betsy. The husband was 71 years old and the wife was 66 years old. The husband retired last year after being a food service manager for the past 38 years. The wife was a homemaker. The couple had six grown children, 11 grandchildren and one great grandchild. Their children were ages 44, 41, 38, 36, 30, and 28 years old. Five out of their six children had finished college and were now working as an attorney, registered nurse, school administrator, school teacher, and business owner. The youngest of the six children was currently in college majoring in speech pathology. The husband stated that he never had a formal education but he did complete a five-year job program and
served in the Army, which gave him the skills to obtain the job he retired from. The wife attended boarding school up to 11th grade and was being trained to become a Certified Nurse Assistant; however, due to an accident, she never went back to school. She stated that she “truly enjoys being home and raising her children and grandchildren.” The couple preferred to make their responses in Navajo.

**Interview Couple 6**

The sixth couple I interviewed had been married for 21 years. Thompson was 46 years old and Bernadette was 42 years old. They had four children: two girls, ages 20 and 17 years old; and two boys, ages 11 and 13 years old. They were also grandparents to a one-year-old granddaughter. Their oldest daughter was now married and attending her third year in college with her husband. Their second oldest daughter was attending her first year at Dine College. The young sons were in eighth and sixth grades at a local public school. The husband had two years of community college education; whereas, the wife had earned two Master’s degrees in education and had been a school administrator for the past 17 years in various Bureau of Indian Education schools within the Arizona and New Mexico areas. The husband had been a bus driver for the past 10 years but had also worked as a welder for three years. Both came from a BIA educational background. Throughout the interview, it was the wife who responded to the questions more in depth and was always the first one to respond. The husband waited for the wife to respond; he then responded. His responses were more in Navajo rather than in English, but most of his answers were similar to that of his
wife and were more geared towards the traditional Navajo teachings. The couple stated that they are both at a point in their lives where they have “re-g geared [their] expectations for [their] children as well as their roles and responsibilities as parents because [they] are now grandparents.”

The parents in this study understood their involvement in their children’s education from a broader perspective based on Navajo teachings and values that they were taught when they were growing up. The findings suggest that the parental involvement from the parents’ perspectives go beyond the definition of parental involvement as perceived by the school systems because the perspectives of the parents included being involved in every aspect of the child’s life from “the time they are conceived to the time they become old.” All the parents did not limit attaining education to within the walls of the school to be the place where all learning took place. All stated that they recognized there was a difference between formal, Western education, which is the school, and education in life, which, as stated by John, that “they need to obtain throughout their lives so they are able to survive and succeed in this world.” The parents acknowledged school as the primary place for their children to attain an education but they also believed that education is bigger than what occurs within the walls of the school. As a result, the parents in the study were involved in all aspects of their children’s lives outside the school; all felt a sense of responsibility to prepare them for success in life. Bernadatte expressed that

I always check on my daughter to see if she is okay and if she is taking care of her husband and her daughter on a regular basis. Although she is now a mother herself, I have to make sure that my daughter is cooking for
her husband and her daughter, as I have taught her when she was growing up. I always check on both of them to ensure that they are staying on top if their school work.

Danny also stated that he makes sure that all his children are okay; that he calls them daily to see how each of them are doing.

There is more to success in life than just going to school and getting an education. If my children are happy with their lives and enjoy what they are doing, then I am happy, too. Life is more important than just academics.”

Although four out of the six couples interviewed admitted they were hardly ever or never present at their children’s school, all six couples valued education both within the walls of the school, as well as education about life. Both Sally and Robert agreed that because they work during the day they hardly ever attended parent-teacher conferences or any other events that took place at their children’s school; however, they made sure that they were part of their children’s lives and their education by having study hall every evening and being available for their children when their children were doing homework around their dining room table each evening.

Even though I do not attend my children’s activities during the day, I still make sure that they value education by helping them with their homework first before they do their chores or do anything else. My wife also sits with my twins and provides mini teaching during their homework time. Yes, we value education in our household. (Robert)

They support “being here” for their children in various other ways; however, “being there” depends on a variety of other factors. Some factors that parents voiced that they face daily consisted of work requirements and schedules, juggling school themselves to attain their own education, having to juggle their
children’s various extra-curricular activities, sports and parent meetings, and numerous socioeconomic hardships. All the parents in the study juggled life’s circumstances on a daily basis to support their children’s education. However, the actions and reactions to their life circumstances—their experiences, their resources, their morals, their judgments and their values—determined their level of involvement in their children’s education within the school systems. But the parents in the study supported their children’s life education outside the school more. Even though the circumstances in the parents’ daily lives dictated whether they showed up at the school, the parents reported that they supported their children by “being there” for them; that “being there” for their children on a day-to-day basis meant to support their children’s education, whether it be within the “walls of a school” or through teachings of values, morals, and attending spiritual ceremonies with their children. As George stated,

I make sure that my children go to peyote ceremonies and blessingway ceremonies with me, especially the boys. I also make sure that they follow the rules of dressing up for the ceremonies where my daughters wear skirts and moccasins and my sons have their k’etoh and headbands on. This is what I am teaching them. I also want them to learn the rules and procedures of what to do and what not to do in these ceremonies. These are also the teachings from our educational process.

All six couples voiced that participation in spiritual ceremonies with their children was crucial to the continuous support of their children. John expressed that he and his wife have been attending ceremonies with their children since they were babies. He also expressed that it was through the ceremonies and through our prayer and belief that our children are where they are at today. I truly believe that our prayers have been answered because when our children were just growing up, we went to meetings with them and they
listened to us pray for them to get a good education and to live decent lives. Through that, they also started to pray for themselves as they got older. Now we are seeing with our own eyes the reality of what we asked the Holy people for way back then. That’s how belief, hope and reality work together. That’s what we teach our children and that is how we have always supported our children. Even today, we support our grandchildren the same way.

Furthermore, Sally also shared,

_We make our children go to ceremonies with us every weekend where they have to sit up all night and listen to songs, prayers, and teachings. Through this, they learn how to endure, have hope, and begin to understand what the realities of life are._ Yes, there is another type of education besides academia, which we instill in our children. I know we support them by doing this as well as by having them listen to us pray for them. That way they know what we want for them.

**Themes**

Three themes emerged from the interviews of as to the parents’ perspectives of parental involvement in education. Each of the themes occurred simultaneously as the parents explained how they supported and guided their children through their education and through their lives. The themes were

(a) *spirituality*; (b) *responsibility*; and (c) *values*. For each of the themes component parts were identified. For *spirituality*, the components identified were (a) *prayers* and (b) *faith*. For *responsibility* the components identified were (a) *meeting needs*; (b) *meeting educational requirements*; and (c) *expectations to make connections*. For *values*, the components were (a) *valuing education*; (b) *understanding and communicating values*; (c) *future independence*; and (d) *being well-rounded*. The themes and their component parts from the parents’ perspectives are presented in the following sections.
**Spirituality: Faith and Prayer**

All parents in the study emotionally expressed that the heart of their parental involvement was the spiritual aspects of their children’s lives and how their children will practice their beliefs and prayers as part of their daily lives. All the parents have a strong foundation in their faiths and stated that is what they instill in their children. That is how they are being actively involved in and support their children in their educational accomplishments. All the parents in the study expect their children to take part in ceremonies, learn prayers, and begin to develop a sense of faith as well as to understand the importance of using their faith in acquiring positive things in their lives.

The parents in this study each believed that having some sense of a belief system, having faith, is the foundation all success in education as well as in life itself. Each parent expressed how faith helped them through so many negative experiences in their lives, but faith has also helped them to see the many wonderful things in their lives as well—that is what they want to instill in their children.

If our children do not learn anything else from us as parents, one thing I want for them to learn from us, just this one thing, is to have faith as part of their daily lives and to learn to understand how tremendously powerful faith and prayer can be in their lives. (Bernadette)

Another parent, Noami, professed,

We strongly believe in having prayer in our lives because it helps us through all the difficult times and also the good times we have in our lives. I am ensuring that we are instilling this in our children. I know that our children will gain something good from having a belief and through that belief, they will have hope, strength, and the commitment to lead positive, successful lives. That’s what we believe in.
Danny and Marie also professed that although they did not attend ceremonies, they still believed that faith and prayer were necessary in their lives as well as their children’s lives. They brought up their children attending church every Sunday and for their children to live by the Ten Commandments.

According to Danny,

> It is through our belief in God and Jesus Christ that has given us both the hope and the courage to overcome any obstacles in our lives as well as obstacles in our children’s lives. We teach our children that they need to pray regularly, especially during times of bad times so they can learn to rely on their prayers and their faith to continue on. By praying, it allows them to open up, relieve their stresses and it allows them to have the hope and the courage that there is a tomorrow. That’s what we teach our children.

Jake also expressed that he teaches his son that prayer comes first in his life: “Above all things, prayer is number one to live a life of contentment and happiness. . . . that’s what I want for my son.”

**Responsibility**

Each parent in this study expressed feelings of a deep, intrinsic sense of responsibility for their children. Across all parents, a strong sense of responsibility to meet their children’s day-to-day needs as well as to think about and plan for their children’s future was evident. These parents equipped their children for success in school and in life. These parents set the foundation for their children’s success in school but the values they instilled in their children the importance of education was more on how to survive and succeed in the world through the learning of life skills.
Meeting needs. The parents in this study desired to meet the needs of their children on a variety of levels to prepare them academically as well as to prepare for real life. All parents voiced that the main parts of meeting the needs of their children were to provide shelter, food, heat, and a belief system that their children can stay strong with. They wanted their children to understand the significance of providing such necessities so they could “take it with them throughout their lives and not forget that these necessities are crucial for their survival” (Danny). John and Betsy made the connection of providing necessities to the values that each holds in their belief as traditional Navajos. John stated,

The most sacred elements in our lives are air, fire, water, and the earth. So, when you say that our children need to understand these crucial values, we are saying that these sacred elements are like human beings where our children need to learn to use them with respect and partake of them in a sacred way.

All the parents identified themselves as providers who were responsible for meeting the immediate and future needs of their children. As the husband in Couple 1 stated,

I am responsible for my child’s safety at home, that she feels safe at home, health, mental stability . . . responsibility for her education in life, what happens in her environment, animals, physical location, her home . . . my responsibility that she knows enough about life to make correct decisions and to stay away from the wrong ones . . . my responsibility to keep her warm, safe, clothes, fed, filled with opportunities, and a positive mind, loved, happy, even though there are going to be times she is going to be mad and times when is going to be sad, but to be there for her when something seems overwhelming. (Jake)

All the parents also recognized the need to provide emotional support for their children. Couple 2 stated that their role as parents was to support their children so they would be able to get what they wanted out of life. “However,
there are parameters with what they want, and those parameters go back to the teachings and the values we are instilling in them, but that support is always there and it will always be there, no matter what” (Sally). Sally and Robert supported their daughter by what their daughter sees in front of her.

What we do now in front of her is what we teach her. What we try to do in front of her is to love one another, play, work, pray so she can see that these are things she will do later. Through what she sees from us, we are supporting emotionally, physically, and spiritually. (Robert)

Parents in this study identified that a part of meeting their children’s needs included instilling morals and values in their children. Among the parents in this study, many of them identified their responsibility for teaching their children right from wrong and setting the example for their children. It was here that many parents identified themselves as teachers. They believed that it was their job to send their children to school ready to engage in appropriate social interactions with others as well as to have the respect and the kindness of others. Parents taught their children values based on their own beliefs and what they determined were important for their children to know in order to become successful in life. As Couple 2 expressed emotionally, based on the set of twins they have,

With our twins, the cultural songs, stories, and prayers are based on them so we have to let them know that they have a role and responsibility within themselves first, then their family, and within the world. They have a purpose in life as to why they were born on this earth as twins. (Sally)

Couple 5 also expressed that the values and morals they as parents set for their children become the foundation of how they live their lives today as Navajo men and women.
Our children live their lives as spiritual people, where they depend on their prayers and their faith on a daily basis. . . . The morals and the values that we taught them to be respectful, independent, kind, and standing up for what they believe in have become the foundation of their lives as well.

(John)

Some parents acknowledged that teachers were also responsible for teaching children values at school. There were instances where the values between a parent in this study and a teacher conflicted. The values that the parent espoused to the child in the home sometimes differed from the values that teachers espoused to their children in the classroom. Couple 3 described a conflict between what they were teaching to their son at home versus what his teacher was telling their son at school. According to the mother in Couple 3, the teacher was labeling children who do not follow rules of the classroom as “bad” when they made choices in behavior that were against classroom rules. The mother in Couple 3 stated,

We do not use the word bad in our home and we try to teach our son that, yes, he may have inappropriate actions in his behavior, but that does not make him a bad person or bad in general. We do not like when our son comes home from school telling us that the “teacher thinks I’m a bad boy.” We do not like it because that word hurts him emotionally. (Edith)

From the conflict, the mother in Couple 3 found it difficult to support the efforts of the teacher. Another parent expressed her expectations regarding values.

I wish the school would teach and enforce the same beliefs and expectations that we place on my children at home. It is hard when you try to set high expectations and tell my children to value certain things, but when they come home from school, those teachings I try to instill in them decrease as a result of what their teacher tells them. (Edith)

Another parent also stated that they wished their children would be taught the values and morals from a traditional Navajo perspective using their Navajo
language and culture. Because that is never the case, as a result, they are seriously looking into the possibility of home schooling their children in the near future.

**Meeting educational requirements.** The parents in this study collaborated on their children’s schoolwork to help them meet the requirements of their education. All parents were very active with supporting their children’s education in a variety of ways. Some of the parents talked with their children about their school day to reinforce what was taught in school, sat with them to do their homework, and helped them study. Most of the parents believed that the educational requirement that is crucial to their children is instilling the teachings of “who they are, where they come from as Diné males and Diné females and obtaining the fluency in their native Diné language.” As the father in Couple 3 stated,

A child should know who he is and where he is coming from and knows his language. My child needs to know he is Diné and what it means to be Diné. He also needs to know what it means to be around family, to hear his language and to have spirituality by attending peyote ceremonies, attending deest’ii’ (crystal gazing ceremonies) or just being around grandma and grandpa and listen to them pray and for him to understand that there is a God. This is most important as my son’s educational requirement. (George)

Marie expressed that she and her husband Danny ensure that they teach their children about who they are and to teach them their spiritual side to help them develop their character and personalities so they can be good people in the general society they live in. This is a requirement that we instill in our children. Through this, we ensure that our children are good in school, as a result (Marie)
Another important educational requirement that all the parents expressed is the teaching the roles and responsibilities of being a Diné male and female. Through these roles and responsibilities, there are separation of thought, feelings, identity, and belief for both male and female. Couple 5 articulated how they both taught their children to learn, understand, and live these roles as males and females.

This is where the warrior and blessingway teachings come into play and this is how you teach your children to be in unity, balanced as a human being because they carry both the female and male identities with them, which are your mother and father. (Betsy)

Sally stated that she teaches her daughter how to take care of her home, because she is responsible for whatever is in her home such as the food, the fire, the fire poker, the water, the bedding, the jewelry, and whatever possessions she has in her home. Most importantly, she stands in front of her children and protects them at all costs, the same way that any living being would protect its children.

Bernadette, emotionally stated,

I teach my daughter she is the steward of her home because the home is like the womb of a mother. She is the caretaker of her home and what is inside. She has her weaving tools, her cooking utensils, her grinding stone and her traditional brush as her weapons because these are the tools that she needs in order for her children to survive, so they won’t go hungry, they won’t get cold, they won’t go without clothing, they won’t be dirty. . . . That’s what I teach my daughter

Bernadette’s husband, Thompson, expressed similar analogies on what he teaches his sons.

My sons are the warriors and the protectors of their families and everything that is outside. They take care of the wood, the livestock, and the maintenance of the home outside, the sweat lodge. Their families consisting of their wives and their children are always behind him because
he is their protector. He will face any danger or any evil that may try to harm their families.

As a result, the couple believed the mother and father have to stay together to raise their children because there is a balance, a unity of roles and responsibilities taught from both mother and father. “You cannot have one without the other,” concluded Thompson.

Parents in the study also addressed conflict between their perspectives of parental involvement in educational requirements versus the school systems’ perspective on these requirements. The mother in Couple 6 expressed how the school is always asking parents to be more involved with their children’s education,

but it’s is always when, where, and how the school wants us parents to be involved. We, as parents, believe we are involved in our children’s education, but we have our own definition of how we are supporting, teaching, and instilling educational standards in our children. It may not be the academic standards taught in the school to meet AYP, but these standards are based on our beliefs, our expectations on how we want to mold our children. We do support our children in education, but we also have our education at home and in the ceremonies they attend. (Bernadette)

Parents in the study also voiced how they often have conflict with the school because the schools do not understand their home situations and home environments. The mother in Couple 2 has been a teacher for the past 17 years and she mentioned that schools do not understand those parents who have minimum wage jobs and many time they do not have leave benefits to come to the school, or they might be too tired to help their children with their homework or check up on them and so . . . the gap is that because of the socioeconomic status of many of the parents. They come from struggling families and broken homes, so we at school cannot always expect parents just to go to the school. Many of these parents don’t have
gas money or they don’t have their own vehicles so they catch rides with relatives or they have to hitchhike to get to the schools. Yet, schools demand that parents come to the school because that’s how they perceive parental involvement. (Sally)

She went on to say that schools need to go out to the parents somehow and that it was a matter of trying to reach the parents at their level instead of always expecting them to be involved somehow at the school. Although parents have to be held accountable, the perceptions of parental accountability and what parental involvement means conflict.

Couple 5 also stated that although they never went to the school when their children were growing up, nor did they sit down with them to help them with their homework, nor did they attend parent meetings, they emotionally voiced that they were indeed involved in their children’s education as parents through our disciplining, through our teachings, through our parent-child talks of how education is important and how they will benefit from education later in life, but most of all, we were strongly involved as parents through our prayers, our hope, our faith, and the very fact that we had back-to-school NAC meetings, end-of-the-year NAC meetings every year for our children. We had blessingway ceremonies for them where they were disciplined and lectured on the rights and wrongs of life. That’s where songs, prayers, thoughts, feelings, talks, and understanding were bestowed upon our children to keep them strong, endure, and have the understanding to take what they were taught in school and use what they learned to make better lives for themselves. That’s what they did. We see that. We believe it’s because of our faith and our prayers. (John)

The father went on to say that schools do not understand that parents are involved in their children’s education; that they sacrificed daily to ensure their children did obtain an education, both Western education and traditional Navajo education.

All of the parents in the study believed that, although there are gaps in the schools as far as what is being taught and not taught to their children, the school
system is the place where core subject areas such as mathematics, reading, writing, science, and social studies are taught. Most of the parents explained that they were actively involved in helping their children meet the educational requirements of their education—educational requirements meaning academic requirements as well as education in the home and the traditional teachings of the Navajo people. They felt it was their responsibility along with the teachers to make sure that their children met the requirements of their education.

The young father in Couple 1 declared, “The school doesn’t have to do anything for your child to learn. You can teach your child yourself. Your child’s education is in your hands and it actually never leaves the parents’ hands.” Jake stated “It is up to you as parents on what your child should and will learn because you have more of that involvement in the way your child grows up than the school does.” Robert also confirmed this by stating,

Whatever gaps there may be between we as parents and the school, if there is any, my wife and I can cover those because there is only so much a school can do. The rest is up to us, if not the entirety, if not the whole. My daughter’s whole education is up to us and whatever the school doesn’t take care of, we will.

Making connections. It was important for many of the parents in this study that their children made the connection between what they learned at school to the real life experiences outside of school. At the same time, all the parents found it necessary to have their children make the connection between what they learned at home and what they learned at school to their daily lives. As a result, some of the parents expressed how they exposed their children to different learning experiences outside the school, such as providing them with experiences
such as travel, cultural experiences, extra-curricular activities, and having them participate in ceremonies for relatives as well as at home. The parents in this study wanted their children to know that there is more to life than what is at their schools, their homes, and their communities.

In order for these parents to provide these experiences for their children, they had to be physically present for their children, and they had to have some level of awareness that there were opportunities for their children to make connections with their learning at school. Among the parents, some were deliberate in their efforts to provide connective opportunities; whereas, others had a goal of providing their children experiences that would help them in their future.

All of the parents were practical in their approach as to helping their children make connections with their learning at home and at school. Their idea of an educated person was one who always connected life experiences with learning. Bernadette noted, “What I do certainly allow my kids to see the connections between what they learn at school and at home with helping them develop skills that they will need in order to be successful in life.” She further explained that she was concerned about their children’s success after they finish school. She wanted to prepare them for adulthood when they have to navigate the world on their own. She deliberately provided them with practical, real-life opportunities to experience connections to the world around them. One activity that Bernadette did was to have her children attend summer programs in other states and to be “on their own” when they are at these summer programs. She also forced her children
to become more independent by making them cook on their own, wash their own clothes, and learn to manage their own finances through biweekly allowances.

Robert explained that part of making connections with his children’s learning at home and at school were the experiences they were getting at home such as chores, teachings, and demonstrations of how to do simple things such as laundry, cooking, and caring for horses because they are the skills needed on their own as adults. “The roles that my children play right now are important. They wash dishes and do their own laundry. They started taking on these roles when they were eight or nine years old.” His wife Sally further explained that these skills that they are learning now serve as a guide from birth. Instilling these values and teachings and having them learn our expectations and from a certain age they start having to do things on their own, just like the example that my husband made like washing dishes and doing laundry, having them do these things. . . . We are preparing them to be able to do it on their own without us. Whether it’s with their social skills, life skills, their education, we are instilling those skills for the future.

These parents used the day-to-day experiences that they shared with their children to support their education and to support their future independence.

Another important connection between school and life experiences most of the parents brought up was laziness. They felt that laziness was the number one negative thing that all their children experienced daily. The parents felt their children needed to combat laziness in order for them to succeed in life and in school. Jake illuminated,

Everything in this world is known and how you grasp those concepts and how you go with that is up to you. If you are lazy, you can’t make it. I see that in myself, my siblings, and my children. I see that people have other perspectives and like the western society, they might see laziness as no
problem and they wouldn’t diagnose it as a problem, but for us Diné, laziness is the root of all negative things. Laziness forces people not to complete tasks, chores, homework, assignments, projects, and even wake up to face a new day. Because of laziness, our children tend to have bad attitudes and behaviors and tend to talk back. . . . So with that, parents need to have an understanding of themselves and their children.

The father in Couple 6 (Thompson) explained that laziness was given to the Navajo people during the time that the Twin Warriors were killing off evil monsters that were destroying the people. The Twin Warriors came upon the People of Laziness one day and were planning to kill all of them, but the Laziness People begged the twins to keep them alive. They defended themselves by saying that if laziness were kept around, it would give our people ways to develop the lazy people mentally, emotionally, socially, physically and spiritually. Through combatting laziness, they could continue developing the components in them not to have laziness in their lives. However, once the people stopped developing themselves, laziness would indeed come in and begin to destroy what the people developed. One analogy is if you are a hard working person with a good job, a good family, and a nice home, you know you have worked hard at maintaining these luxuries and possessions. Once you bring laziness into your life by forming a habit of being tardy to work because you oversleep, you soon get fired. Once you stop cooking for yourself and your family because of laziness, you and your family cannot eat; and if you don’t have a job, you can no longer bring food into the home, you starve. You no longer work and you no longer have finances, so you get behind on your bills and soon you have no heat, no shelter, no transportation, no food, no clothing.
Laziness was spared by the Twin Warriors as a check-balance system to help our people stay on our toes so laziness will not get into our homes.” That is one of the reasons why we expect our children to get up early in the morning and begin doing chores or for them to do things as soon as they are told. . . . There is no such thing as wait in our home. . . . Why wait to do something when it can be done right away, especially if our children are just watching television or on the computer playing games. If I say something needs to be done, it needs to be done now. . . . Wait is a word for lazy people! (John)

His wife (Betty) continued by stating that this is the same concept that the military has where soldiers are told that if you wait, you are dead. She further stated that because she was brought up with a father who served in the military. She grew up to do things as soon as she was told, or there would be consequences. This discipline helped her to complete homework assignments before they were due and she learned to be more independent as a result. That is what she and most of the parents in the study wanted for their children to learn so they could be more independent in their lives.

All the parents in the study also acknowledged that in order for their children to make such connections between their experiences at school and their homes, they needed to have faith and prayer as a necessity in their lives, the same way they needed food and water. Part of having faith and prayer was actively participating in ceremonies with people who had actually experienced and overcome obstacles in their lives, who expounded on good teachings about life experiences, who embraced disciplines on how to “stay on that corn pollen road,” and who told of analogies as to differences between right and wrong,. A Couple 1 parent stated, “It is our responsibility as parents to teach our children to always have prayers in their lives and to depend on prayer and belief.”
John, the father in couple 5, further explained that their children and grandchildren needed to learn to make connections between what is being learned at home and at school through listening and understanding that these testimonies of their relatives are real and that these relatives have actually gone through such experiences; therefore, life is real and hard, but when you have prayer and faith in your life, a sense of hope is given. That hope turns to a sense of understanding that anything is possible in this world, but you have to work at it to make it possible.

You cannot just pray and say you want all these wonderful things in your life, then sit back and think just because you prayed, they will come true. Prayer gives you hope and understanding to allow you to begin paving that road to make true what you prayed for. In order for that road to be paved, you have to get up, pick up a tool, and begin paving it. . . . You have to meet your prayers half way in order for them to become a reality. Everything in life is like that. That’s what I want my children and grandchildren to learn and begin to understand, because their prayers are like a commitment they make for themselves, and their faith gives them that hope to make it happen. (John)

Values

The parents in this study not only held high expectations for their children’s education, but they also valued education as well. Four of the parents in the study were in school pursuing their own education and had the opportunity to model educative practices such as study habits and using technology to write papers and conduct research for their children. Noami, who is working towards a nursing degree, acknowledged that

we role play and role model what is expected of our child by allowing her to sit with us sometimes when my husband and I are doing homework. She internalizes that we need to do our school work and most times, I catch a
glimpse of her picking up a book and looking at it and pretending to read it. Through this, she is learning that education is important.

All believed that they needed to set clear expectations for their children so they will succeed in education. As one parent in Couple 4 stated,

We want to pass on the knowledge that we know to our children in terms of hard work, prayers, school, so they can have that extra step to be better than us, and we set high expectations for them to ensure that this does happen.

Each parent in the study expected their children to go beyond high school, whether it be college, vocational school, or some type of training, but they each desired that their children obtain enough education that they could support themselves in the future.

**Valuing Education**

All the parents in the study valued education and expected that their children would value education the same way that they did. Each of the parents also acknowledged that when they talk about education, they do not necessarily mean academics and earning a college degree, but the type of education that their children will use in life. The young father (Jake) of Couple 1 stated,

I believe that knowledge is power and education is good. That you don’t need an education to survive but with an education you can live well. It is a powerful tool that will allow you to get things a lot easier than you would normally do, in terms of the ability to think logically and rationally, and the ability to take critical thinking one step further.

His wife, a young mother (Noami), also stated, “I want my daughter to know that education is important in life and that it is a wonderful thing to learn and learn what hard work is.
A huge part of valuing education, for most of the parents in the study, was for their children to obtain a western education so they would be better equipped to achieve the ultimate goal, which is to have a home, to build that fire because once you have that home, you are going to light your fire inside, you put your water there, your food, your bedding, then your possessions. That’s the teaching. How you are going to utilize those things and achieve those. You use the western education. (Sally)

Each parent affirmed that western education was valued as a tool for their children to reach that goal of having a successful life as well as having a family. This is what they wanted to see for each of their children and grandchildren, hopefully their great grandchildren.

**Understanding and Communicating Values**

Parents in this study consistently communicated their values and beliefs about the importance of education and life to their children. Jake expressed,

I think it’s good to be part of their education and to be aware of what they do at school, to be aware of how they go about their lives when we aren’t around you and to be aware of the people they associate with, to be aware of the friends that they have, to be aware of the people they know so that as parents, you know you have a sense of how they are developing, so you get a sense of it. If something is not right, you try to prevent it from something bad happening.”

Edit stated that communicating values to her children was crucial in raising her children. She expected her children to learn such values and to understand these values so they could begin living them on a daily basis. Edith said that she communicated her values by “teaching them the correct way from the Diné perspective, the proper way of how you are supposed to be. I go about raising my children that way."

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The mother of Couple 6 (Bernaditte) stated,

My whole family is involved in raising our children. My siblings are all well educated; therefore, we always communicate the importance of education to all our children. We always tell them that through faith and prayer, they will succeed and get the type of education they want; they just have to believe that they can do it. We do not expect nor do we accept anything less.

Like Couple 6, all parents affirmed that they do “practice what they preach” by helping their children with homework, and being role models themselves by allowing their children see their own parents go through their own education. They also take their children to the nearest libraries, which oftentimes trips take one to two hours away, whenever their children have research to do; or they ensure that there is technology available for their children at all times for learning purposes.

These parents in the study developed standards for their children’s education. Some parents were specific about the kinds of grades that were acceptable for their children to earn in school. Other parents spoke of the effort they expected their children to put forth to complete their school work. Bernadette stated,

I want all my children to have grades no less than a B grade. I expect them to turn in their assignments before the deadlines; and if they need to redo assignments, I make sure that I sit there with them while they work on their homework.

She further stated that her youngest son was finding it difficult to meet the standards that she set for her him. She sometimes gets calls from his teacher letting her know that her son still has missing assignments or that he forgot to turn in his work.
I know my son has the ability to turn in all assignments. What I am finding out is that he just decides not to complete them. Laziness is getting the best of him. As a result, I have to look through his school bag when he says he doesn’t have any homework; and if I do find one, I make him sit with me at the table until he completes it and I watch him put it back in his bag. My son is in the seventh grade, and I have to treat him like this just so he can get good grades!

Each parent expressed feelings of setting faith and prayer as the foundation for communicating values to their children. Some of the parents take their children to ceremonies every weekend where the children sit up all night and listen to prayers, songs, and teachings from relatives at the ceremonies. The endurance they have to learn by not going to sleep throughout the night as well as learning songs and specific prayers for these ceremonies is also communicated and greatly reinforced by the parents.

There is not one weekend that goes by that my children do not attend ceremonies with us. When our children see us parents being in these ceremonies, they begin to value it as well. Soon they will depend on these ceremonies to help them get through anything. (George)

Danny said,

Through their faith and prayers, they have to keep going, they have to keep learning. They shouldn’t stop just at high school. They should keep going. Even after college, they have to keep going, believing that they just continue learning, just to improve them and improve their surrounding and then just continue enjoying what they do. Their faith and prayer will do this.

**Future Independence**

Because these parents realized their children could become independent in their future through education and because they expected their children to be contributing members of society in the future, they nurtured their children’s education as a way to develop their future independence. Therefore, the parents
provided opportunities for their children to develop in a variety of ways. Some parents relied upon their spiritual beliefs and led by example. Other parents used their experiences with obtaining their education as a model for their children. Every parent in this study expressed that it was most important to nurture a sense of independence in their children.

All parents in the study desired to assist their children with developing future independence and each parent believed education was the key to their future success. Each parent realized that one day their children would have to leave their nest and survive on their own. These parents discussed not only developing their children’s academic acumen, but also nurturing their children so that they could go out into the world and be successful adults. In order to accomplish future independence, each parent acknowledged education but they also acknowledged aspects of their children’s lives in helping them to become successful.

One couple explained their spiritual beliefs were foundational to teaching their children to become independent. The mother of Couple 2 (Sally) expressed,

As parents, we value education and we want our children to learn how to be independent when they grow up. Our parents taught us that it was their faith, ceremonies, and prayers that got us children this far in education and to learn things on our own. We are now all educated and have families of our own and live good, decent lives. As a result, that’s what we are instilling in our children. We are involved as parents, but not from the perspective of the school.

Part of developing that foundation was to also teach their children that “spirituality and the meaning of a home . . . what a traditional home is, as to what their grandparents have set and what their great-great grandparents have set and to
maintain those teachings” (George). He continued on by explaining that a major part of future independence for his children is to be able to go out in the world and live successfully as Navajo males and Navajo females, using the home teaching skills to live. Having independence not only meant learning to complete assignments on time and attending classes without having to be told by their parents, but to have a home and to maintain that home by keeping it clean, cooking for themselves, and taking care of themselves. George stated,

From a traditional perspective, how they take care of themselves and how they conduct themselves as female and male, like their presentation of themselves from morning to night, is crucial in being independent. Once they are out on their own, they have to begin utilizing what they were taught during their puberty ceremony. That’s the foundation of education.

Noami declared that part of independence is “to teach our children to have a belief in which they are as Diné people as well as being spiritual human beings.”

**Being Well Rounded**

Because each parent in this study desired their children to be well rounded individuals, they provided their children with experiences to support such. The parents in this study identified a well-rounded individual included being knowledgeable, which meant that their children could transfer and connect things that they learned at school to the real world. These parents provided their children experiences that they could connect to all areas of their lives and desired that their children would learn in meaningful ways in order to connect knowledge to different aspects of their lives in the future.

Each parent in the study believed that in order to be well-rounded, their children would need exposure outside the school. All parents believed that being
well-rounded was necessary for their children to meet their goals for the future. Parents expected that their children would be able to mix with different people, try different and new experiences, and not be limited by a lack of exposure or experiences.

The parents expressed that an important aspect of being well-rounded included being knowledgeable. Each of the parents expected their children to acquire knowledge and apply that knowledge to their lives. They expressed that acquiring knowledge and using that knowledge would help their children gain secure employment in the future. But at the same time, each parent also expressed that the knowledge they wanted their children to gain was for them to acquire the knowledge of Diné teaching through their faith and their prayers. This type of knowledge is only acquired through ceremonies. One parent expressed,

Being able to gain knowledge and transfer that knowledge between academics and Navajo education . . . being able to experience that . . . and gain new knowledge and new experiences through these two educations is something I want my children to be able to do.

For this parent, it was not just about having knowledge, but it was about using it in a way that would allow her children to derive at new knowledge.
Chapter Five

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter includes a summary of findings, conclusions, and recommendations based upon the findings. This study examined the parents’ perspectives of parental involvement in education.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine how parents understand their involvement in their children’s education from their perception, especially in childrearing and child development by gender and age. Although there have been studies conducted regarding parental involvement from the perspective of the schools, very few have been conducted to explore the perceptions of parental involvement from Navajo parents, especially individual perceptions of childrearing and child development from the mother as well as from the father. This study was done through interviews of two-parent couples within the Flagstaff area.

The qualitative descriptive research study was limited to a purposeful small sample size of six households, consisting of two-parent homes and multiple children, regarding their attitudes and perceptions about parental involvement and their views of child development as well as childrearing practices in each of their families. The parents in the study varied by age, income level, and educational level, but were not used for the purpose of selection to participate in the study; however, the data were collected for demographic considerations. Interviews with parents were conducted using a combination of theoretical and purposeful
sampling. A set of open-ended, semi structured interview questions were used to
in the initial interviews.

**Discussion**

Three themes emerged from the interviews of as to the parents’
perspectives of parental involvement in education: (a) *spirituality*,
(b) *responsibility*, and (c) *values*. Each of the themes had component parts. The
component parts of *spirituality* were (a) *prayers* and (b) *faith*. For *responsibility*,
the component parts included (a) *meeting needs*, (b) *meeting educational
requirements*, and (c) *expectations to make connections*. For *values*, the
components included (a) *valuing education*, (b) *understanding and
communicating values*, (c) *future independence*, and (d) *being well-rounded*.

The study revealed that all parents’ perspectives on their involvement with
their children included all aspects of their children’s lives. Their involvement did
not just center around the walls of their children’s academic education, but
entailed their education in all aspects. The parents in the study were very
confident that their involvement in their children’s lives, from every activity that
their children engaged in, every person their children were exposed to, and every
experience their children were exposed to, was what they called *parental
involvement*. The parents’ perceptions on parental involvement were more
expansive in their definition than what is typically defined within the walls of
schools. The schools’ definition of parental involvement was inadequate for these
parents in the study, and the school’s definition did not accurately define the type
and level of involvement that these parents have in all aspects of their children’s lives.

All the parents in the study supported academic education, and they all felt that school was one of the primary sources of their children’s education; but the education that their children were receiving at home was equal to the school. The parents’ perspectives were in a broader sense because they looked at the bigger picture of how they could support and help their children in all aspects of their lives, to be successful both in the present and in the future. All the parents were “there” for their children, and they navigated a variety of factors to be present and involved in their children’s education and in their children’s lives. All parents were involved in their children’s lives each day and supported their children in a variety of different ways.

**School Definitions Versus Parent’s Perspectives**

Parental involvement in research literature is defined by a parent’s attendance at school-sponsored events. The national standards of parental involvement developed by decades of research by Epstein (1995) on school, community, and family partnerships have been adopted by the United States Department of Education (USDE, 1994), the National Parent Teacher Association (PTA, 1995), and codified in NCLB (USDE, 2004). All have a provision for parental attendance at school events.

The national standard definition is a narrow definition of parental involvement. This definition portrays parents who do not engage with other agencies, who do not come to school events, and do not ascribe to the school’s
definition of learning at home as deficient. The literature also suggests that if parents do not participate in their children’s education in ways defined by schools, they are labeled as “hard to reach” (Mapp, 1998). Further, even though the school may define these parents as deficient, the parents are involved in outside activities with their children, transferring social capital to their children and reinforcing what their children are taught at the school.

According to Corbin-Staton (2009) parental involvement is broader than the various conceptualizations present in the current literature. Despite attempts by researchers, lawmakers, and practitioners to increase parental involvement little improvement have been made (Allington & Cunningham, 2007) because there is a gap in understanding parental involvement from the parents’ perspectives. Parental involvement research remains misrepresentative of parents and the involvement they have with their children’s education. Additionally, many of the parental involvement researchers instruct school officials in what programs and trainings to offer parents to solicit their involvement and “improve” their parenting (Carey, Lewis & Ferris, 1998; Drake, 2004; Epstein, 1995). The assumption made by researchers and school officials is that parents need to be fixed through training programs because parents have deficits (Nieto, 2004).

Pelletier and Brent (2002) reported that parents are a child’s first and most important teachers and parents provide the experiences that equip children with life skill abilities and attitudes that promote success. The findings of this study indicated that parents are involved in their children’s education in ways that are not recognized by schools. The definition that parents identified in this study
included their “involvement in every aspect of their child’s life” and was not only limited to their involvement in school-sponsored events. In fact, some of the parents in this study indicated that they were not able to participate at the school due to various circumstances. Yet, the parents identified three principles as essential to their involvement from the parents’ perspectives. The parents in this study indicated that spirituality, responsibility and values were essential elements of parental involvement from the parents’ perspectives; that they provided support for their children’s education in a variety of ways.

Parents were recognized in this study as providers. Parents met and provided for their children’s immediate and future needs. Parents were recognized as teachers and role models as to instilling values in their children. Parents were identified as collaborators as to their children’s school work in order to support their children and the teachers that worked their children. Parents were communicators, and they initiated communication with their children and the teachers to ensure support of their children’s education. Parents worked with their children outside of school to expand their awareness of the world around them. Parents provided their children with opportunities to connect their classroom learning to the real world around them. Parents were identified as advocates for their children’s abilities, and they worked to foster independence in their children.

Parents developed their children’s interests outside of school and they developed their children’s tolerance for differences. Parents advocated for their children’s appreciation of education, and they expected their children to continue their education. Parents shared their values with their children, and they set the
standards and expectations for their children’s education in the home. Parents sought to develop the whole child and advocated for their children to become lifelong learners who eventually would be “productive members of society,” as Naomi stated. Parents did not demonstrate that they had deficiencies, but instead showed that their involvement in their children’s education was far reaching and much more influential than attendance at a school-sponsored event. The parents’ perspectives of parental involvement included every opportunity for a parent to “be there” for their child and was not limited to involvement at the school level.

In this study, the parents perspectives illuminated that a parent’s absence at school events, lack of interaction with child-serving agencies, or inattention to homework hotline did not mean a lack of involvement. Every parent in this study, regardless of their educational background, socioeconomic status, or religious viewpoints, was involved in their child’s education in a variety of ways. In this study, the socioeconomic variable was not a determination of whether a parent was involved or whether a child would do well in school. The socioeconomic variable determined the kind of activities parents engaged in with their children in order to support their children’s education. But socioeconomics did not keep a parent from being involved, nor did it determine whether a child would succeed in school. The parents’ perspectives allowed parents to share their experiences and to reveal a deeper meaning and understanding of the involvement they provided to their children’s education and lives. The parents’ perspectives must be considered in conjunction with the current definition of parental involvement that is shared by schools, researchers, and lawmakers.
The literature on parental involvement revealed that parents are expected to serve at the school in predetermined ways as defined by school officials (Gutman & McLoyd, 2000) or they are labeled as “hard to reach” (Mapp, 1999). Parental involvement is defined by schools as (a) encouraging parents to participate in the education of their children; (b) establishing effective two-way communication, (c) developing strategies at school to empower parents to participate in their children’s education, (d) coordinate school staff to collaboratively develop meaningful parent and family engagement, (e) utilize schools to connect students and families with community resources and support, and (f) involve parents as partners in school governance and in the development of young people (USDE, 2004). Schools officials equate parental participation in schools as parental involvement in programs and practices developed by the schools that recruit parents to support the school. Much of the literature on parental involvement describe how educators can draw parents in to assist the school with its efforts to educate children (Barton et al., 2004). According to Nieto (2004) minority and poor parents are often characterized by schools as uninvolved in their children’s education and are often viewed by educators from a deficit perspective. The educational background and socioeconomic variable in this study were not determinants of whether one would be involved in their children’s education. Data collected in this study from parents revealed that parents did not exhibit deficit characteristics but were involved in their children’s education in a variety of ways regardless of their educational background and socioeconomic level. More importantly, Navajo parents in this study felt a deep
sense of responsibility to be involved in their child’s education and to use all of their resources to support their children’s learning.

Couple 1 are both young parents who were attending college in Flagstaff, Arizona. Although their only income was from financial aid—monthly income from the Program for Self Reliance within the Navajo Nation and Food Stamps—both husband and wife felt a deep sense of responsibility to be involved in their daughter’s life daily and to be there for her educational process. Both Noami and Jake did not describe themselves from a deficit perspective. Although they were currently limited financially while attending college, they still acknowledged they used different free resources within the Flagstaff area to increase their daughter’s knowledge in skills they would like their daughter to obtain in her educational process. They both took turns to talk about their full commitment to their daughter and to her education, which was evident throughout their interview. Jake stated,

Being there for my daughter and letting her know that I am there for her is something very dear to my heart. I want her to always know that her daddy is always going to be there no matter what because my daughter is my life.

Noami also expressed that even though they were currently financially limited, she was still actively involved in her daughter’s education nonetheless, by reading to her daughter, teaching her how to say Navajo words, disciplining her at an early age, and just “being there for her everyday. I want my daughter to know that I will never leave her and that she will always count on me.”

The parents in this study described themselves as providers who met their children’s immediate and future needs. These parents also served as teachers and
role models by teaching their children right from wrong, encouraging their children to do their best in school, and instilling values in their children that would allow them to be successful in school and in life. The parents in this study worked to ensure that their children met the requirements of their education through the support that they provided outside of the school.

The parents in this study demonstrated that their involvement extended beyond the school walls into the home. They conceptualized parental involvement differently from what is typically defined in the research literature and different from what is codified in federal law. That is, the United States Department of Education (USDE, 2004) publication on NCLB, 2011—ESEA reauthorized—has statutorily defined parental involvement as follows:

The participation of parents in regular, two-way, meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities; including ensuring that parents play an integral role in assisting their child’s learning; that parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child’s education at school; that parents are full partners in their child’s education and are included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees in the education of their child; and that other activities are carried out, such as those described in section 1118 of the ESEA (Parental Involvement), (Section 9101(32), ESEA).

The parents in this study noted that, although they were unable to be physically present in the school due to various individual life circumstances, they were very involved in their children’s education in other ways such as providing real world experiences and opportunities for their children to apply skills learned at school; extracurricular activities outside of school that enriched their children’s education; and most importantly, attending weekend ceremonies and family gatherings where their children were taught about life from other family members.
The findings of this study indicated a lack of continuity between how parents defined parental involvement versus how the schools tend to characterize parental involvement.

The parents in this study used their social capital to support their children’s education. Social capital was defined as an “investment in social relationships with expected returns” (Mapp, 1999). Parents used their influence in their children’s lives and their relationships with their children to let their children know the importance of education. According to Lareau and Horvat (1999) parents rely on networks of individuals, their unique experiences, and their resources in order to support their children’s education. All parents in this study expressed that they have a broader understanding of the support they provide to their children’s education.

The number one thing that I rely upon is my faith and my prayers. I know that through my prayers and my faith, I gain a sense of hope that anything is possible. Along with that, I rely so much on my family and my close relatives to always be there for me and my children. These are my utmost necessary resources. (Edith)

John also reaffirmed this by expressing that spirituality is what brings families together, as well as unique experiences from families and their unique sense of how they see the world around them through their own experiences in life. These are valuable resources that my children listen to during peyote ceremonies and family gatherings. These resources help me to support my children to learn about life and education, which I think are one in the same.

Like Barton et al. (2004), both parents indicated that parents draw upon multiple experiences and resources in order to support their children’s education and lives.
All parents in the study revealed that they had a deep sense of responsibility for their children’s education, and their lives. They also believed that they needed to build a sense of responsibility in their children because responsibility involved learning to be independent in order to begin meeting the educational requirements and building a sense of spirituality within themselves. All parents voiced that they were indeed responsible for their children; they were responsible for what their children did every day; they were responsible for what their children said every day; and they were responsible for where their children went and who they were with every day. All the parents in the study hoped that their children [were] responsible to be careful in who they were with, where they go and that they were responsible enough to be careful with the kind of words that came out of their mouths. This is important because the very words that come out of our mouths is something sacred. Words are sacred and once something is said, it’s heard so I hope my children take that responsibility to say the right thing to the right people. (Marie)

The literature on parental involvement revealed a positive impact on student achievement and overall school success (Baker, Mackler, Sonnenschein, & Serpell, 2001; Bennett, Weigel, & Martin, 2002; Bloome, Katz, Solsken, Willett, & Wilson-Keenan, 2000). Nieto (2004) asserted that deficit theories place the blame for children’s failures in school on their homes and families, reducing the responsibility of the school and society. Nieto also acknowledged that the deficit perspective taken by school officials has had an overwhelmingly negative impact on parents as to the schooling of their children. In this study, all the parents stated that there is another side to having an education which are not
within the walls of the schools, but within life itself. They believed that in order for their children to succeed in life, they needed to learn and understand that they needed to educate themselves about life skills, independence, responsibility, and spirituality before they would be able to go out into the world and succeed in whatever they wanted to become in life.

Yes, there is western education and that is important for my children. Yes, they need to go to school and get an education, but there is also another part of their education which is to learn about life at home, how to survive, how to live, how to be responsible and how to be on their own. Most importantly, they need to learn and understand that they have to have faith and prayers and songs so they can accomplish anything they want to do in their lives. (Bernadette)

She further stated that even though she is an educator, she still believed that all children need to find some sense of purpose and belief in their lives and that is not taught in schools. She also stated that, as an educator, she has seen many schools that she taught in blame parents for not being supportive of the school and for not participating in fundraising activities. However, she believed that parents were always there for their children, regardless of what the schools say because she saw the support, the love, and the genuine care for the children coming from their parents. “This is what the schools do not see,” Bernadette stated.

Supplying needs and instilling values were significant findings related to a parent’s sense of responsibility. From the parent’s perspective, important aspects of parenting were sacrifice and putting a child’s needs before a parent’s needs, being a role model to children, being a disciplinarian, establishing boundaries, encouraging good morals and values, teaching their children right from wrong, and helping their children with decision-making. Parents expressed the
importance of being there for their children and being involved in every aspect of their children’s lives. Parental involvement from the parents’ perspectives extended beyond what happened at school and included what happened outside of school. All of the parents stated that instilling a sense of moral values was crucial to their children living good, decent lives and to find some sense of purpose in their lives.

All of the parents believed that prayers and belief needed to be instilled in their children, because having a spiritual life through prayers and songs and ceremonies will help our children learn the moral values of being a Navajo male and a Navajo female. Through the teachings from elders and other good relatives, our children would learn to take those teachings to heart and to begin to have a belief in them. Once they have a sense of belief, they would learn to hold it dear to their hearts and then begin to live and practice those beliefs, those values, those morals very single day. Through that, our children would become decent men and women. (John)

Spiritual development is crucial to the development of the Whole Child, which is what all of the parents in this study were referring to when they expressed that prayers, songs, and ceremonies were important for their children to learn and understand because the beliefs that they developed instilled values and morals. As *The Learning Compact Redefined: A Call to Action* states, communities and schools need to create conditions in which all children can develop their capacities for intellectual, social, emotional, physical, and spiritual learning (Marshall, 2007). The report, *Hardwired to Connect*, issued by the Commission on Children at Risk, recommended that youth-serving organizations promote the moral and spiritual development of children (Kline, 2008). The commission report
states that children’s spiritual needs are genuine and are as essential to their being as their physical and intellectual needs (Kline, 2008). Adults care for the whole child when they support children’s spiritual development by instructing children in faith so that they help children develop moral sensibilities, character, and virtue (Bunge, 2004). Ratcliff (2008) believed that religion is not just cognitive knowledge: “God cares about the whole child, not just the intellect” (p. 66). Nye (2004) researched children’s spiritual development in the United Kingdom, finding that she had to study the child as a whole, not just different aspects of development. According to Nye, the child’s spiritual life flies like a bird through his intellectual, emotional, social, cultural, and moral life. Many spiritual traditions embrace the vision that the whole child includes physical, emotional, cognitive, and spiritual dimensions of development (Miller, 2007). Mahatma Gandhi said,

But unless the development of the mind and body goes hand in hand with a corresponding awakening of the soul, the former alone would prove to be a poor lopsided affair. By spiritual training I mean education of the heart. A proper and all round development of the mind, therefore, can take place only when it proceeds pari passu with the education of the physical and spiritual faculties of the child. They constitute an indivisible whole. (Kripalani, 1980)

According to Mary Catherine Daly (2004), modern society by no means is certain as to what it means to be moral; consequently, we are under stress about questions of right and wrong, about how to keep ourselves on a straight path, and how to guide our children. Family structures are fluid and continually changing, while our sense of community and tradition has broken down. There is a huge confusion in the world—confusion about values, about what and how to teach.
The moral goalposts seem to have moved, and we do not know what game we are playing, whatever the rules are. We live in a period of instability and change. As a result, many people feel lost, disoriented, even terrified. Previous generations were much more certain about what it meant to be moral and about how to produce moral individuals. As well as this, the vast cultural changes in the past few decades have impacted on moral life and we have ended up not knowing what is real, significant, and worthwhile. The threat to personal values are greater today than ever before, as the modern mindset has a worldview that centers on things versus relationships. However, the decline of the whole frame of mind on which morals was based gives us an opportunity to forge a new, better morality, if we so choose (Hannon, 1995; Neville, 1989; Wood, 1981).

As a result, all parents in this study believed that it was crucial to teach their children morals and values because the schools are not teaching them and because this type of education belongs to the parents.

To help children to become good, productive, contributing citizens we must teach them to think rationally and to behave responsibly. Children must love learning and love living in a society that is fair, and where responsibilities are equally as important as rights and freedoms. (Deroche & Williams, 1998)

Furthermore, the parents in the study agreed that they must begin teaching these morals and values to their children at an early age because, as Gert (1998) puts it, “Teaching children to be moral and virtuous should be done in the early years and if children do not learn to care for others while they are young, it may be impossible to teach them when they are older” (p. 385). We must ask whether we are teaching children morals in order to be fulfilled and happy; or whether we are
teaching them to be moral so as to refrain from acts of destruction toward themselves, others, and the world around them. Or are we teaching them that money and self-centeredness can buy everything including happiness?

All the parents in this study also expressed concern that the social development of many children today are in isolation and loneliness. The more technological communication has developed, the more isolated people, especially children and young adults, feel (O’Donnchadha, 2000). Elkind (2001, p. 5) stated, “It is indeed no small irony that at the very time the stress of social life and change is threatening the existence of childhood, we know far more about childhood than we have ever known in the past.” Today’s society is experiencing higher rates of crime, cruelty, and violence than in the past, and these rates have led to an increasing interest in how we as parents can begin to combat these social ills by discovering how to develop social competence and caring behavior in children.

Children’s lives and social development are profoundly influenced by events that happen in the world outside their homes, as Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological approach to child development defines. Bronfenbrenner claimed that in order to understand both the subtle and the obvious ways in which children interact with others and with their environment, their lives should be thought of as a “nested arrangement of concentric structures, each contained within the next” (p. 22). Bronfenbrenner’s four-nested system of the micro, meso, exo, and macrosystem illustrates the complexity of child development and in particular social development. The microsystem is what a child experiences in a given
setting, for example, his home. The mesosystem refers to links amongst settings in which the child directly participates. The exosystem refers to links to settings in which the child does not participate directly, but which affect him, such as his mother’s work environment may affect her behavior at home and hence the quality of her childcare. Finally, the macrosystem refers to the general pattern of ideology and organization of social institutions in the society or subculture the child part of.

In psychology, ecology is understood as the range of situations in which adults and children engage, the roles they play, the situations they encounter, and the consequences of these encounters. Ecological descriptions provide an overall picture of people’s niches in the world. With respect to children, ecology gives us a sense of the whole child and the many influences that impact that child’s learning and development, which helps show the many social expectations children encounter. Each relationship in Bronfenbrenner’s model is reciprocal—the child is influenced by the parent and vice versa. This reciprocal relationship reverberates on to the wider society, which both shapes and is shaped by its individual members. In advocating this model of human development, Bronfenbrenner warns of the dangers of focusing on the individual without taking into account the context within which he lives: individual, family, community, society, and larger world factors that impact a child’s development. Early on, the environment which has the most direct influence is the home and family; and as the child grows, he gets greater exposure to the wider world. Children do not develop in a vacuum; each child is born into an ecological, familial, cultural,
geographical, and historical context. Introducing children to the complex world outside the family exposes children to serious challenges and involves great strides in a child’s social development. All encounters, good and bad, impact on his development. Such encounters are called the socialization process (Cole & Cole, 1989).

Socialization is a vital aspect of social development, is based on all social experiences, and occurs everywhere. It is not a simple process of learning, but is a complex balancing act in which children encounter a huge range of ideas in the process of forming their own distinctive personality. Socialization shapes how we think, feel, and act; and children learn a myriad of social skills through interacting with others. Through socialization they also learn the values and behaviors accepted in their society. Children’s social contact with others assists their learning; and such social experiences hopefully provide the child with qualities and capacities that are associated with being a fully integrated, socially competent human being (Dowling, 2000). This is what all the parents in this study believed that they needed to teach their children and were teaching them, which is not taught within the walls of the schools. Furthermore, this is the type of education that parents should be instilling in their children at home rather than waiting on the schools to teach these skills.

I believe that this is my responsibility to teach social development to my children, especially using the clanship and kinship terms so my children will know how to respect and interact with their relatives and through that, they will learn and understand their own identities as Navajo males and females. (Bernadette)
Social development is of paramount importance, not only to the individual person but also to the smooth running of society. Children’s development as social beings is central to their progress as autonomous human beings and is every bit as important as their intellectual growth. In essence, children must learn to live, work, and play collaboratively if society is to function.

It was also agreed by all parents that in order for their children to succeed, their emotional development has to be balanced. This is their responsibility, as parents, to ensure that their children’s emotional development is progressing and processing according to developmental processes. All parents also agreed that today’s children have to cope with pressures far more subtle and complicated than those experienced in the past. More and more children are coming to the end of their emotional and personal resources and are suffering from burnout, anxiety, desperation, and innumerable stress-related illnesses. As Purcell (2001) stated, this is the age of anxiety. Greater output is demanded of everyone, especially children, while less and less support mechanisms are available.

Yet, feelings and emotions are the threads that hold life together, in particular mental life (Hannan, 1995). Parents see this in children today and they do not want their own children to have emotional distress. Some of the parents expressed concern that the schools are so focused on their children’s academia that they seem to have forgotten about the other developmental areas that our children need to be a whole person. Schools do not focus on all the negative emotional desperation, depression, loneliness, anxiety, and thoughts of negative self-images that many children are feeling every single day when they go to school. None of the school officials see this, and they are not doing anything about it.
That’s why it is up to us as parents to ensure that our children, my children, do not feel like this. It’s up to me to make sure that my children remain balanced emotionally because that’s the only way they will do good in school and succeed in life. (Jake)

Prioritizing human emotions is vital for many reasons. Denham (1998) highlighted the repercussions for children who are not developed emotionally, claiming they are at long-term risk for depression aggressiveness, violent crimes, problems in relationships and parenting, as well as being at risk for poor physical and mental health, including being more prone to addictions and self-destruction. Borysenko (1987) claimed that a clear link between emotional well-being and physical health has been established. She stated that the connection between the ability to manage emotions and the functioning of the immune system are clearly documented. The dangers of helplessness and the feeling of a loss of control contribute to illness. These facts strongly indicate just how important emotional development really is.

Our inner world is very different from our outer world, and part of that inner world involves the development of the emotions. Inner development is different for every child, and the development of one’s inner world as a self-accepting human being involves taking full responsibility for the inner development. No one else is capable of controlling what goes on inside them. Failure to accept this will result in children who blame, complain, whine, seek approval, and who believe they do not have the capacity to make decisions or to cope with the inevitable ups and downs of life. Children who learn to handle their emotions in an appropriate manner are more effective at soothing themselves.
when upset. They also become more biologically relaxed, having lower levels of stress hormones and lower physiological indicators of emotional arousal. Such children experience more productivity, are more popular, and are better liked by their peers. They are also seen by other adults and teachers as more socially skilled, having fewer behavioral problems, and paying attention better, thus are more effective learners. Thus, they are better prepared both for life and for learning (Humphreys, 1996). All the parents in the study taught their children, through their spiritual development, to become emotionally balanced individuals so they can achieve in life.

**Limitations**

The purpose of this qualitative, descriptive, multiple case study was to examine how parents understand their involvement in their children’s education from their perceptions, especially in childrearing and child development. This study allowed the parents to tell their stories as to their own perceptions of parental involvement. The study was limited to a small, purposeful sample of Navajo couples whose children attended school within the Flagstaff, Arizona area. These parents were randomly chosen based on a demographic survey they completed. The sample limited the findings of this study and the results cannot be generalized to another context. Further, the parents in the study self-reported their experiences. This limited qualitative research relied on participants reporting their experiences truthfully during the interviews. According to Heppner, Kivlighan, and Wampold (1999), qualitative research is concerned with the applicability of findings more than the generalization in the context in which the qualitative
investigation took place. Qualitative researchers recognize that their construction influences their understanding of the participants’ experiences and reflects upon their constructions to guide their research (Heppner, Kivlighan, & Wampold, 1999).

Another limitation of this study was the inability to separate personal experiences from the experiences of the participants. As a parent and educator, I analyzed and interpreted the data through a dual lens of being a parent and an educator. There were times during the research process that I felt significant tension and frustration between these dual roles. Consequently, I was not completely void of personal experiences and personal bias.

Finally, it is possible that there was a selection bias in this sample, where individuals who were more acculturated and educated may have been more interested in participating in this study than individuals who were less educated, less acculturated. This bias may have influenced potential participation in participants’ decisions to participate in this sample and may have led to a more homogenous sample than had this selection bias not occurred.

Implications/Recommendations

A greater acknowledgement and understanding of Navajo parents’ perspectives of parental involvement have several significant implications for educators, university preparation programs, policymakers, and parents.

Educators

As suggested in the research literature, the relationship between parents and educators should be one of mutual respect and consideration. The current
conceptualization of parental involvement leaves much to be desired from the viewpoint of educators and parents, especially with Navajo parents. Parents must support the work educators do; however, educators should assume that a parent, as their child’s first teacher (Peletier & Brent, 2002), has valuable information to offer teachers and other school officials about their children. Educators should not assume that parents need to be fixed or trained in order to be adequately involved in their children’s education (Nieto, 2004). Educators should engage in conversations with parents about their children as part of the educational process. According to the findings of this study, parents feel a sense of responsibility for their children and work to nurture an appreciation of education in their children and their children’s education.

Educators should look at professional development opportunities that will prepare them to involve themselves and interact with families and the community in a knowledgeable and respectful way so as to view Navajo parents as allies rather than something else to fix. Navajo parents should not be viewed as one more thing to manage (Flanigan, 2005) by teachers, and they should not be blamed for a child’s lack of achievement (Nieto, 2004). Educators should develop a better understanding of Navajo parents’ involvement in their children’s education that might not be evident by their participation in programs developed by the school. Educators should work to view parents as reciprocal partners in the education of a child when parents show up at school and when parents do not show up at school.
According to *Teachers as Social Scientists: Learning About Culture From Household Research*, by Luis C. Moll and Norma Gonzalez (1997), teachers need to build on the experiences and the abilities their students bring to the classroom and for teachers to learn more about their students and about their households by tapping into accumulated knowledge and strategies for survival that households possess, which is referred to as “funds of knowledge” (p. 90).

A collaborative research project was conducted in the 1990s to develop innovations in teaching that drew upon the knowledge and skills found in local households in the Tucson area. Teachers from various Tucson schools went into the homes of their students to learn about the funds of knowledge their students brought to the classroom daily. Teachers went into the households to observe the skills, abilities, ideas, and practices of their students’ households and how these social networks represented a flexible mechanism that allowed households to adjust to changing social and economic circumstances (Moll & Gonzalez, 1997). Teachers who participated in this study learned the vast funds of knowledge their students brought to the classroom and how much they, as teachers, needed to redefine the valuable resources that were available to them through the students. Teachers basically learned the cultures of each of their students through firsthand knowledge; and through this, teachers gained a deeper understanding of where their students came from and what cultures they were a part of.

It is crucial that teachers of Navajo students need to complete a professional development session where they go into the homes of their students and observe the funds of knowledge that their students have so these valuable
resources can be used as part of the instructional strategies for stronger retention of their students. All teachers of minority students would benefit from this type of professional development.

**University**

University teacher preparation programs often focus their efforts on preparing teachers to take a defensive posture against parents as if they are fighting for their turf as an expert in the classroom working to educate children (Abrams & Gibbs, 2002). Another focus of university programs is to prepare teachers to manage parents (Flanigan, 2005) assuming that parents will be difficult to manage. Esptein (1995) assumed that parents needed training in order to be involved effectively in their children’s education. These perspectives assumed that parents will be overinvolved or not involved at all. Consequently, the perceptions of educators as they enter the workforce are that parents will need to be fixed or that parents cannot appropriately be involved in their children’s education. Given the findings of this study, university preparation programs that lead to teacher certification should change the vector from amount of involvement (assuming a school-defined type) to depth of involvement. This would offer aspiring educators an opportunity to consider that parents are involved in their children’s education whether or not they are present in the school. The parents’ perspective of parental involvement could broaden aspiring educators’ understanding of the involvement that Navajo parents currently provide to their children’s education that might not be fully understood or appreciated.
Policy

Policymakers and lawmakers have adopted Epstein’s six types of parental involvement as the national standard for parental involvement. The NCLB Act and the Race to the Top reform efforts both refer to parental involvement as a key ingredient for school turnaround. Parental involvement in its current conceptualization is misunderstood and in many cases used against the parents. The national standards support the notion that parents must volunteer in the school; must connect with child-serving agencies in the community to receive help with raising their children; and must support school-sponsored activities and events in order to be involved.

While Epstein’s (1995) perspective of parental involvement partnerships offer educators a framework to engage parental involvement, it also suggests inadequacies of parents. As the national standards are currently written, parents and educators have differing perspectives of what involvement actually means, especially for Navajo parents. For parents in this study, involvement is responsibility, spirituality, and values. Parental involvement from the parents’ perspectives extends to “involvement in every aspect of a child’s life” with school being one aspect of a child’s life. As a result of the findings of this study, policymakers should recognize the involvement that parents provide to their children’s education and broaden the national standards to reflect adequately the involvement of parents in their children’s education.

If the goal of policymakers is to strengthen partnerships between parents and schools, there must be changes in the language of the national standards that
allow parents and educators to work together collaboratively. The following changes to the language in the national standards to include the parents’ perspectives are recommended:

1. The first provision of the national standards should reflect that parents in feel a deep sense of responsibility for their children. It should not be assumed that parents are not properly rearing their children and are not adequately preparing them for school. Schools should not assume that all parents are deficient in their parenting skills.

2. The second provision of the national standards suggests that parents need guidance from teachers in order to engage their children in learning experiences at home. The assumption is that parents are not equipped to provide adequate learning experiences for their children. The parents in this study were engaged in multiple learning experiences outside of the school. The parents challenged their children with what they learned in school to the real world. According to Cassidy (2009) some teachers possess significant weaknesses in helping students connect knowledge to their lives. The provision should reflect that parents strengthen and enhance their children’s education when they offer them learning experiences outside of school.

3. The third provision should reflect more specifically what the role of the parent is in decision-making and advocacy. Many school bureaucracies limit the information that parents have access to; being clear about what is
appropriate might be more inviting to parents. The parents in this study were not involved in any school advocacy groups.

4. The fourth provision should reflect that parents have resources that they draw upon to support their children’s education. The parents in this study did not rely on public resources to raise their children. They relied on their family and social networks and their beliefs to support their children. These resources should be acknowledged as well.

It is also recommended that policymakers recognize the parents’ perspectives of parental involvement and allocate funding for more research in this area, especially with Native Americans. Policymakers play a significant role in adopting and endorsing parental involvement policies that impact practices in schools around the nation. A lack of exploration of the parents’ perspective has led to a lack of understanding of parental involvement and ultimately has resulted in more programming along with more federal dollar being allocated to the issue of parental involvement with little improvement as to parental involvement as it is currently conceptualized. The findings of this study indicate that parental involvement needs to be conceptualized through the experiences of parents in order to present a more balanced picture of what it means to be involved in a child’s education.

**Parents**

All parents have a responsibility to their children. It is not the responsibility of the school to raise children; it is the parent’s responsibility. The parents in this study took responsibility for raising their children. They believed
that learning occurred at school, but they also realized that their children learned outside the school. As a result, the parents provided opportunities for their children to have multiple learning experiences that they could connect with in the classroom. All parents in this study also modeled behaviors for their children that were conducive to learning. All parents in this study set high expectations for their children’s education.

This study illuminated that parental involvement from the parents’ perspectives is about more than a parent’s participation at the school. The parents in this study demonstrated that their involvement extended to every aspect of their children’s lives. Parental involvement from the parents’ perspectives is about parents taking responsibility for their children, parents nurturing their children in a variety of ways, and parents having standards and expectations for their children’s education.

Parents should be aware of how schools measure parental involvement and the bias that may work against them when they do not show up at school events. Parents should work with educators to help them understand that there are other ways in which they are involved that might not be recognized or acknowledged by school officials. The way to advocate or change parental involvement conceptualization is to ensure that educators realize there are multiple ways of supporting a child’s education.

**Recommendations for Further Study**

There are a number of areas that should be considered for further research. Although the information gathered from this study is beneficial and informative,
much more research is needed. Future studies should attempt to recruit a larger and more diverse sample. Specifically, it would be beneficial if future studies were able to recruit individuals from different tribes and from different parts of the United States. This would allow for a better understanding of how the results of this study are relevant to other Native American families outside of the Flagstaff, Arizona area.

More research is also needed on the relation between the perceptions of the whole child and student achievement in the classrooms by Native American parents. This would provide further insight into the parental involvement experiences that impact the practices of parenting skills within these homes.

Lastly, it is recommended that thus study be expanded to include an understanding of the parents’ past experiences with their own education and how those experiences shaped their beliefs, values, and actions with their own children. Further examination of parents’ experiences could provide a more in-depth context in which to further analyze parental involvement from the parents’ perspectives.
REFERENCES


Alliance for Excellent Education. (2006, December 12). Healthier and wealthier: Ensuring that every student graduates from high school could save more than $17 million. *New Alliance Brief, 6*(23).


Dabrusky, G. (2007). A case study of the perceptions and practices of economically disadvantaged parents towards parent involvement and the
relationship to student achievement in a suburban school district.


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APPENDIX A

RECRUITMENT FLYER
PARENTS’ PERSPECTIVES WANTED

You are invited to participate in a research study titled:

Parents’ Perspectives in their child’s education in two-parent households

STUDY PURPOSE:

The purpose of this study is to examine how parents understand and believe their involvement in their children’s education is from their own perspective as parents and caregivers.

STUDY DESCRIPTION:

1. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary,

2. All parent responses are kept confidential.

3. You will be given a $20 gift card for your participation in this study.

STUDY REQUIREMENTS:

You are asked to participate in a tape recorded interview lasting approximately one hour and complete a short form.
If you are interested in learning more about this study, please contact:

Berdina Tsosie  
Doctoral Student  
Arizona State University  
928-349-0271  
berdina_tsosie@yahoo.com

Study Information Sheet

Parents’ Perspectives in their child’s education in two-parent households

ASU IRB number:

Principal Investigator: Dr. Nicholas Appleton  
Telephone number: 602-727-6433

Co-Investigator: Berdina Tsosie  
Telephone number: 928-349-0271

1. INTRODUCTION
You are invited to participate in a research study under the direction of Dr. Nicholas Appleton of the Department of Educational Leadership, Arizona State University. Taking part in this research is voluntary and you can decide to withdraw from the study at any time.

2. WHY IS THIS STUDY BEING DONE?
You are being asked to take part in this study because you are the parent of a Rock Point Community School student and have children of various gender and ages. The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine how parents understand and believe their involvement in their children’s education from the parents’ perspectives.

3. WHAT IS INVOLVED IN THIS STUDY?
If you choose to take part in this study because you will: A) Complete a parent Demographic data Sheet; B) Participate in a tape-recorded interview for approximately one hour. The total amount of time anticipated for participation in this study is a minimum of one hour, but will not exceed two
There will also be follow up questions which will require a second visit, if necessary.

4. WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?
Participation in this study poses minimum risks. All responses made by the participant including the demographic data will be kept confidential and each participant who participates in this study will be given a pseudonym to protect his/her identity. I will make every effort possible to keep all participant information and responses confidential, but I cannot guarantee this. Furthermore, some of the questions I ask you will make you uncomfortable and may not want to respond to them, which is your right to do. You may also need breaks in between the interviews at any time throughout the interview. You may stop your participation in this study at any time.

5. ARE THERE BENEFITS TO TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?
You will not directly benefit from this study, however, this study will benefit schools, parents, researchers and policy makers through awareness of what parents think and understand parental involvement is and how parents believe parental involvement is in their children’s education; you will become the voice for other parents.

6. WHAT ARE MY OPTIONS?
You do not have to participate in this study if you do not want to. Should you decide to participate and later change your mind, you can do so at any time. Your child’s academic standing will not be affected in any way from your decisions to participate or not.

7. WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT FOR BEING IN THIS STUDY?
You will receive a gift card of $20.00 per participant, for taking part in this study.

8. CAN I BE TAKEN OFF THE STUDY?
You can decide to withdraw from this study at any time.

9. HOW WILL MY PRIVACY BE PROTECTED?
If results of this study are reported in journals or at scientific meetings the participants in this study will not be names or identified. ASU will not release any information about your research involvement without your written consent, unless required by law. All information will be kept confidential and
each participant will be assigned a pseudonym in order to protect the identity of the participant.

10. PROBLEMS OR QUESTIONS:
Arizona State University can provide further information about your rights as a research participant. If you think you have been harmed in this study, immediately report this to the Principal Investigator of this study, Dr. Nicholas Appleton at 602-727-6433 or at his email address, appleton@asu.edu.
Pre-Interview Statement by Berdina Tsosie

Yá’át’ée. My name is Berdina Tsosie. I am Bit’ahnii. Ta’neeszhnii is my father’s clan. Kin Lichí’ni is my maternal grandfather’s clan and Áshiihí is my paternal grandfather’s clan. I am a doctoral student at Arizona State University. First, I would like to thank you for taking the time to allow me to come into your home to conduct an interview with you and your spouse. My research is on parental involvement and how parents perceive parental involvement towards their children’s education.

I will be recording this interview and taking notes of your responses for my research purposes, but I will keep all this information confidential. Your identity will be kept confidential by giving you a pseudonym to protect your privacy and for you to remain anonymous. The recordings will either be erased or destroyed once I have completed the transcriptions of the interview and have completed the requirements for my doctoral program. I assure you that I will conduct this research under the strictest rules as provided by the Arizona State University IRB. There are no risks involved in your participation of this research and will not obtain any direct benefits from this research, however, this will benefit all who are currently involved in education and how parental involvement in education as well as administrators, teachers and parents.

Would you like to proceed?

If yes – at this time I will give you a copy of the Study Information. Please take a few moments to read it over and ask any questions that you may have.

If no – thank you for your participation thus far. Ahéhee’. 

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If participant denies the right to be recorded – I will reiterate confidentiality of the study, if participant still is reluctant to be recorded, the researcher will proceed with taking copious notes.

**Parent Demographic Data Sheet**

This information is to give the research background information to assist with the interpretation of the research. Your responses are voluntary and will remain confidential. Please take the time to honestly answer all of the questions to the best of your ability. Thank you for your participation in this study.

1. Age: ______________

2. Gender: ____ Male _____Female

3. Race: _______________________________

4. Educational Level: _______________________________

5. Employed: ______ yes ______No

6. Income level:

7. Marital Status: ____ live with partner ______married
   ____ remarried

8. Number of Children: _____ male _____female

9. Ages of
   Children:_____________________________________________

10. Grade levels of Children:
    ____________________________________

11. What language do you speak to your child(ren) in the home?
    _______________________________
12. What language do your children speak in the home?
________________________

Semi Structured Interview Questions:

Warm Up Questions:

6. How many children do you have?

7. What grade are your children?

8. What ages are your children?

9. How long have you been married/with your partner?

10. What language would you like to use for this interview?

Interview Questions:

16. What does being a parent mean to you?

17. What are your goals for raising your children?

18. What are some things you strongly believe in for raising your children?

19. What does parental involvement mean to you? How would you describe parent involvement?

20. Is there a difference in the way you talk to and discipline your children based on their ages? Do you talk to your (age) differently than the way you talk to your child who is (age)? Do you discipline to your (age) differently than the way you discipline your child who is (age)?

21. What type of teachings do you instill in your children? Why those teachings?
22. Would you say that the way you raise your children and the teachings you instill in your children is the same as what your spouse believes? Why or why not?

23. What do you think and believe should be learned in school?

24. What do you see as the gaps between you, as the parents, and the school when it comes to parental involvement?

25. What do you believe is the responsibilities of the school?

26. What do you believe are the responsibilities of you, as the parents?

27. What do you believe is the role of the school in your child(ren)s’s education? Why?

28. What role do you play in your child’s education?

29. What do you believe should be the role that parents play in their children’s education?

30. Is there anything else you would like to add?
APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
Warm Up Questions:

1. How many children do you have? We have five children.

2. What grade are your children?

3. What ages are your children?

4. How long have you been married/with your partner?

5. What language would you like to use for this interview?

Interview Questions:

1. What does being a parent mean to you?

2. What are your goals for raising your children?

3. What are some things you strongly believe in for raising your children?

4. What does parental involvement mean to you? How would you describe parent involvement?

5. Is there a difference in the way you talk to and discipline your children based on their ages? Do you talk to your (age) differently than the way you talk to your child who is (age)? Do you discipline to your (age) differently than the way you discipline your child who is (age)?

6. What type of teachings do you instill in your children? Why those teachings?

7. Would you say that the way you raise your children and the teachings you instill in your children is the same as what your spouse believes? Why or why not?

8. What do you think and believe should be learned in school?
9. What do you see as the gaps between you, as the parents, and the school when it comes to parental involvement?

10. What do you believe is the responsibilities of the school?

11. What do you believe is the role of the school in your child(ren)s’s education? Why?

12. What role do you play in your child’s education?

13. What do you believe should be the role that parents play in their children’s education?

14. Is there anything else you would like to add?

***How do you feel or think that the involvement or lack of involvement of your parents has affected you or not affected you as adults today?
APPENDIX C

ASU IRB APPROVAL
To: Nicholas Appleton
   ED
From: Mark Roosa, Chair
      Soc Beh IRB
Date: 02/01/2011
Committee Action: Exemption Granted
IRB Action Date: 02/01/2011
IRB Protocol #: 1012005828
Study Title: Parents' Perspectives in their child's education in two-parent households

The above-referenced protocol is considered exempt after review by the Institutional Review Board pursuant to Federal regulations, 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(2).

This part of the federal regulations requires that the information be recorded by investigators in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. It is necessary that the information obtained not be such that if disclosed outside the research, it could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You should retain a copy of this letter for your records.