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A Qualitative Study of Three Urban Catholic High Schools: Investigating Parent and Principal Expectations and Realizations of Parental Involvement and the Parent-School Relationship

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by

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DEDICATION

To my parents, Kay and Bill, whose unwavering love, support, and belief in me has made this possible. They are a true testament to the importance of presence in parental involvement.

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ABSTRACT

A Qualitative Study of Three Urban Catholic High Schools:

Investigating Parent and Principal Expectations and

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This qualitative study investigated parents' and principals' expectations of their roles in the parent-school relationship and how they defined, encouraged, and realized parental involvement within an urban Catholic high school setting. Through pattern analysis and axial coding of the data collected from parents and principal interviews, documents, and observations at parent-school meetings and events, four patterns emerged: (a) the underlying child-centered mission, (b) the parents' role in supporting the student, (c) the parent-school relationship created to support the student, and (d) the principals' role in creating a trusting environment that promotes parental involvement. Further analysis was guided by the parental involvement frameworks of Epstein (2001) and Barton, Drake, Perez, St. Louis, and George (2004) and the Catholic school mission. The findings revealed that the child-centered goal guided the parents' and principals' expectations of shared responsibilities, although the parents varied in how they defined parental involvement activities. Parents expressed the importance of the school's role in

creating a caring and respectful environment that encouraged a strong parent-school relationship. The principals addressed the Catholic school mission and how they developed the school culture, climate, and environment to support that mission.

This study author concluded that Catholic schools have the opportunity to create strong parent-school relationships that encourage differentiated parental involvement. In addition, she concluded that the role of all schools is to provide a relationship built on trust and the knowledge that parental involvement requires consideration of the varied types of involvement and ways in which parents choose to mediate the types of parental involvement.

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Introduction

Urban Catholic school enrollment is decreasing, and schools are facing difficult financial struggles that have already caused many schools to close (Catarro, 2002a; El Ghazal, 2006; Greeley, 2002; James, 2007). These closures impact the disadvantaged youth at these schools because urban Catholic school students have a higher graduation and academic success rate (Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993; Litton, Martin, Higareda, & Mendoza, 2010). The research report by Higareda, Martin, Chavez, and Holyk-Casey (2011) found that 98% of the Catholic school students in the 2005 sample studied graduated with a high school diploma in 4 years. This was significantly higher than the 66% graduation rate for students attending Los Angeles Unified Schools the same year (Higareda et al., 2011).

However, other public options such as charter schools have begun to offer the following features once considered characteristic of Catholic schools: high academic success, a safe environment, and discipline (Bryk et al., 1993; Farr, 2010; Litton et al., 2010; Merseth, 2010; Schultz, 2009). Nonetheless, the Catholic identity and Catholic school mission remain two salient features unique to Catholic schools (Bryk et al., 1993; United States Conference of Catholic Bishops [USCCB], 2005). This mission, which fosters community and a respect for parents as the primary educators of their children, may be part of other unobtrusive and less- articulated reasons parents choose Catholic

schools. Research has shown that Catholic schools have a higher rate of parental involvement and trusting relationships, which have been attributed to the functional community created by shared values (Bryk et al., 1993; Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Putnam, 2000; Shokraii, 1997). Little research has investigated the parents' perspectives and the factors that connect parent-school relationships and parental involvement (Drummond & Stipek, 2004; Elias, Patrikakou, & Weissberg, 2007; Mapp, 2003). Investigating the driving forces of parent-school relationships and parental involvement will help administrators provide and sustain a thriving Catholic school community and help Catholic schools remain a desired choice for parents in low socioeconomic urban areas.

This research explored the interconnectedness between the Catholic school mission, parent-school relationships, and parental involvement. Little is known of parents' expectations of parent-school relationships, how the school and parents actualize these expectations, and what role the Catholic school mission plays in parent-school relationships and parental involvement. In order to investigate this connection, the researcher obtained data related to the parents' expectations of the parent-school relationship and how parents understood their role in parental involvement (Bakker & Denessen, 2007; Barton et. al., 2004; El Ghazal, 2006; Epstein, 2001; Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006). Administrators must understand parents' perspectives and expectations in order to build effective relationships and support meaningful parental involvement (Barton et al., 2004; Elias et al., 2007). For the administrators and school, this

"understanding of the parent perspective may yield the benefit of strengthening the connection between families and schools" (Stelmach, 2005, p. 183).

It is important to understand which components of the Catholic school mission pertain to parents. The following mission components that directly affect parents and that are discussed in this study are recognizing parents as primary educators, collaborating with parents to develop a trusting relationship, developing community, embracing diversity, and working toward social justice in low-socioeconomic schools (Catarro, 2002a; Grocholweski, 2008; James, 2007; Massaro, 2000; National Catholic Educational Association [NCEA], 2004; National Conference of Catholic Bishops [NCCB], 1972; Pontifical Council for the Family, 1983; USCCB, 2005). These components of the Catholic school mission are also reflected in some of the themes found in the Catholic social teaching as outlined through papal encyclicals, bishop letters and conferences, and other Vatican statements that have defined the Church's position on world political, economic, and social issues for more than 100 years (Massaro, 2000; USCCB, 2011). The Catholic social teaching themes, though not directly discussed in this dissertation, support the Catholic school mission and include the dignity of each human, solidarity, emphasis on the value of the family, and the preferential option for the poor (Massaro, 2000; USCCB, 2012).

One component of the Catholic school mission—collaboration with parents—is detailed in the Code of Canon Law (1983), a framework for Church and school governance. Collaboration with parents served to support the interconnectedness of parents and schools and encouraged that "parents must cooperate closely with the

teachers of the schools to which they entrust their children to be educated; moreover, teachers, in fulfilling their duty, are to collaborate very closely with parents" (can. 796 §2). The 2005 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops spoke of the need for schools to "collaborate with parents and guardians with the changing and challenging cultural and moral contexts in which they find themselves" (USCCB, 2005, p. 3). These cultural contexts include communication and are an element of focus within parent-school relationships. Delgado-Gaitan (1991) used the term *culturally responsive communication* to define communication that respects and acknowledges cultural differences, expectations, and needs. This included employing various languages in school communications and heightening awareness of symbolic artifacts that reflected not only the school culture and beliefs but demonstrated whether schools exhibited an accurate understanding of other cultures. These artifacts included mottoes, awards, celebrations, and newsletters.

The mission components that evoke collaboration, respect, and community offered Catholic schools a unique opportunity of developing a mutually trusting relationship (Bauch & Goldring, 1995; Braatz & Putnam, 1996; Bryk et al., 1993; Coleman, 1988; Frabutt, Holter, Nuzzi, Rocha, & Cassel, 2010; Putnam, 2000). In addition, social capital theorists addressed trust and community as aspects that built parent-school relationships and encouraged parental involvement (Braatz & Putnam, 1996; Bryk et al., 1993; Coleman, 1990; Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Convey, 1992; Putnam, 2000). Braatz and Putnam's (1996) research on social capital and parental involvement found that "when families directly engage in instructional activities the

benefits for students' achievement are clear, significant, and reasonably uncontroverted" (p. 8). In addition to student achievement, improved enrollment due to parent satisfaction could be an important result of stronger parent-school relationships.

Currently, however, relationships and parental involvement are frequently determined by the schools and often defined within traditional structured activities such as attending parent-teacher conferences, volunteering in the classroom, and participating in fund-raisers and school- sponsored activities such as carnivals (Convey, 1992; Frabutt et al., 2010). The schools frequently determine the roles of involvement and structured parent-school relationships without taking into account the parents' expectations, experiences, and cultural background (Barton et al., 2004). Epstein (2001) developed a parental involvement framework defining six types of involvement. In this framework, she acknowledged culturally relevant communication and the concept of collaboration. She listed the six types of parental involvement as communicating, parenting, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. Barton et al. (2004) extended the types of parental involvement to those activities and actions determined by the parents and how they chose to participate in their child's education. They defined this type of involvement as *ecologies of parental engagement* (EPE). Epstein's (2001) and Barton et al.'s (2004) frameworks guided this study, but the findings were determined by coding and analyzing the parents' and schools' expectations of parental involvement and the parent-school relationship, in addition to collecting evidence of how these expectations were realized.

Statement of the Problem

Many urban Catholic schools face declining enrollment and closure. Nonetheless, the need to have these schools remain open is evidenced by the high number of low-socioeconomic students that graduate from urban Catholic high schools (Catarro, 2002a; Greeley, 2002; Litton et al., 2010). Moreover, attention must focus on the parents, who are key to Catholic schools because they ultimately decide which schools their children attend. Previous studies found that parents chose Catholic schools for their academic success, discipline, and safe environment (Bryk et al., 1993; El Ghazal, 2006; Schultz, 2009; Shokraii, 1997). However, there may be other factors that draw parents to the Catholic schools such as effective parent-school relationships and parental involvement (Bryk et al., 1993; Coleman, 1990; Greeley, 2002). These factors may be such an integral part of the Catholic school culture and mission that parents fail to recognize or articulate them as reasons for choosing Catholic schools. If urban Catholic schools wish to remain open and to continue serving the lower-socioeconomic communities successfully, it is vital that administrators understand the parents' expectations in terms of parent-school relationships and parental involvement and how these expectations are realized. Furthermore, because of the unique Catholic identity, the interconnectedness between parent-school relationships, parental involvement, and the Catholic school mission must be examined.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate Catholic urban parents' expectations of the school in terms of parent-school relationships and of themselves in

terms of parental involvement. In addition, this study investigated urban Catholic high school administrators' expectations of the school in terms of parent-school relationships and their expectations of parental involvement within this relationship. The research questions on the administrators' expectations were designed to parallel the parental expectation questions in order to gain an authentic and balanced understanding of the parent-school relationships, the effect of encouraging parental involvement, and ways in which schools mediated their expectations with those of parents to achieve an effective mutual relationship.

Finally, this study explored how the schools addressed and actualized the expectations of both the school personnel and the parents. Epstein's (2001) six types of parental involvement (communicating, parenting, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community) and Barton et al.'s (2004) EPE model served as measures of parental involvement, although these measures remained fluid as the parents' expectations were coded and understood. The Catholic school mission, components of social capital, and Epstein's (2001) and Barton et al.'s (2004) frameworks served as theoretical underpinnings for an examination of how the relationships and types of parental involvement function become realized. Although parental involvement is not a panacea to urban Catholic school financial and enrollment problems, it is important to examine it as a factor that encourages community engagement and commitment between parents and schools. This commitment may be the impetus needed to encourage parents to support and advocate for Catholic schools.

Significance of the Study

This research study was significant because it provided a constructive platform for the parents to actively voice their expectations. Through interviews I conducted, the parents gained a better understanding of their own expectations of parental involvement when they articulated what they may not have had the opportunity to voice aloud.

In addition, this study was meaningful because it addressed the impact of the Catholic school mission on parent-school relationships and parental involvement. The USCCB (2005) stressed the necessity of collaborating with parents to meet the changing moral and cultural contexts of society. Clearly, one way to do this is to ask parents what they believe, value, and expect of their relationship with Catholic schools. This is consistent with the Catholic school mission of social justice that professes to help students from minority and low-economic backgrounds achieve academic success (NCEA, 2004; USCCB, 2005; Youniss & Convey, 2000). The second Vatican Council reinforced this mission of education of all children, regardless of race, creed, or socioeconomic background (Bryk et al., 1993). The Catholic mission upholds the importance of parents as the primary educators, and consequently, it is important to give value to the parents by listening and respecting their opinions.

The information gathered from this study provides schools with insights and understanding needed to strengthen the home-school connection, to reduce barriers to the relationship and to parental involvement, to evaluate how well schools collaborate with parents in regard to these expectations, and to encourage parental involvement that is meaningful to both parents and the school (Dauber & Epstein, 2001; Stelmach, 2005).

Strengthening the connection may encourage additional enrollment and open an avenue for parent advocacy of Catholic schools (Stelmach, 2005).

Theoretical Framework

Three conceptual frameworks guided this study in the investigation of the interconnectedness between the Catholic school mission, parent-school relationships, and parental involvement: (a) the Catholic school mission in regard to the role of parents and the responsibilities of the schools in collaboration with the parents, (b) social capital theories in terms of relationships and involvement, and (c) two specific parental involvement frameworks designed to provide theoretical underpinnings and practical applications to parental involvement.

The Catholic school mission guided the study with an understanding of the underpinnings and values that Church doctrine and the United States Catholic Bishops have espoused. The mission plays an integral role in parent-school relationships, and as Bauch and Goldring (1996) noted, "historically, Catholic schools have worked collaboratively with parents emphasizing the role that parents play in the education of the children" (p. 423).

Social capital provided a theoretical framework for parent-school relationships as it applies to trust, communications, and parental involvement (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Braatz & Putnam, 1996; Coleman, 1990; Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Putnam, 2000). Although social capital is frequently studied as an asset to students and their academic success, this study approached social capital in relation to the research on how Catholic schools build relationships through shared beliefs, trust, and a functional community

(Braatz & Putnam, 1996; Bryk et al., 1993; Coleman, 1990; Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Convey, 1992; Ross, 2009). Putnam (1993; 2000) asserted that parental involvement successfully linked parents to schools and social capital. Moreover, Putnam and other researchers observed a link between social capital and parental involvement that builds strong parent-school partnerships (Barton et al., 2004; Carreón, Drake, & Barton, 2005; Putnam, 2000; Reynolds, 2009).

Joyce Epstein's (2001) six types of parental involvement and the EPE model developed by Barton et al. (2004) grounded this study's theoretical framework in order to understand parental involvement theories and to establish specific observable measures previously researched and implemented. Epstein's (2001) six types of parental involvement included the following: communicating, parenting, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. Her framework has been used to develop programs such as the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS, 2010) and Project Appleseed (2010). However, caution must be taken to not limit parental involvement to these six types listed; it is a dynamic, fluid practice that varies according to the age and needs of the students, the resources parents and schools possess, the parent-school relationships, and the specific actions parents decide to take (Carreón et al., 2005).

The EPE (Barton et al., 2004) model stressed that the type and amount of parental involvement in high-poverty urban schools was directly related to the parents' environment, previous knowledge, and personal experiences. EPE acknowledged the complexity that existed between the parent-school relationships, the parents' engagement,

and the context in which both occurred. This model was influenced by Bourdieu and Passeron's (1977) social capital theories. It adapted Bourdieu's concept of *fields* to understand how parents mediate and create their own spaces for involvement, and how they can influence the school rather than accept standard types of parental involvement authorized by the schools (Barton et al., 2004; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). The EPE model shifted from analyzing the types of parental involvement prescribed by the school to understanding "the interconnections between 'what' parents engage in and 'how' they manage to do so" (Barton et al., 2004, p. 3). This lens of ecologies of parental engagement allowed me to focus on the overall environment that affected the parents' decisions and expectations.

Research Questions

This qualitative research study was guided by the following four questions:

PARENT EXPECTATIONS

1. What expectations do parents of urban Catholic high school students have of the school in terms of parent-school relationships?
2. What expectations do parents of urban Catholic high school students have of themselves in terms of parental involvement?
    a. How do they put these expectations into practice?

ADMINISTRATOR EXPECTATIONS:

3. What expectations do administrators of urban Catholic high schools have of the school in terms of parent-school relationships?
    a. How do they put these expectations into practice?

4. What expectations do administrators of urban Catholic high schools have of parents in terms of parental involvement?

Research Design and Method

This qualitative study was conducted at three urban Catholic high schools, two which were the sites of a Phase II study by Loyola Marymount University (LMU) on Catholic school success as measured by the high school graduation rate. These schools were previously chosen to represent schools in the southern California archdiocese serving low-socioeconomic areas in order to compare their success rate to that of students in the local public schools (Litton et al., 2010). As part of the research team in LMU's Phase II project on Catholic school success, I became interested in parental involvement when the data taken from the parents' questionnaires did not have one parent who answered that parental involvement impacted their child's education. Was parental involvement not important for these parents or did they not understand the term *parental involvement*? How could the results from this questionnaire differ so widely from all the current literature and theories? Do the results differ because the parents were in a Catholic school, or because parents did not understand the connections of parental involvement and student success? I wanted to explore this further, and I decided to return to schools similar to the ones where the questions were asked. The third school was chosen to represented an urban coed school and was not part of the original study, although a portion of the students came from low-socioeconomic areas nearby.

By choosing low-socioeconomic urban schools, I wanted to add to the body of research begun in the Phase II study. For the purpose of getting a diverse sample of low-

socioeconomic parents, I conducted the study at three different types of schools: coed, single-sex female, and single-sex male. I chose a diverse sample rather than focusing on a single ethnic group because frequently a school's population consists of a mixture of ethnic groups, and the challenge is in meeting their diverse needs.

The 12 parent participants were selected from a purposive sample with the following criteria: (a) the parent must have a junior or senior student; (b) the child must have attended the school a minimum of 1 year; (c) the parent must be from the lowest-socioeconomic group in the school; (d) the participant must be a parent, not a guardian, with a mixture of single and two parent families; and (e) the parent must be from a racial mix of Black, Hispanic, immigrant parents, and second or third generations that represented the racial composition of the school. Not all participants met the criteria of being from the lowest-socioeconomic group, and this is acknowledged in the delimitations.

Four parents were chosen from each school for the semistructured interviews that were not taped to ensure the anonymity of the parents and the honesty of the responses. The questions for these interviews were designed to answer the first two research questions: (1) What expectations do parents of urban Catholic high school students have of the school in terms of parent-school relationships, and (2) What expectations do parents of urban Catholic high school students have of themselves in terms of parental involvement?

Principal interviews were designed to parallel the parent interviews and answer the final two research questions: (3) What expectations do administrators of urban

Catholic high schools have of the school in terms of parent-school relationships? (4) What expectations do administrators of urban Catholic high schools have of parents in terms of parental involvement?

Validation of the research questions 2a and 3a, which asked how expectations were actualized in practice, consisted of documentation through the responses of parents and principals and observations of such activities as parent-school meetings, Back-To-School night, board meetings, and family-school events. Unobtrusive data and symbolic artifacts were collected to further validate parents' expectations and school support. Types of data included principal bulletins to parents, parent handbooks, and website information. Other common forms of symbolic artifacts that reflected the quality of communication and parent-school relationship were the languages used in bulletins and a welcoming atmosphere created by the school and office staff. Other measures that showed evidence of school responsiveness to the parent-school relationship were how the school contacted parents on the students' progress, how they provided information to parents about courses and curriculum, and whether the schools sought advice and feedback from parents (Bauch & Goldring, 1995). I transcribed and translated data from the interviews. Observation data were recorded from a checklist I had designed to look for symbolic and unobtrusive data guided by Epstein's (2001) six types of parental involvement. See Appendices C and D for the detailed checklists.

Data were analyzed continuously through the data collection period and during the coding process. Typology allowed me to initially code for specific topics and the data were further coded for those components discussed in the literature on the Catholic

school mission, social capital aspects connected with relationships and parental involvement, and the two parental involvement frameworks by Epstein (2001) and Barton et al. (2004). I conducted inductive analysis to discover emerging topics and categories

Limitations

The first limitation of this study was that the findings are not generalizable because the study was limited to the expectations of 12 female parents and three principals and observations of three urban Catholic high schools.

The second limitation of this study was the threat of selectivity. Parents who chose to participate in the study may have already had a good relationship with the school and were more actively involved (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009; Krathwohl & Smith, 2005).

The third limitation was experimenter bias and the possibility that parents may have said what they thought the researcher wanted to hear.

Delimitations

The first delimitation is that this current study acknowledges that the students' and the teachers' roles were not explored. This study explored the parents' and principals' roles, which are two other key roles that lead to student success.

The second delimitation is that although five stratifying criteria were set to select the parent participants, not all parents met this criteria; this is explained in detail in Chapter 3.

The third delimitation is that although my position as a parent may pose a bias, this position is balanced with my position as a teacher, having taught in both public and Catholic schools more than 25 years.

Definition of Terms

***Catholic School Mission*:** The United States Bishops define the mission with a threefold purpose of imparting the message of Christ, building community, and promoting service to those in need (NCCB, 1972). Whereas there are many aspects within the Catholic school mission, this study addressed the mission in relation to parents. Parental aspects within the Catholic school mission include the following: respecting parents as primary educators, developing trusting and collaborating parent-school relationships, building community, embracing diversity, understanding the interconnectedness with community members, and working toward social justice (Catarro, 2002a; Grocholweski, 2008; James, 2007; Massaro, 2000; NCCB, 1972; NCEA, 2004; USCCB, 2005).

Culturally Responsive Communication: This is a method of communication that respects, acknowledges, and understands cultural differences, expectations, and needs (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991). Grant and Ray (2010) incorporated this concept of culturally responsive communication into their family systems model as well and defined their model as culturally responsive family involvement.

***Parents as Primary Educators*:** The term *primary educators* has been given to parents by the Church, which recognizes the central and primary role parents have in their children's lives. The Church maintains that parents "have the original, primary and inalienable right to educate them" (Pontifical Council for the Family, 1983, §5).

***Parental Involvement*:** Traditionally, parental involvement has been viewed by schools as including particular activities such as teacher-parent conferences, school-family activities, classroom volunteers, and fund-raising events (Barton et al., 2004; Carreón et al., 2005), but it has become so frequently used in literature that the term is difficult to measure. In this study, parental involvement will be defined by Epstein's (2001) six types of parental involvement and the EPE model developed by Barton et al. (2004). Epstein's (2001) six types of parental involvement are communicating, parenting, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. The EPE model addresses parent practices in low-socioeconomic urban schools as they are affected by their environment, previous knowledge, and personal experiences. The theory behind ecologies of parental engagement surmises that parental involvement is "a dynamic and ever-changing practice that varies depending on the context in which it occurs, the resources parents and schools bring to the their actions, and the students' particular needs" (Carreón et al., 2005, p. 467).

***Parent–School Relationships*:** These relationships refer to the way parents and schools are connected. These connections can be observed through verbal and nonverbal communication. Social capital theorist Putnam (2000) determined that mutual trust, respect, and reciprocity affect the quality of parent-school relationships.

***Social Capital*:** In this dissertation, the term *social capital* is defined as the connection of parents to the school and other parents, which in turn, improves the effectiveness of the parent-school relationships and the students' success (Coleman, 1988, 1990). Social capital is cultivated by the school's shared beliefs, bonding structures, and trust, and in

this study, the focus is on how urban Catholic high schools utilize these aspects to promote the parent-school relationship (Braatz & Putnam, 1996; Bryk et al., 1993; Coleman, 1988, 1990; Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Putnam, 2000). In addition, this study examines parental involvement as one asset that may be promoted through social capital.

***Symbolic Artifacts*:** This term has been adapted from Gay (2002), who defined *symbolic curriculum* as embedded symbols such as mottoes, awards, and celebrations that reflect the school culture and beliefs. Examples of common forms of symbolic artifacts that reflect the quality of communication and parent-school relationship are the languages used in bulletins, a welcoming atmosphere created by the school and office staff, and the types of family-school events. These symbolic artifacts can powerfully and subtly reinforce or devalue certain values by choosing what to display and what to omit.

***Urban Schools*:** Various characteristics define urban schools including geographic population and density, poverty, a high ratio of ethnic minorities, the disenfranchised, and an environment of crime, violence, and pollution (Bempechat, Boulay, Piergross, & Wenk, 2008). These are "significant characteristics" to consider because of their impact on students, parents, and the schools (Thomas, 1994).

Summary

In conclusion, the purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate urban Catholic high school parents' and principals' expectations of parent-school relationships and parental involvement and how they defined and realized their roles to support the students' success. In addition to the purpose of this study, Chapter 1 outlined the

methodology and addressed the significance of understanding the parents' and principals' expectations to meet the ever-changing parent, school, and student needs.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature on the current and historical underpinnings of the Catholic school mission, which include parents as primary educators, the mission of trust and collaboration, community, diversity, and social justice. It also details the social capital theories as they apply to trusting parent-school relationships, connecting home and school, and communications. In the next section, the components of parental involvement are defined by social capital theories, the parental involvement frameworks of Epstein (2001) and Barton et al. (2004), and parents themselves. Finally, the organizational and governance structure of the Catholic school and their impact on parental involvement is addressed.

Chapter 3 covers the methodology and design for this qualitative study that took place in three urban Catholic high schools. Principals and parents were interviewed, various parent-school activities were observed, and unobtrusive and symbolic artifacts such as communication bulletins and parent-teacher policies were collected.

Chapter 4 presents the four patterns and subpatterns that emerged from the data, which were collected from the parent and principal interviews; observations of the meetings, events, and office visits; and unobtrusive and symbolic artifacts as they pertained to parent-school communication. The methods of data analysis and procedures are also discussed.

Chapter 5 presents a discussion of the findings in relation to the patterns discovered in Chapter 4, the frameworks described in the literature review, and the

Catholic school mission components as they relate to parents. It concludes with recommendations for Catholic schools and education in general, and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Research findings have demonstrated the positive effect of parental involvement on student achievement (Bauch & Goldring, 1995; Braatz & Putnam, 1996; Convey, 1992; Epstein, 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jeynes, 2007; Keith et al., 1998). These findings have led to the development of frameworks that provide various types of parental involvement and place primary importance on developing a strong parent-school relationship in order to encourage this involvement (Braatz & Putnam, 1993; Bryk et al., 1993; Carreón et al., 2005; Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Dauber & Epstein, 2001; Putnam, 2000; Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006). This interconnectedness between parental involvement and strong parent-school relationships creates an important factor in effective parental involvement, but another link must be considered in developing successful parental involvement programs, namely, parents' expectations of parental involvement and relationships (Bakker & Denessen, 2007; Barton et al., 2004; El Ghazal, 2006; Epstein, 2001; Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006). An understanding of parents' expectations is pivotal knowledge that administrators need to acquire in order to build effective relationships and support meaningful parental involvement (Barton et al., 2004; Elias et al., 2007; Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001).

In addition to parents' expectations, the Catholic school mission adds another dimension to the complexity of understanding and supporting parental involvement and

parent-school relationships in Catholic schools. This review focused on the following components of the Catholic school mission that directly relate to parents: collaboration with parents, respect for diversity, development of community, and the designation of parents as the primary educators (NCEA, 2004; Pontifical Council for the Family, 1983; USCCB, 2005). This emphasis on collaboration, respect, and community offers a unique situation of providing schools with an inherent trusting relationship (Bryk et al., 1993; Coleman, 1988; Frabutt et al., 2010; Putnam, 2000). Administrators, however, cannot rely solely on the inherent aspects of the mission to build relationships and encourage parental involvement; they must also understand the parents' expectations and support them (El Ghazal, 2006; Stelmach, 2005; Woodard, 2009).

In addition to understanding parents' expectations and the complex connection between parent-school relationships, parental involvement, and the Catholic school mission, urban Catholic school administrators must also understand the environment and culture of urban schools and families. This literature review begins with an in-depth look at the Catholic school mission and history as it pertains to parents, community, diversity, and urban schools. It continues with social capital theories as they apply to parent-school relationships, trust, and communications. Having provided a foundation of social capital theories on parent-school relationships and an explanation of the Catholic school mission, the next section details the frameworks that define components of parental involvement. Finally, this literature review describes and analyzes the Catholic school governance and its influence on parental involvement.

Catholic School Mission and Parents

A major component in the Catholic Church's mission that must be addressed in this study of parental involvement and parent-school relationships is the role of parents as primary educators. For more than 300 years, the official Church teachings and documents have affirmed the mission that values parents as the primary educators and have supported the relationship between home and school (Frabutt et al., 2010). In addition to parents as primary educators, four other components of the Catholic school mission pertain to parents. These include (a) collaborating with parents to develop trusting parent-school relationships, (b) creating community, (c) respecting diversity, and (d) addressing solidarity and social justice. Church documents such as the papal encyclicals and bishops letters have also influenced these four components of the Catholic school mission and are known as the Catholic social teachings (Massaro, 2000; USCCB, 2012). Although this review does not address the Catholic social teachings directly, it is important to note that the four applicable Catholic social teaching themes are pertinent to the components of the Catholic school mission. They include the value and dignity of each person, solidarity and the interconnectedness of each human to another, the focus on family as the primary educators, and the importance of taking care of the world's poor (Massaro, 2000; USCCB, 2012).

This section of the literature review addresses five key components of the Catholic school mission as they interconnect parents, parent-school relationships, and parental involvement. The five following components of the mission are addressed in

this section with the following shortened titles: parents as primary educators, trusting parent-school relationships, community, diversity, and solidarity and social justice.

Mission of Parents as Primary Educators

The Catholic Church has recognized the important role of parents in their children's lives and upholds that parents "have the original, primary and inalienable right to educate them" (Pontifical Council for the Family, 1983, §5). The USCCB (2005) stressed that the primary educator role entails both the spiritual and moral education of their children. This role implies that parents are models and examples of faith and places the responsibility on parents to fulfill this duty. The document of the Pontifical Council for the Family (1983) placed the parents' role as foremost in the Catholic school mission. Part of fulfilling this mission has required that Catholic schools support the parents through collaboration with parents, teachers, and school administrators (Bauch & Goldring, 1996; Bryk et al., 1993; Code of Canon Law, 1983; NCEA, 2004).

Pope John Paul II called for an amendment of the Canon, and this 1983 Code of Canon Law has continued to serve as a framework for the Church mission and governance (Code of Canon Law, 1983; Haney, O'Brien, & Sheehan, 2009). The Code addressed the interconnected rights and responsibilities of parents and schools (Grocholewski, 2008). Additionally, the Code acknowledged the interconnectedness of parents and schools and encouraged that "parents must cooperate closely with the teachers of the schools to which they entrust their children to be educated; moreover, teachers, in fulfilling their duty, are to collaborate very closely with parents" (Code of Canon Law, 1983, can. 796 §2). While the type of collaboration appears to have been

open to interpretation, Haney et al. (2009) specified that collaboration must depend on the organizational structure and understanding of relationship building.

Frabutt et al.'s study (2010) of pastors and their views of parents and parental roles in education gathered data taken from the 2008 Notre Dame Study of U.S. Pastors to conduct a mixed-method analysis. Their study noted that both pastors and schools have interpreted this collaboration with support of the parents to include parent religious education, parent-school-church collaboration, parental involvement, and school choice. However, limited research has examined the specific needs and value of the home-school collaboration and the particular types of parental involvement (El Ghazal, 2006; Frabutt et al., 2010). In their research, some pastors and schools defined parental involvement as consisting primarily of parents' decision to enroll their children in Catholic schools. School choice may even have discouraged parental involvement (Frabutt et al., 2010). Bauch (1987) suggested that parents' decision to send their child to private school may have caused parents to relinquish their responsibility and decide that education should be best left to the school. However, in a later study in 13 urban American schools, five of which were Catholic schools, Bauch and Goldring (1996) found that the Catholic parents surveyed reported that the schools offered adequate opportunities for parental involvement.

Frabutt et al.'s (2010) study explained some of the school pastors' understanding of collaboration and parental involvement. In their analysis, Frabutt et al. (2010) discovered that the pastors had varying interpretations of the type and degree of parental involvement that schools should allow. One pastor declared that the parents must take

ownership of the school in order for the Catholic school's tradition of educational excellence to continue (Frabutt et al., 2010). A few pastors agreed that this ownership could be achieved through strong parent organizations (Frabutt et al., 2010). In contrast, some of the interviewed pastors were wary of too much parental involvement, particularly involving governance. One pastor cautioned that parents' over-involvement in school governance could potentially harm the overall effectiveness of the school because parents might focus on their children's individual needs rather than the needs of the school as a whole (Frabutt et al., 2010). In Bauch and Goldring's (1996) study, teachers voiced concern that parents might have too much influence over school-wide decisions.

Mission of Trusting Parent-School Relationships

The Catholic school mission of collaborating with parents has required a component of trusting parent-school relationships. This consisted of parents entrusting their children to the Catholic schools and, in return, the school's accepting the responsibility of this trust (Grocholweski, 2008). Bryk et al. (1993) described this relationship between parents and school as both fiducial and mutual; parents entrust their children to the schools, and the schools trust that parents will support the schools and uphold their commitment to the children's education. Their study observed trust to be a strong factor with low-income parents, who have made great financial sacrifices, and they trusted that the school would educate their children well. Bryk et al. (1993) noted that this trust also had a reciprocating effect on the staff, who in turn considered it their moral responsibility to provide the best education possible for these students. This relationship

of trust differs from the public service sector and private school contract-for-service models, and it requires further research to understand the integral relationship between parents and Catholic schools, especially with parents of low-socioeconomic status (Bryk et al., 1993; O'Keefe & Murphy, 2000).

Mission of Community

The mutually trusting relationship between parents and schools leads to building community, another component of the Catholic school mission (Bryk et al., 1993). The NCCB (1972) included Catholic schools' community in the threefold purpose of education. Community in the Catholic schools is based on faith and value, and as stated by the NCCB (1972), it is a concept not only to be taught but also to be lived. Bryk et al. (1993) observed the quality of life of the Catholic community when administrators, teachers, students, and parents share a system of values that reflect a strong community atmosphere. Adults and students reaffirmed this culture of community with their frequent reiterations of "we are a community" (Bryk et al., 1993, p. 127).

Coleman and Hoffer (1987) described the Catholic school communities as "functional communities," which are formed through shared values and have the capacity to bring about change. This type of community has a positive impact on the students' academic success (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987). Ross (2009) suggested that the idea of functional community and its power to create change also applied to the relationship between parents and schools. In this type of relationship, the school serves as the center of the functional community and the parents work together to positively influence the school. Parents as a functional community group provide a vital aspect of parental

involvement that not only promotes social capital but that can encourage parental empowerment (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Hoffer, 2000; Ross, 2009).

Mission of Diversity

Community is a part of the mission that requires schools to embrace the universal Catholic philosophy (McLaughlin, 2002). Universality refers to the practice of accepting all humans regardless of race, creed, or culture. Whereas the Catholic Church and schools have not always purported a universal philosophy, the U.S. Catholic schools have had a long history in working with diverse cultures that can be traced back to the early 19th century (Bryk et al., 1993; Hunt, 2005). Catarro (2002a) divided this history into two distinct periods: the first period referred to the assimilation of European immigrants into the American culture, and the second reflected the Church's recognition and acceptance of all cultures, races, and religions.

The first period began around 1830 and lasted through the 1960s, when the United States experienced heavy waves of European immigrants. During that time, the mission of the Catholic school was one of assimilation and acculturation (Bryk et al., 1993; Catarro, 2002a; Hunt, 2005). Some ethnic schools, however, provided refuge for immigrants to maintain their culture and language while introducing them to the American way. These schools served as a bridge from the immigrants' homeland to America. There was controversy surrounding the maintaining of one's home culture, with fears that these ethnic schools could give rise to separatism; as a result, the schools gave way to policies of assimilation to avoid a political wariness of Catholics that was already present in the United States (Bryk et al., 1993; Catarro, 2002a).

The second period began in 1962 when Pope John XXIII called 2,500 of the world's bishops to the Second Vatican Council, also referred to as Vatican II (Bryk et al., 1993). During Vatican II, the bishops addressed the Church's role and mission in the modern world and developed nine decrees, three declarations, and four constitutions that specifically detailed the Church's theology on divine revelation, the liturgy, the pastoral duties and Catholic social teachings of the Church, and the dogmatic constitution of the Church (Second Vatican Council, 1965; Massaro, 2000). Vatican II set the parameters for the Church's contemporary role to be separate from the governing countries (Bryk et al., 1993; Massaro 2000). By declaring this separation of Church and State, the Church reassured Americans who feared that the Pope would try to assert his political views on the U.S. government (Bryk et al., 1993). With this fear quelled, the Church could now embrace diverse cultures and promote enculturation without suspicion of political subversion. Vatican II also reinforced the importance of respecting cultural differences and living the mission to bring faith and culture together (Martin & Litton, 2004; Massaro, 2000). A major change from masses spoken in Latin to use of the local vernacular clearly illustrated the advocacy for cultural diversity and enculturation (Martin & Litton, 2004; Pope Paul VI, 1965). In addition, the Second Vatican Council replaced the Catholic schools' former mission of assimilation to one of adaption and acceptance of cultures.

In *The Catholic School* (1977), the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education reaffirmed the Catholic school mission to address diverse cultures and to welcome all faiths. The Sacred Congregation (1977) considered enculturation as a more meaningful

avenue to teach the Catholic faith in diverse communities. The Church's educational mission of the dignity of human life implied a cultural inclusiveness that respected diversity. The NCEA (2004) upheld that Catholic educators must embrace diversity and accept the values and cultures of others. In addition to the areas of culture, race, and ethnicity, this belief should be extended to all diversity such as sexual orientation, gender, special needs, religion, and socioeconomic status (Martin & Litton, 2004; NCEA, 2004). Martin and Litton (2004) reiterated the need for Catholic schools to support diversity in order to build a caring and just community that the Catholic mission purported. Additionally, this respect for diversity must not only apply to the students but should extend to parents, who are also part of the community and deserve the dignity of human life that Jesus' teachings profess (NCCB, 1972).

The mission of diversity in regard to Catholic school parents entails an awareness and understanding of the cultural background and individual experiences and assets that parents have to offer (Gay, 2002; Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Acceptance of diversity can be reflected in school policies that are culturally sensitive, in bulletins written in more than just English, and in school events that are encouraging to all parents (Martin & Litton, 2004). Understanding culture can alleviate teachers' deficit assumptions about why parents do not participate in school activities or their child's education. Such assumptions include believing that parents do not care or that they are too busy at work to be involved (Barton et al., 2004; Delgado-Gaitan, 1991).

Mission of Solidarity and Social Justice

The final key component that is pivotal in addressing the relationship between parents and urban Catholic schools is their mission of social justice. The Catholic theme of solidarity incorporated the community mission and placed it in the context that all its community members are interconnected and interdependent (Massaro, 2000). This mission of solidarity and social justice extended to the early United States history of Catholic schools, which helped struggling immigrants and low-income families (Bryk et al., 1993; O'Keefe & Murphy, 2000).

Historically, the relationship between U.S. Catholic schools and poor urban communities can be traced back to the Ursuline Sisters, when they established a free school for girls in 1727 (Bryk et al., 1993; James, 2007; O'Keefe & Murphy, 2000). This mission of solidarity and social justice currently continues, as urban Catholic schools face a growing number of school closures and families battling economic hardship (Cattaro, 2002; James, 2007; O'Keefe & Murphy, 2000). The NCEA (2004) called for Catholic schools to embrace the social justice mission by accepting and respecting all people, regardless of race, ethnicity, or income. The USCCB (2005) recognized the importance of maintaining Catholic schools in low-socioeconomic urban areas as part of the social justice mission. They justified this by saying that "Catholic schools are often the only opportunity for economically disadvantaged young people to receive an education of quality that speaks to the whole person" (USCCB, 2005, p. 4). This concept of the whole person reflected the Catholic school identity that proposed to teach as Jesus did and

allowed each person reach their spiritual and intellectual potential (Grocholweski, 2008; Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977).

Research studies have found that urban Catholic schools demonstrate higher academic achievement success rates than public schools (Bryk et al., 1993; Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Shokraii, 1997). Bryk et al.'s (1993) 10-year longitudinal study included interviews, observations, and 1980s data from the *High School and Beyond* (HS&B) survey, which confirmed the Catholic school effect of higher academic achievement. The National Center for Education Statistics conducted this survey and chose only sophomores and seniors from a sample of 1,025 U.S. secondary schools. A random sample of 72 students was drawn from the original sampled schools (Bryk et al., 1993). Larger proportions of Catholic schools as well as schools with high proportions of minorities were deliberately chosen to determine the effect of Catholic schools on their academic success (Bryk et al., 1993).

Academic success is only one reason parents gave for choosing urban Catholic schools. Schultz (2009) found that the top two reasons urban parents in the diocese of Erie, Pennsylvania, gave for choosing Catholic school were related to its moral and faith development. The Erie parents' choices were consistent with the U. S. Bishops' social justice mission of teaching to the whole child, which included both spiritual and intellectual development (National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1972; USCCB, 2005). Nurturing spiritual and intellectual development required a safe environment, which is another important factor that urban parents listed for enrolling students in Catholic schools (Bryk et al., 1993; Litton et al., 2010).

The social justice mission to maintain urban Catholic schools for those most in need and to be respectful of the diverse community may itself have influenced parents to choose Catholic schools. To further understand the complex interconnection between the components of the Catholic school mission listed in this review—parent choice, and urban parents' expectations of parent-school relationship and involvement—the following section examines several components that define urban Catholic schools.

Defining Components of Urban Catholic Schools

In addition to acknowledging the interconnections between parents' decision to enroll their students in Catholic schools, their expectations of the parent-school relationships, and how they participate in their child's education, urban school administrators must also consider the factors that specifically define and impact urban schools and parents. This section investigates five pertinent factors that define the context of urban schools, which include geographical definitions, poverty, ethnic minorities, immigrants, and environmental risk factors by the U.S. Census Bureau (Borreo, 2010; Catarro, 2002b; Greeley, 2002; James, 2007; Louie & Holdaway, 2009; Stromquist, 1994; Thomas, 1994). In this section, the factors are listed in three main topic areas: (1) geographical definitions; (2) poverty, ethnic minorities, and immigrants; and (3) environmental factors.

Geographical Definitions

The U.S. Census Bureau (2011) defined *urban* geographically as "all territory, population, and housing units located within urbanized areas (UAs) and urban clusters (UCs)" (p. A-24). The term *urban cluster* was first introduced in the Census 2000 to

improve the accuracy in measuring urban locations in all parts of the United States and its territories. Both UAs and UCs consisted of densely developed areas, with the minimum number of people in a UA being 50,000, and 2,500 in a UC. Although the U.S. Census did not calculate the size of inner-city areas in its report, the term *inner-city* remains the subject of much examination for schools, both public and private, and educational researchers (Epstein, 2001; Hunt, 2005; Shokraii, 1997). All areas with 50,000 people or more are broadly classified as urban, but the inner-city specifically refers to the central zone in an urban area.

The U.S. Bishops (USCCB, 2005) stressed the need to help urban, inner-city, and rural schools, but they did not clearly differentiate between urban and inner-city schools. Nonetheless, McDonald and Schultz (2011) differentiated between these terms when calculating the regional distribution of Catholic schools in the United States in the 2010-2011 Annual Statistical Report on Schools. They divided the geographical locations for both Catholic elementary and secondary schools into the following categories and percentages: inner-city 11.5%; rural 21.0%; urban 31.5%, and suburban 35.9% (McDonald & Schultz, 2011).

Poverty, Ethnic Minorities, and Immigration

Geographic location is not the only characteristic that defines a school as urban or inner-city. Poverty, a high ratio of ethnic minorities, the disenfranchised, and the environment are other characteristics to consider because of their impact on students, parents, and the schools (Bempechat et al., 2008). Thomas (1994) defined such causal characteristics that are pertinent to a study as "significant characteristics" and considered

population size and density as only one significant characteristic in urban education studies. A school can be located in an urban area but not be affected by the other significant characteristics mentioned above. For example, Loyola High School, although located in inner-city Los Angeles, defies a clear urban definition. The school's website stated that 2010-2011 tuition was $13,810, which was high compared to lower income area schools; and whereas the 2007-2008 U.S. Department of Education (2011) school statistics showed a population of minority students consisting of 10% Black, 16% Asian, and 23% Hispanic, the number of White students remained a majority consisting of 51% of the student body. Another example of the complexity of categorizing an urban school was Bishop Amat, which although located in a suburban area of Los Angeles also showed a 2010-2011 tuition cost of $6,435 with 69.7% Hispanics. The comparison of these two schools demonstrates the complexity of the urban definition and how the significant characteristics act as measures to help determine the variables that affect student achievement and success.

The higher concentration of ethnic minorities in urban areas was another significant characteristic indicated by Bempechat et al. (2008) and McDonald & Schultz (2011). Minority students accounted for 30.2% of U.S. Catholic school enrollment in the 2010-2011 school year (McDonald & Schultz, 2011). This has increased significantly from 10.8% in 1970 (McDonald & Schultz, 2011). Of the minorities, Hispanic students composed 13.1% of the enrollment and African Americans accounted for 7.4% (McDonald & Schultz, 2011). These statistics did not accurately represent the minority population in urban areas, and the individual school's ethnic population varied greatly

depending on the surrounding general population or the areas from which the students commute. For example, Sacred Heart, an urban school in East Los Angeles, had 96.4% Hispanic students in the 2008-2009 school year (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). At Junipero Serra, another urban school in Los Angeles, the student population was 62% Black and 28% Hispanic for that same year (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

Immigrants comprised a subgroup among ethnic minorities, and this population represented a significant urban characteristic that must be addressed when developing parent-school relationships, which can be impeded by schools' and parents' misunderstanding of cultural expectations and parents' limited English (Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies, 2007; Ramirez, 2003). The U.S. Census Bureau's Summary Profile (2011) did not provide a classification for immigrants, nor did McDonald and Schultz's (2011) Annual Statistic Report and the U.S. Department of Education (2011) School Detail. Nonetheless, this is a significant characteristic that impacts student achievement, parent-school relationships, and parental involvement. Researchers continue to study the urban immigrant population (Carreón et al., 2005; Drummond & Stipek, 2004; Stanton-Salazar, 1997). The USCCB (2005) considered Catholic schools as the Church's most effective avenue for helping the poor, diverse, and immigrant populations. The NCEA (2004) reaffirmed the Catholic school's duty to openly accept and respect students of all races, cultures, and religions. Catarro (2002b) and Hamilton (2008) noted an increased enrollment in non-Catholic subgroups comprised of both immigrant and U.S. born students.

Environmental Factors

Environment is the final significant characteristic of urban studies discussed in this review that also must be considered in relation to how it defines and impacts students, parents, and schools. Environmental factors that affect urban schools include unemployment, pollution, crime, drugs, noise, and structural spaces (Stromquist, 1994). The crowded space of urban cities forces the rich and poor to live within close proximity, and this condensed space has its own effect on emphasizing the gap that exists between the wealthy and the impoverished (Stromquist, 1994). It also plays an important role in urban Catholic schools, where parents have stated that they chose an urban Catholic school not only for their academic success, but also for their safe campuses (Bryk et al., 1993; El Ghazal, 2006; Litton et al., 2010). Parents often cited their reasons for choosing Catholic schools as safety, academic excellence, and values, but it is not clear which factor, if any, drives the others (Hamilton, 2008; Schultz, 2009).

The complexity and degree of impact that these significant urban characteristics have on student achievement, parent-school relationships, and parental involvement continue to be investigated (Carreón et al., 2005; Overstreet, Devine, Bevans, & Efreom, 2005; Turney & Gao, 2009). The following section details the Catholic school parent-school relationships in terms of social capital, trust building, communication, collaboration, expectations, and the Catholic school mission.

Components of Catholic School Parent-School Relationships

Coleman (1988, 1990) defined social capital in reference to social organizations, which provide components such as trust, networks, and norms to improve the productiveness of individuals and groups. This focus on the social structure differentiates social capital from human or cultural capital, and is concerned with how the social structures affect the actions of the actors within the structure (Coleman, 1988). Research has looked at the effectiveness of student learning in schools that results from social capital and the community-type relationships it builds (Braatz & Putnam, 1996; Coleman, 1988).

Many factors affect parent-school relationships but this review is limited to the factors of trust building and communication as they are connected to social capital. In addition, the Catholic school mission of community and collaboration with parents must be addressed in this section of parent-school relationships. Finally, the literature on what parents expect of the parent-school relationships is discussed.

Social Capital and Relationship Building

Trust building in parent-school relationships is an intrinsic theme in social capital theories. The Coleman Report (Coleman, 1966) began the focus on Catholic schools and their unique identity that cultivated parents' social capital, a form of capital that could be used as an asset in community building and student success. Coleman and Hoffer (1987) defined social capital as "the set of resources that inhere in family relations and in community social organizations and are useful for the cognitive or social development of

a child or young person" (p. 300). Coleman and Hoffer's (1987) research further lauded the positive effect Catholic schools have had on building social capital for low-socioeconomic families due to the Catholic school community of faith and built-in networks. They attributed this effect to three forms of social capital, which included community norms, levels of trust as evidenced by teacher expectations, and the opening up of information channels (Coleman, 1990; Coleman & Hoffer, 1987).

Putnam (1993) defined social capital as "features of social organization, such as trust, norms and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions" (p. 167). Putnam's landmark study, *Bowling Alone* (2000), broadened his definition of social capital to include "connections among individual social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them" (p. 19).

Putnam (2000) divided social capital into two forms that focused predominantly on the community level: bridging and bonding. He ascertained that the bridging form of social capital helped create reciprocity and a feeling of community as parents connected to the school and other parents. Bonding capital was developed from being part of a group or organization and resulted in group loyalty and cohesiveness from a mutual goal. Religious organizations and school communities are examples of both forms of social capital because parents become connected to the school and with other families while working toward the mutual goal of the children's education. Bryk et al. (1993) stated that Catholic schools benefited from this bonding community built on a faith-based structure because it provided the foundation for parents to entrust their children to the schools.

Trust Building and Parent-School Relationships

Trust is a complex component in Catholic schools because it is inherently built into the school mission's components of collaboration and parents as primary educators. These two aspects of the mission require mutual trust between parents and teachers, and these fundamental aspects make it difficult to distinguish how trusting parent-school relationships are formed and nurtured. Bryk et al. (1993) found that the Catholic school relationship between parents and teachers was strong in the schools they observed, and they suggested that trust relationships may be more important in providing opportunities for disadvantaged students. Although they suggested a link between the voluntary choice of parents and the trust they placed in teachers, Bryk et al. (1993) provided no specific details on how Catholic schools further developed and strengthened this trusting parent-school relationship.

The Catholic school mission of embracing and respecting diversity provided another conduit for trust building. At the NCEA symposium in 2004, the association spoke of engagement with culture and diversity in their vision of Catholic schools' future. Embracing diversity also called for teachers to acquire knowledge of their students' culture and background. This knowledge added to building mutual trust (Dallavis, 2008; Martin & Litton, 2004). The frameworks of the culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) designed by Ladson-Billings (1995) and Gay's (2002) culturally relevant teaching were designed to build trust and consider cultural differences as an asset rather than a deficit. Recently, this culturally relevant approach has been applied to parents, family

involvement, and home-school relationships (Epstein, 2001; Grant & Ray, 2010; Henderson, et al. 2007).

Gonzalez et al. (2005) further illustrated the concept of culture and home-school relationships with the term *funds of knowledge*. Their simple premise for funds of knowledge stated that teachers enhance the children's education when they understand their students' everyday lives. In their anthropological study, teachers went into students' homes, as researchers, to understand the families' culture and to connect the families' knowledge to the curriculum taught in schools. This connection motivated the students and allowed teachers to have greater respect for their students and parents, which resulted in a mutual trust as referenced in the previous section on culturally relevant pedagogy and diversity (Dallavis, 2008; Gay, 2002; Gonzalez et al., 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Martin & Litton, 2004).

Communication Bridging Home and School

Communication enhances the understanding between home and school, builds trust and social capital, and strengthens the parent-school relationship. The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (1977) indirectly addressed communication by stating, "Catholic schools will work closely with other Christian bodies (the family, the parish and Christian community, youth associations, etc.)" (§ 48). This section covers three particular aspects of communication: culturally responsive communication, nonverbal communication, and reciprocal communications.

Although the Catholic school mission did not cite specific details to establish communications, the mission of embracing diversity has clearly paved the way for

culturally responsive communication. Delgado-Gaitan (1991) introduced the term culturally responsive communication to define a method of communication that respects, acknowledges, and understands cultural differences, expectations, and needs. Similar concepts have been incorporated into teaching strategies such as Ladson-Billings' (1995) definition of culturally relevant pedagogy and Gay's (2002) definition of culturally responsive teaching. Grant and Ray (2010) incorporated this concept of culturally responsive communication in their family systems model as well and defined their model as culturally responsive family involvement.

Similarly, culturally responsive communications can adapt Gay's (2002) key elements of culturally relevant teaching. These original elements consisted of developing a cultural diversity knowledge base, designing culturally relevant curricula, demonstrating cultural caring, and learning about diverse communication styles. The elements of a culturally diverse knowledge and culturally relevant curricula can extend to parent-school relationships and include bridging the parents' experiences, culture, and knowledge to the curricula. Culturally relevant curricula can apply to parent education as well. Schools must understand the background and needs of the parents to provide appropriate parent education. An effective culturally responsive communication considers the language support needed for non-English-speaking parents and determines the type of information parents need to navigate the school system (Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Ramirez, 2003). Catholic schools cannot rely solely on the inherent community aspect of Catholic schools to alleviate problems in communication; the schools must

recognize that parents of any economic status, culture, or education level still require an understanding of how to get information from the school and navigate the system.

In addition to developing a cultural diversity knowledge base and designing culturally relevant curricula, culturally responsive communication requires an element of cultural caring. Cultural caring requires that the schools understand the parents' experiences, knowledge, and language (Gonzalez et al., 2005; Ramirez, 2003; Valenzuela, 1999). This understanding and caring is observed in simple, subtle details such as how the schools welcome parents to their site or even how much time is allotted for parents to meet with teachers during open house. Caring also entails the support schools give to parents. Elias et al. (2007) designed a competence-based framework for parent-school-community partnerships in secondary schools around their findings that parents wanted the school to assist them in their roles as parents.

The final element that Gay (2002) addressed, culturally responsive communication styles, can extend to understanding how parents culturally perceive parent-teacher relationships. For example, some cultures hold the teachers in such high esteem that they are hesitant to question anything the teacher says or does, and this silence is often mistaken as apathy (Hill & Torres, 2010). This misinterpretation of apathy has occurred with Latino cultures because of the culture's emphasis on respect for authority: Parents do not become as involved because they respect what teachers are doing in school (Hill & Torres, 2010).

Nonverbal or hidden communication can be observed through symbolic artifacts. Gay (2002) coined the term symbolic curriculum to include representations such as

mottoes, awards, celebrations, and blackboards. The most common form of symbolic curriculum can powerfully reinforce certain values by choosing what is displayed and devaluing that which is noticeably absent. This missing value has been referred to as the hidden curriculum, the unspoken transmission of values, culture, and deeply embedded beliefs (Fullan, 2000; Shields, 2004). Hidden communications with parents can hold the same unspoken messages and can be transmitted through similar symbols. The main office set up without chairs, for example, can be either welcoming to parents or unknowingly discouraging. Choosing certain celebrations over others places higher value on the celebration chosen. Mottoes or slogans can send positive or negative communications if cultural differences are not considered.

Reciprocal or two-way communication is the final aspect of communication. Epstein (2001) included communication as one of the six types of parental involvement. Within the parameters of communication, she listed two-way communication as a way to connect schools, parents, and students. Part of the two-way communication she outlined required consistently detailing the student's academic and social progress or other student information that either parents or teachers judge necessary. For two-way communication to occur, teachers needed to be responsive to parents' cultural and language background (Epstein, 2001; Peterson, 2010). Two-way communication was frequently absent in schools, however, and often a more traditional, hierarchical approach was used (Peterson, 2010). This hierarchical structure has been the traditional format used in the Catholic schools, with the pastor often being on the top level (Arthur, 1994; Frabutt et al., 2010). Arthur (1994) addressed the discontinuity and conflicting nature of this hierarchical

format and the over-reliance on the inherent trust in the parent as primary educator, both of which limit reciprocal communication.

Parent Expectations

The fact that parents choose Catholic schools adds a complex dimension in parent-school relationships and parent expectations. Catholic schools often assumed that by choosing a Catholic school, it would imply that parents' expectations have already been met (Bauch & Goldring, 1996; Bryk et al., 1993; Frabutt et al., 2010). The mission of parents as primary educators further complicates the relationship because of its dual nature; it implies that even though parents assume responsibility for their children's spiritual development, they also entrust their children to the schools. This dual nature of Catholic school parent roles and expectations has received little attention, although there have been some studies that surveyed and interviewed parents about why they chose Catholic schools (Bryk et al., 1993; El Ghazal, 2006; Schultz, 2009; Warren, Young, & Hanifin, 2003). Even fewer studies, however, have researched parents' expectations in urban Catholic schools and whether schools are meeting these expectations (El Ghazal, 2006).

Research studies in public schools have investigated parent expectations, and these findings are applicable to urban Catholic school parent-school relationships (Barton et al., 2004; Elias et al., 2007; Miretsky, 2004; Ramirez, 2003). In Miretzky's (2004) qualitative study at three low-income public elementary schools in Chicago, parents and teachers were interviewed separately, in homogenous groups, and in focus groups that combined both parents and teachers. This unusual design allowed researchers to see how

parents and teachers interacted with each other. Parents expressed the importance of shared responsibility between teachers and themselves and wanted to have a mutual parent-teacher relationship (Miretzky, 2004). Whereas parents frequently mentioned the expectations of a joint relationship, teachers did so less often; but they did both agree that parent-teacher interaction should remain student-focused. Historically, however, there has been contention between parents and teachers as to how democratic the relationship should be (Miretzky, 2004). Catholic school governance, subsidiarity, and the type of relationships that this allows will be discussed later in this literature review.

In a study by Ramirez (2003), 44 parent participants from a predominantly Latino community in Southern California were interviewed in groups about parental involvement. This resulted in the parents expressing concerns and expectations regarding communication. Some parents were frustrated by the lack of communication or the fact that written bulletins were not in Spanish (Ramirez, 2003). Due to frustration with the limited language support at the board meetings, parents decided to bring their own translator. Another communication concern voiced was the lack of cultural understanding that all Spanish speakers were not from Mexico and therefore, differed in culture and customs. These concerns would likely have been assuaged through culturally responsive communication.

Communication and caring can make parents feel welcome. This receptivity has proven to be a strong predictor of the degree of parental involvement and positive parent expectations (Dauber & Epstein, 2001; Overstreet et al., 2005). In Dauber and Epstein's 1993 study of parents' attitudes toward involvement in inner-city schools, they found that

parents were more actively involved with the schools when the schools encouraged them to participate (Dauber & Epstein, 2001). This focus on parental involvement continues in the next section.

The Defining Components of Parental Involvement

The previous section discussed social capital in terms of parent-school relationships, the Catholic school mission, and how its key components affect trust building and communication. This section reviews key theories in social capital that are relevant to parental involvement and the current educational parental involvement frameworks. Finally, it addresses the parent expectations in terms of parental involvement.

Social Capital Theories and Parental Involvement

The social capital theories illustrate how trust building is an important component of parent-school relationships. Coleman and Hoffer (1987) explained that Catholic schools benefit from the trust built primarily on the network of social relations created by being part of the Church community and linked to the schools. They defined this network as a functional community and hypothesized that this type of community had a positive effect on building social capital, which in turn, improved student achievement. The functional community effect resulted from embedded social structures within the Church that gather parents together through participation at Church functions and not necessarily through any effort or conscious decision by the schools (Bryk et al., 1993; Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Hoffer, 2000). Although Coleman (1988, 1990) mainly focused on the positive outcomes trust had on social capital and students' academic

achievement, he also used the concept of trusting relationships to illustrate the interconnectedness of parental involvement and social capital. He analyzed social capital with regard to the relationship between parents and schools that results from existing in a functional community (Convey, 1992). He reasoned that with a trusting relationship, a school could encourage parental involvement, which in turn, increases parents' social capital. Although he described parental involvement as dependent on the level of trust that schools built, he never clearly defined the parameters of what parental involvement entailed (Dika & Singh, 2002).

Putnam (1993, 2000) also viewed parental involvement as successfully linking the school and community through shared norms. Like Coleman's theories on social capital, he did not clearly explain how parental involvement actually would open a space for sharing norms (Coleman,1988; 1990) . Braatz and Putnam (1996) acknowledged the limitations of their definition that links social capital, parental involvement, and student achievement. They discouraged placing too much emphasis on social capital as the end to all educational problems and warned, "for all its promise, strengthening social capital is not an antiseptic, risk-free strategy for improving education" (p. 32). However, the link that exists between social capital and parental involvement continues to be researched today and provides an important connection to parent-school partnerships (Barton et al., 2004; Carreón et al., 2005; Putnam, 2000; Reynolds, 2009).

Social capital theories have not listed specific types of parental involvement, although these theories tended to focus on two types: school activities and parents' interaction with their children (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Putnam, 2000). School

activities included parent-teacher conferences, talking with teachers at school events, serving in school organizations, and fund-raising (Convey, 1992). Interaction with their children was also considered to produce social capital between parent and child (Convey, 1992). These types of parental involvement occurred more frequently in Catholic schools, as noted in the data from HS&B (Bryk et al., 1993).

Not all literature concurs with Coleman and Putnam's social capital theories. These theories have been criticized for viewing social capital as a means of increasing parental involvement and not clearly defining what involvement encompasses or how it must be considered in terms of race, culture, or socioeconomic backgrounds (Drummond & Stipek, 2004; Stanton-Salazar, Chavez, & Tai, 2001). Definitions that limit the parent voice lead to interpretations that parental involvement entails what the school thinks parents need to do (Barton et al., 2004; Epstein, 2001; Gonzalez et al., 2005). This simplified definition can lead teachers and administrators to interpret a lack of parental involvement as parents not caring or valuing education, and places barriers on the forms of social capital constructed or reproduced (Barton et al., 2004; Drummond & Stipek, 2004). Some researchers challenged such deficit models and acknowledged that low-income, minority parents do want their children to succeed, but other barriers such as communication, cultural differences, and language hold them back from becoming more involved or actively choosing their own type of parental involvement (Barton et al., 2004; Gonzalez et al., 2005; Mapp, 2003; Ream & Palardy, 2008; Vélez-Ibáñez, 1983). Coleman and Hoffer (1987) observed, however, that Catholic school principals generally

did not equate a lack of parental involvement with lack of interest as did the public school principals.

Stanton-Salazar (1997) questioned both Putnam's and Coleman's failure to address class and race differences in their earlier definition of social capital. He suggested that creating successful help-seeking networks and an institutional support framework would help low-income parents overcome their lack of social capital and thereby increase parental involvement. Coleman and Hoffer (1987) and Bryk et al. (1993) noted in their studies that Catholic inner-city schools showed strong parental involvement, which may be due to the institutional support that such a functional faith-based community provides.

Parental Involvement Defined by Current Educational Frameworks

Social capital theories focus on the interactions and networking capacities of parental involvement. Convey (1992) divided parental involvement into the following two areas: school activities and parental interaction with their children. The Catholic schools place emphasis on volunteering and fund-raising as an aspect of parental involvement (Bryk et al., 1993). Catholic schools often define the parental involvement role in terms of the number of service hours yearly required of the parents (Arthur, 1994). However, other aspects of parental involvement may also be considered in addition to volunteering and fund-raising. Epstein's (2001) framework for comprehensive partnership programs has six types of parental involvement: (a) communicating, (b) parenting, (c) volunteering, (d) learning at home, (e) decision-making, and (e) collaborating with the community. Epstein (2001) used the term *parent partnership* to

imply a more mutual, comprehensive relationship between parents and school (Epstein, 2001; Henderson et al., 2007). This mutual relationship is created by the student-centered goal and how the role of each actor, parent and school, influences the students' success. She referred to this as "overlapping spheres of influence" to demonstrate the strong roles each play in supporting the student's education (Epstein, 2001). She stated that educators think of parental involvement as the responsibility of the parents to get involved with the school and to participate in their children's education at home. With both parents' and educators' perspectives in mind, she defined school, family, and community partnerships as assigning "some responsibilities to schools, families, and communities to share information, ideas, activities, and services with each other about schools and children's education" (Epstein, 2001, p. 89). *Parental engagement* is another term that emphasizes more empowering and decision-making roles of parental involvement (Carreón et al., 2005; Reynolds, 2009). Barton et al. (2004) adapted this concept to urban parents and designed a new framework they called ecologies of parental engagement (EPE).

Scholarship is rich on parental involvement but in order to focus on low-income urban parents as the primary educators in the Catholic school, this review focuses on Epstein's (2001) six types of parental involvement and Barton et al.'s (2004) framework of parental engagement. This review includes the following components: communicating and fostering a welcoming environment, issues of parenting and parent education, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, collaborating with community, and ecologies of parental engagement.

Communication and fostering a welcoming environment. Epstein (2001) listed communicating as one of the six types of parental involvement and Henderson et al. (2007) noted that effective communication helps foster a welcoming environment. This review previously discussed the concept of actively engaging in culturally responsive and reciprocal communication and attending to nonverbal communications in order to promote trusting parent-school relationships. Developing a trusting relationship requires a welcoming environment and this in turn encourages parents to become involved in school activities that promote their child's academic success. A school's successful parental involvement program is dependent on how well parents feel they are genuinely welcomed (Mapp, Johnson, Strickland, & Meza, 2008). Mapp et al. (2008) discussed the importance of welcoming as part of the joining process in which parents are welcomed into the school and honored for their contributions. Such a joining process connects the parents to the school by trust and respect. Jeynes (2010) described this process as containing subtle qualities of caring and supportive communication necessary to foster parental involvement.

Communication also needs to be consistent in the clarification of school policies, programs, expectations, and organizational procedures (Epstein, 2001). Parents often do not participate because they do not understand how to navigate the school system or know where to begin to get questions answered (Barton et al., 2004). Epstein (2001) suggested sample practices that encouraged explicit communication, including the following: yearly conferences, monthly student work folders, newsletters printed in the parents' home language, phone messages, and e-mails. A welcoming environment

extends beyond policies and programs and includes the accessibility and friendliness of the office staff, the availability of staff who understand the students' home languages, and the physical layout of the office such as comfortable chairs and informational bulletin boards (Henderson et al., 2007). Some schools and centers such as the North Carolina Parent Information and Resource Center (NCPIRC), the New Jersey State PIRC, and the Alaska PIRC have adapted the family-friendly checklist from Henderson et al. (2007) for parents to use as an assessment to review the school environment.

Creating a welcoming environment is consistent with the Catholic school mission of respect for all, although the inherent mission is not in itself enough to provide a caring atmosphere. Schools must actively and tenaciously seek to adapt to changing needs, dynamics, and culture (Barton et al., 2004; Litton & Martin, 2009). The need for a caring and inviting environment is even more crucial in low-socioeconomic and ethnic minority communities, as research shows that students benefit academically from such an environment, particularly because it encourages parental involvement and collaboration (Bryk et al., 1993; Howard, 2003; Litton & Martin, 2009; O'Keefe & Murphy, 2000).

In order to provide an environment that breaks down barriers for parental involvement, administrators must address the hidden curriculum and intrinsic negative values that may exist within the school culture regarding race, socioeconomic standing, or creed. Administrators play a crucial role in eliminating these barriers and building a supportive environment, but they also must have the teachers and staff subscribe to the same values of diversity and social justice (Litton & Martin, 2009). Breaking the barriers for parental involvement may require a change from demanding traditional types of

involvement and valuing the subtle aspects of caring addressed by Jeynes (2010). Parents may be empowered with the knowledge that they can be participating in their child's education at home through their encouragement and support, and teachers may understand that this type of involvement can also demonstrate parental concern and high expectation for their son or daughter.

Issues of parenting and parent education. This aspect of parental involvement provides support for parents to help their children in the home, with homework and social and cognitive developmental skills (Elias et al., 2007; Epstein, 2001). Many parent education programs are designed to teach the parents how to raise and educate their children, with little regard for the parents' own personal experiences and expectations (Gonzalez et al., 2005). Although parent education is an important aspect of parental involvement, the workshops and trainings must also take into account the parents' culture, background, knowledge, and expertise (Epstein, 2001; Gonzalez et al., 2005; Grant & Ray, 2010). At the high school level, parent education should include information on college applications, the General Educational Development (GED) exams, and how to access counselors (Elias et al., 2007; Epstein, 2001). All of the previous communication techniques should be applied to parent education, along with culturally responsive communication and an ethic of care and respect. For example, Epstein (2001) suggested making workshops flexible enough to allow for parents' schedules, which could include workshops online or providing written materials that can be read at any time.

In addition to parent education, schools supported families with programs that assisted with health, nutrition, and other services and had opened a number of parent support centers within school sites or at an annex (Burke, 2005; Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Epstein, 2001; Henderson et al., 2007; Ryder, Espinosa, Castagnola, & Gibson, 2008). This concept of family support reflects the Catholic school mission of social justice and solidarity (Massaro, 2000).

Volunteering. Bryk et al. (1993) noted that the role of Catholic high school parents is often limited to volunteering in terms of fund-raising. Fund-raising is a crucial element for schools, but limiting parental involvement to this one element will affect how many parents can participate. This is particularly true in high schools. Elias et al. (2007) found that few parents became involved, because the options were limited to fund-raising. High school parental involvement may also be limited due to the teenagers' need for independence (Bauch, 1987). Epstein (2001) revealed that whereas most adults think that students want minimal family involvement, data from students has shown the opposite.

Volunteering, frequently in the form of parent service hours, is usually required at Catholic schools. Volunteering includes a wide range of activities, such as helping in the classroom, going on field trips, helping the office fill the monthly envelopes, and helping at the snack bar during sports games. Although parental involvement in their children's education was found to be strongly linked to improving students' academic success, Bryk et al. (1993) determined that parental involvement in traditional school organizational matters did not generally have any effect on academic success. They concluded from this

finding that the "operation of effective Catholic high schools provides no evidence to support" the need for more "democratic participation by parents in the governance of Catholic high schools" (Bryk et al., 1993, p. 306).

Learning at home. This area of parental involvement usually consists of parents helping students with homework and can be connected with parent education and communication (Epstein, 2001). Epstein (2001) suggested that schools communicate information on homework policies, how to help students improve their skills, and how to monitor and discuss homework at home. Helping with homework can prove challenging for parents with limited English or minimal educational backgrounds. This provides an example of how the concept of funds of knowledge can be successfully applied (Epstein, 2001; Gonzalez et al., 2005). Activities that link the students' work to the parents' knowledge and experience prove effective in breaking the cultural barriers and in mediating relationships that allow parents to be actively involved in their children's education (Barton et al., 2004; Barton & Tan, 2009; Gonzalez et al., 2005). Barton and Tan's (2009) study at a low-income school in the northeastern United States opened dialogue with the parents in order to connect family knowledge and backgrounds in designing a science curriculum.

Epstein (2001) explained that parents' involvement with children's homework can "mean encouraging, listening, reacting, praising, guiding, monitoring, and discussing, not 'teaching' school subjects" (p. 412). Jeynes (2010) viewed encouraging, listening, and reacting as "subtle" aspects of parental involvement. He considered the inconspicuous but essential aspects of parenting styles, such as communicating and maintaining high

expectations of their children, to be principal components of parental involvement. At times, schools have measured parental involvement in terms of helping with homework and attending school functions such as teacher-parent conferences (Epstein, 2001; Jeynes, 2010). However, with Jeynes' (2010) research findings, such programs may need to modify their focus on overt strategies and actions. The problem that arises, however, would be how to teach these subtle aspects to parents (Jeynes, 2010). A possible solution may be found in the unassuming manner of encouragement and support exhibited by teachers and administrators for parents, which may prove more effective than specific parent education and parental involvement activities (Jeynes, 2010; Mapp et al., 2008).

These subtle aspects of support, positive expectations, and mutual respect are embedded in the Catholic school mission; however, it is not clear how schools actualize and build on these subtle aspects. Bryk et al. (1993) indicated a noticeable caring environment in Catholic schools, but more research is needed to understand how this loving atmosphere affects the unobtrusive qualities of parental involvement that Jeynes (2010) discussed.

Decision-making. Parental involvement and decision-making usually focus on organizations such as the parent-teacher association (PTA) or parent-teacher organization (PTO) and fund-raising. In O'Brien's (1987) book, *A Primer on Educational Governance in the Catholic Church,* he stated that the responsibilities of Catholic parent-school organizations included providing communications between home and school, parent education, and avenues for volunteering, fund-raising, and advocacy. At some

schools, parents participate on school boards and school site councils; this will be discussed further in the Catholic school governance section.

There is a trend toward developing parent leaders and parent representatives (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Epstein, 2001; Stelmach, 2005). Epstein (2001) also recommended having parent advocacy groups lobby for school reform and improvements. Delgado-Gaitan's (1991) 4-year research study observed parents in the Carpenteria, California school district who wanted more than conventional involvement and started a group they named Comite de Padres Latinos (Committee of Latino Parents), which they referred to as COPLA. This group's original purpose was to understand the school system and their rights and responsibility as parents. However, as they became more informed of the system, they assumed more responsibility as advocates of their children's education and for opening communications between parents and schools.

The USCCB (2005) interpreted parental involvement in school reform on a federal level and commended the efforts that parent organizations made in advocating for the right of Catholic school students to be treated equitably in government-sponsored programs. The U.S. Bishops encouraged parents to participate at both local and federal levels by lobbying for the right to choose schools and receive government tax credits (USCCB, 2005). Aside from advocacy of choice and availability of government-sponsored programs, the Catholic schools do not have a clear decisive policy on decision-making, although both Canon 796 and the U.S. Bishops have reiterated the need for schools to collaborate with parents (Frabutt, et al., 2010; NCEA, 2004; USCCB, 2005). The NCEA (2004) encouraged the school leaders in their decision-making process to

include the parents. The Church document Canon 796 (§ 2) stated, "In fulfilling their task, teachers are to collaborate closely with the parents and willingly listen to them; associations and meetings of parents are to be set up and held in high esteem" (Code of Canon Law, 1983). Frabutt et al. (2010) interpreted this to mean that teachers and administrators should work with parents, not only by collaborating but also in shared decision-making as well. This interpretation is not the norm, and although parents are active in volunteering and fund-raising functions, only low levels of democratic decision-making are observed (Arthur, 1994; Bryk et al., 1993; Ross, 2009).

Collaboration with community. Epstein (2001) broadened the concept of collaboration with parents to working with the entire community and making connections with local businesses, universities, and organizations in order to benefit the students, families, or schools. The definition of community in this context included all those who are interested in and affected by the school. This collaboration benefits the students and families by providing them with health, cultural, recreational, and financial resources, but also promotes civic capacity where students and families use their talents and skills in mentoring and volunteer programs such as recycling or helping at senior living facilities (Epstein, 2001).

Ecologies of parental engagement (EPE). Barton et al. (2004) specifically designed the EPE framework in response to a lack of research on parents as partners in a democratic and decision-making relationship. The EPE model was a parental involvement framework for urban parents that illustrated the types of involvement in terms of how the parents had created and defined their participation in their children's

education. This model used the term *ecologies* instead of *involvement* to demonstrate a more "dynamic, interactive process in which parents draw on multiple experiences and resources to define their interactions with schools and among school actors" (Barton et al., 2004, p. 3). In the EPE model, Barton et al. (2004) investigated how parents chose to participate and how the parent-school relationship facilitated their involvement (Barton et al., 2004; Frabutt et al., 2010). They conducted a 3-year longitudinal study in science and parental involvement in a high-poverty, urban elementary school in which they interviewed parents, administrators, teachers, and community leaders. The EPE shifted the focus from a school-driven, parental-activities model to a model that highlighted how parents chose to be involved and how the school was able to support these choices (Barton et al., 2004).

This model incorporated the concept of spaces, similar to what Bourdieu called *fields,* and discussed how parents engaged and mediated capital within these spaces (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Barton et al. (2004) examined the parents' involvement with their children's education as fluid spaces that existed in many different settings and were influenced by various environmental factors. Involvement could be at home or school, co-curricular or academic, for example, but the spaces created were defined by school policies, expectations, values, and the parents' own knowledge and experiences. This focus on the total environment led them to define the framework as "ecologies" of engagement. This model incorporated some of the social capital theories of fields, capital, and building trusting relationships with the concepts of funds of knowledge and

culturally responsive communication, although the EPE framework placed greater emphasis on parental agency and school reform (Barton et al., 2004).

Carreón et al. (2005) further investigated the EPE framework as it pertained to immigrant parents: how they chose to be involved and how they worked within the school system to be a part of their children's education. Again, this study focused on spaces to understand how parents created the space or opportunities for involvement. The researchers noted three spaces that parents had created: the space of presence in their children's school, the space of educating by example and bridging home and school, and the space of listening and questioning what the school was doing and learning how to navigate the system in order to help their children.

Parental Involvement Defined By Parents' Expectations

The limited amount of data on the parents' expectations of parental involvement itself validated the need for further research from the parents' perspective (El Ghazal, 2006; Stelmach, 2005). Whereas it should be understood that a strong parent-school relationship is not the only factor that affects parental involvement, most of the data gathered indicated that parents feel more communication and support from the schools would be helpful in encouraging parental involvement (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Drummond & Stipek, 2004; El Ghazal, 2006; Elias et al., 2007; Mapp, 2003; Stelmach, 2005). These data also reinforced the interconnectedness between parent-school relationships and parental involvement and how this relationship encourages or hinders parental involvement (Carreón et al., 2005; Drummond & Stipek, 2004, Mapp, 2003).

Delgado-Gaitan's (1991) study of Carpenteria, California, schools found that parents wanted more communication from the school to help them understand how to navigate the system, whereas teachers expected the parents to initiate communication about their students and interpreted the lack of parent involvement in conferences as a lack of concern. Parents wanted the schools to support them with more culturally relevant and frequent communications, and this in turn, would help parents become more involved. This desire for meaningful involvement was reiterated by three mothers in Stelmach's (2005) case study at a Catholic school in Alberta, Canada. They stated that parental involvement should be broadly defined to allow parents to choose their meaningful involvement that would also align with their own talents.

Mapp (2003) also avered the importance of communication and support but extended this concept to developing strong parent-school relationships. She investigated factors that supported a successful parent-school partnership in a Boston elementary school. In her case study, Mapp (2003) wanted to determine how and why parents were involved in their children's education; she ultimately found that communication was the foremost influential factor. She discovered that parents saw the development of a trusting, caring relationship as key to encouraging parental involvement. She reached the following conclusion:

> When school personnel initiate and engage in practices that welcome parents to the school, honor their contributions, and connect them to the school community through an emphasis on the children, these practices then cultivate and sustain respectful, caring, and meaningful relationship's between parents and school staff. (Mapp, 2003, p. 36)

El Ghazal (2006) researched parents' expectations at three urban Catholic schools ranging from low- to high-poverty levels in the Midwestern United States. He found that parents expected clear and consistent communications, which was similar to Delgado-Gaitan's study results (1991). He concluded the following:

> In urban Catholic schools, parents expect a clear communication about their children's educational, behavioral, physical, psychological, and spiritual growth. Parents expect to hear from the school if there is any discipline problem, mood change, school work trouble, or relationship concerns. Parents expect the school to communicate with them also about any changes in the curriculum, the schedule or in finances so that they can adjust. (El Ghazal, 2006, p. 140)

In addition to communication, El Ghazal found that parents interviewed at the three urban Catholic schools consistently mentioned the expectation that they would like to be allowed more decision-making roles in their children's education. These findings were consistent with those of Delgado-Gaitan's (1991) study, where parents felt that their role of involvement was limited by the school's traditional structures of fund-raising and teacher conferences. The parents wanted more responsibilities and decision-making because they felt this would benefit their children's education. Delgado-Gaitan's (1991) study raised the question of parents' rights, responsibilities, and accountability in their involvement in their children's education and school.

One salient expectation researchers frequently noted was that parents wanted to be heard (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Drummond & Stipek, 2004; El Ghazal, 2006; Elias et al., 2007; Mapp, 2003). Ramirez (2003) reiterated that the parents in his qualitative study expected one thing from their schools, namely that they listen to the parents' concerns.

Parental Involvement Defined By Catholic School Governance

Exploring the organizational structure and governance of a school is instrumental in understanding how and why parents are involved in their children's education (Barton, et al., 2004). Organizational structure and governance structure play an important role in school-site leadership, partnership, and decision-making (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991). However, there is contention about the importance of more democratic parental involvement in Catholic schools (Arthur, 1994; Bryk et al., 1993; Ross, 2009). Bryk et al. (1993) discussed how parental involvement in organizational matters did not have any effect on academic success. Nonetheless, some researchers supported the concept of parental involvement in governance and have interpreted collaboration, a Catholic school mission component, to signify that the schools should work with parents in decision-making as well (Frabutt et al., 2010; Hocevar & Sheehan, 1991; NCEA, 2004; O'Brien, 1987).

In order to understand the complexities of the Catholic school organization and its impact on parental involvement, this section reviews the organizational structure and current governance models. Although the structures are defined in specific ways, a wide range of policies and practices is employed by the Catholic schools within each structure (Ciriello, 1998).

Organizational structure of Catholic schools. Church governance has been considered an extension of the Church ministry and mission, which called on schools to carry out the teachings of Jesus Christ (Haney et al., 2009). Originally, Catholic elementary schools were structured around the parish, the pastor, and the local bishop

(Hunt, 2005). The parish financed the schools completely (Hunt, 2005). The traditional form of leadership was top down and hierarchical but also allowed for autonomy within each school (Bryk et al., 1993; Ciriello, 1998). Until the mid 1960s, the Catholic school governance model was based on ownership, with the parishes, dioceses, and religious congregations being the owners and operators. The pastor, bishop, and elected congregational leaders made the decisions (Sheehan, 1991).

School boards originated in 1852 when Bishop John Neumann gathered eight pastors and 20 lay parishioners to discuss issues concerning the Catholic schools (Convey & Haney, 1997). In 1884, the diocesan boards were established, whose function was to manage the construction and operation of the schools (Convey & Haney, 1997). In the 1920s, the introduction of the superintendent position shifted the majority of the board's responsibilities to the superintendent (Convey, 1992).

During the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II) from 1962 to 1965, Pope John XXIII and 2,500 of the world's bishops addressed the importance of the role of the laity in the Church (Hunt, 2005; Sheehan, 1991). A new era of educational school boards began, in which the role of laity changed from advisory, to consultative, and then to more policy-making (Hunt, 2005; Sheehan, 1991). Catholic school boards were very different in structure from public school boards, and the only similarity they shared was that both were involved in policy development (Haney et al., 2009; Hunt, 2005; Sheehan, 1991). Catholic and public school boards still differ today. Monsignor D'Amour established the first local parish board in 1964, although most schools did not have school boards until the 1970s (Bryk et al., 1993; Convey & Haney, 1997). The school boards had influence

over determining the budget, choosing a new principal, setting policy for admissions criteria, and establishing school goals (Bryk et al., 1993). Almost 20 years later, the National Congress for Catholic Schools for the 21st Century (1991) held a symposium that took further steps to change the governing structures. They called for schools to govern more effectively by collaborating with the community they served (Convey & Haney, 1997). In this symposium, Hocevar and Sheehan (1991) called for nontraditional governance structures that provided shared power between the Church and the community and lobbied for greater parental involvement in the political arena of school choice and justice.

Catholic school governance structure and school boards. The Code of Canon Law (1983) gave authority and responsibility to the Bishop over Catholic schools within his diocese, which was a district comprised of parishes (Haney et al., 2009; O'Brien, 1987). According to the Code of Canon Law, the Bishops' authority was legislative, judicial, and executive (Code of Canon Law, 1983; Haney et al., 2009). The executive authority allowed the Bishop to have the following three types of consultative bodies: the presbyteral council (a group of priests that acts as a senate to the bishops), the diocesan pastoral council (dealing with Church ministry), and the diocesan finance council (Code of Canon Law, 1983; Haney et al., 2009). Each of these councils varied among the four types of existing Catholic school structures and are applicable to elementary and high schools.

These four school structures are as follows: single-parish, interparish (also known as consolidated, regional, or interparochial), diocesan, and private schools (Ciriello,

1998; Haney et al., 2009; James, 2007; O'Brien, 1987). Although the structure varies in the four types of schools, they share several similar organizational elements. Each structure has a school board, whose purpose is to promote the Catholic school mission and represent the stakeholders (Convey & Haney, 1997). In addition, all the schools are held responsible to the bishop of the diocese, and each school has a principal who as chief administrator is responsible for the daily school operations (Bryk et al., 1993; Zommers, 2009). At times, the principal's daily duties can entail that of "teacher, advisor, coach, mentor, counselor, disciplinarian, reconciler, strategist, leader, manager, conserver, recruiter, and spokesperson" (Bryk et al., 1993, p. 151).

The first type of school structure is the single-parish school, which is associated with one parish church and pastor. The parish provides spiritual, communal, and financial support. In this structure, the pastor assumes the ultimate responsibility for the school, and the principal is directly accountable to the pastor (Ciriello, 1998; O'Brien, 1987; Zommers, 2009). The finance council, pastoral council, and the school board are advisory to the pastor. In practice, the principal functions as the administrator of the school and is accountable to the parents (Ciriello, 1998; O'Brien, 1987).

Within the single-parish governance structure, the following two board models exist: a consultative or advisory board and a board with limited jurisdiction. Each of these models can generate three types of boards that vary in the administrative teams and the board's span of responsibilities: the school board, the religious education board, and the education board (O'Brien, 1987). The school board's administrative team is the pastor and the school principal, with its responsibilities limited to the school. The

religious education board's administrative team consists of the pastor and the director of religious education; its responsibilities are limited to religious education programs. Finally, the education board's administrative team is made up of the pastor, school principal, and the director of religious education (DRE, O'Brien, 1987).

The pastor, who retains some responsibilities, establishes the consultative board. The administrative team consists of the principal and the DRE. The board's responsibilities focus on planning, policy development, public relations, and financing. In the consultative board model, the board cannot act independently of the administrative team and is encouraged to work with officers of parent organizations in order to understand parent needs and concerns (O'Brien, 1987). Haney et al. (2009) defined the school-parent organization as "responsible for maintaining communications between the home and school, for providing a vehicle through which parents can provide service to the school (for example volunteers and fund-raising), for offering a mechanism for parent education, and for serving as a structure for political action when needed" (p. 27). It is the consultative board's responsibility to work closely with the parent organization to ensure communication and understanding of parent needs and concerns.

The board with limited jurisdiction is also referred to as a board with delegated responsibility or a policy-making board (Haney et al., 2009). This model allows the board with limited jurisdiction to have the final authority to make decisions in delegated operational areas. The school board with limited jurisdiction has responsibility for all areas of school governance, such as the operation of the education programs, including employment, supervision, and evaluation of staff (Haney et al., 2009; O'Brien, 1987).

There is some concern that a school board with limited jurisdiction may limit the pastor's control, but such a board also has the positive aspect of having clear roles of authority (O'Brien, 1987).

The second type of Catholic school structure is known as the interparish or interparochial school (Haney et al., 2009; O'Brien, 1987; Zommers, 2009). These schools are operated and financed by more than one parish and function under similar guidelines as the single-parish structure (Haney et al., 2009; O'Brien, 1987; Zommers, 2009). As in the single-parish school, the interparish school has two board models: a consultative board and a board with limited jurisdiction. Within the two models are also the following three board types: school, religious education, and education.

The third type of school structure is diocesan and is operated and financed in some manner by the diocese. The bishop is the chief administrator of diocesan schools but the operations of the schools are delegated to a superintendent (Zommers, 2009). The diocesan schools have an advisory or consultative school board that functions similarly to the single-parish school board (Zommers, 2009).

The fourth type of school structure is the private religiously sponsored school. These schools are under the bishop's authority but operate mostly independently of the dioceses office and superintendent (Zommers, 2009). Private schools have school boards but they are subject to approval of the diocesan bishop (Zommers, 2009).

Catholic school governance and autonomy. Organizational structures vary in the four types of schools, although for the most part, the control rests with the principal and the board (Bryk et al., 1993). This Catholic school structure allows for less

bureaucratic and more autonomous governance (Bauch & Goldring, 1996; Bryk et al., 1993). This type of decentralization and school-site autonomy has been shown to be effective in student success, and currently, many European countries have adopted this structure (Bryk et al., 1993).

Decentralization in the Catholic schools was not chosen for its efficiency but by the tenet of subsidiarity (Bryk et al., 1993). This is an example of how the beliefs and values of the organization shape the organizational structure and policy. The term *subsidiarity* comes from the Latin word for "assistance" and guides the school's governance, responsibility, and level of control (Massaro, 2000). Subsidiarity requires that the concern for human dignity guide the organization structure (Bryk et al., 1993). The decentralized structure provides the schools with the ability to be sensitive to the needs of the students in individual schools (Bryk et al., 1993). The principle of subsidiarity upholds a decentralized approach to governance. Simply stated, that which can be done effectively in an individual school site is performed by the school and not the larger organization, the archdiocese. The disadvantage of such autonomy and decentralization, however, is that it causes administrators to focus on the mundane, daily aspects of running the organization (Bryk et al., 1993). A solution to this problem could be further parental involvement in governance and site-based management.

Catholic school governance and collaboration. Hocevar and Sheehan (1991) indicated that governance should be a vehicle for collaboration. She encouraged Catholic schools to gradually move to "transitional governance structures of collaborations, which include the greater participation and involvement of persons in the Catholic school

community" (p. 14). She defined this transitional governance as a *transformational-codeterminative* governance. Traditional school boards were designed to collaborate with pastors, administrators, and to some degree, the parents, but the extent of parents' capacity for decision-making was limited (Bryk et al., 1993; Haney et al., 2009; Hunt, 2005; O'Brien, 1987; Sheehan, 1991). With the exception of mentioning that the board collaborates with parents, Haney et al. (2009) did not address the role of PTAs in their primer of Catholic school governance. Further understanding of collaboration with parents in existing structures, such as the school boards and PTAs, is needed to successfully implement parent-school partnerships.

The NCEA's strategic vision plan (2004) advocated that Catholic schools clarify the roles of the various levels of governance and develop a collaborative leadership model. They incorporated carrying out the Catholic school mission of collaborating with parents as one of the duties of administrative leadership. Not all teachers espouse the mission of collaboration and can be threatened when parents participate as partners (Frabutt et al., 2010). Bauch and Goldring (1996) questioned whether "parents and teachers can work together effectively in a balanced power relationship" (p. 425).

However, limited research has examined the specific needs and the particular types of parental involvement that promote effective collaboration between parents and schools (El Ghazal, 2006; Frabutt et al., 2010). In Frabutt et al.'s (2010) research, some pastors and schools defined parental involvement as consisting primarily of parents' decision to enroll in Catholic schools. This factor of choice can complicate the Catholic schools' interpretation of collaboration and parent involvement. It may even discourage

schools from providing various types of parental involvement (Frabutt et al, 2010). Some pastors and administrators assume that because parents have chosen the school, this meets the collaboration requirement (Frabutt et al., 2010). Bauch (1987) suggested that parents' decision to send their child to private school may cause parents to give up their responsibility as educators and decide that education should be best left to the school. More research is needed to investigate how collaboration can be effectively implemented within the Catholic school governance structure with consideration given to the potential of choice.

Catholic school governance and decision-making. The choice factor also complicates the implementation of governance that would allow for parent decision-making. Often the parents' decision to choose the school forfeits their role in school decision-making because parents are expected to put their trust in the Catholic schools once they have made the Catholic school choice (Bauch, 1987). Complicating the matter further, Bauch and Goldring's study (1996) found that choice in Catholic schools could actually be a form of agency because ultimately parents can decide to exit the school. While some studies show that decision-making increases involvement and ultimately improves student learning, there is little understanding as to whether choice is synonymous with decision-making and involvement (Bauch & Goldring, 1996; Carreón et al., 2005). Bryk et al. (1993) refuted this assertion that more parental decision-making was necessary for Catholic schools. From their findings, they contended that there was no evidence to demonstrate that Catholic high schools needed to involve parents more in the decision-making process to become more effective.

In addition, some pastors, teachers, and even parents voiced concern that parents' over-involvement in school governance could potentially harm the overall effectiveness of the school because parents might focus on their children's individual needs rather than the needs of the whole school (Frabutt et al., 2010; Stelmach, 2005).

The Catholic school structure for parental involvement in decision-making has not been clear, even though the Canon Code Law (1983), the USCCB (2005), and the NCEA (2004) have reiterated the need for schools to collaborate with parents, who are the primary educators. The Code of Canon Law (1983) stated, "In fulfilling their task, teachers are to collaborate closely with the parents and willingly listen to them; associations and meetings of parents are to be set up and held in high esteem" (can. 796, § 2). Nonetheless, only low levels of democratic decision-making have been observed, with parental involvement consisting mainly of volunteering and fund-raising (Arthur, 1994; Bryk et al., 1993; Ross, 2009). Hocevar and Sheehan's (1991) vision of a new governance that includes parental decision-making remains to be realized.

Conclusion

The connection of parental involvement with academic success constitutes a minimal factor for Catholic schools, which have already demonstrated academic success with students in low-socioeconomic communities. The important factor of parental involvement rests with its bidirectional effect on trust and relationship building, connecting families and schools, and parents' commitment to the school. Parental involvement is not a panacea for urban Catholic schools that struggle to remain open due to financial cutbacks and low enrollment. However, this literature review suggests that

exploring the interconnectedness between the Catholic school mission, its governance, parent-school relationships, and parental involvement could provide administrators with solutions that strengthen the parent-school community, renew commitment to Catholic schools, and ensure the ongoing viability of Catholic schools in the service of marginalized students.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The benefits of parental involvement for K-12 students are validated consistently in research, but despite the fact that there is little contention about its positive effects, few studies have researched parental involvement from the parents' perspectives (Bauch & Goldring, 1995; Braatz & Putnam, 1996; Coleman, 1990; Jeynes, 2008; Ramirez, 2006; Stelmach, 2005). Fewer studies have researched how parents and schools actualize their expectations of parental involvement, and even fewer studies have been conducted in Catholic schools to determine how the Catholic school mission is connected to parent-school relationships and parental involvement (El Ghazal, 2006; Epstein, 2001). Five components of the Catholic school mission that directly relate to the parent-school relationship and parental involvement have been identified through this study's literature review: (a) recognizing parents as primary educators, (b) collaborating with parents, (c) embracing diversity, (d) developing community, and (e) working toward social justice in low-socioeconomic schools (Catarro, 2002a; Grocholweski, 2008; James, 2007; Massaro, 2000; NCCB, 1972; NCEA, 2004; Pontifical Council for the Family, 1983; USCCB, 2005).

The purpose of this interpretative qualitative research study was to investigate low socioeconomic Catholic high school parents' expectations in regard to parent-school relationships and parental involvement and how these expectations were realized. It

sought to understand the "meanings, interpretations, and experiences" the parents have of the parent-school relationships and how this is interconnected with the ways they choose to be involved in their child's education (Denzin, 2010, p. 25). It also investigated the administrators' perspectives of parent-school relationships and their expectations of parents in terms of parental involvement.

Research has demonstrated the interconnectedness between parent-school relationships and processes by which this relationship encourages parental involvement (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Drummond & Stipek, 2004; Mapp, 2003). In order to add to the current body of research, I investigated parents' and schools' expectations about fostering the relationship and forms their expectations of parental involvement might take (Bakker & Denessen, 2007; El Ghazal, 2006; Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006). In addition, to seek a balanced perspective, I sought the principals' expectations of the parent-school relationship and of the parental involvement.

This study adapted multiple methodological strategies to fully answer the research questions and understand the research findings. Denzin (2010) compared this multiple method approach to a *bricoleur* or handyman, who uses whatever tools necessary to complete the task successfully. To make this study effective and genuine, I chose a phenomenological approach to gain understanding of parents' and administrators' perspectives from their lived experiences and to develop patterns and relationships from their descriptions (Creswell, 2009). I also employed a grounded theory approach through the simultaneous data collection and analysis of multiple data input from interviews, observations, and various artifacts in order to gain an understanding of the parents' and

schools' integral role in parent-school relationships and the connection the relationships have to parental involvement (Charmaz, 2008; Denzin, 2010; McMillan & Wergin, 2010).

The previous chapter explored the scholarship on parent-school relationships and types of parental involvement, serving as "substantive theoretical grounding" (Hatch, 2002, p. 40). Nonetheless, the theoretical underpinnings provided only a flexible framework for this research (Hatch, 2002). This chapter on research design includes the research questions, the sample population, and the detailed methods related to data collection, analysis, and coding to ensure greater reliability and validity.

Research Questions

The research questions are divided into two sections: parent expectations and administrator expectations. This division emphasizes the importance of understanding both perspectives and the balance needed in a mutual relationship. Although this study refers to the interconnectedness of relationships and parental involvement, these research questions are separated in order to differentiate between the expectations that parents have of the school and the expectations they have of themselves in terms of parental involvement. To provide parallel construction, the research questions that address the administrators regarding their expectations of parent-school relationships and parental involvement are likewise separated. Both parent and administrator questions contain a follow-up question that allowed me to examine similarities and differences between participants' claims regarding priorities and their practice in reality (Charmaz, 2008). Given these considerations, the following research questions guided this study:

PARENT EXPECTATIONS

1. What expectations do parents of urban Catholic high school students have of the school in terms of parent-school relationships?
2. What expectations do parents of urban Catholic high school students have of themselves in terms of parental involvement?
    a. How do they put these expectations into practice?

ADMINISTRATOR EXPECTATIONS:

3. What expectations do administrators of urban Catholic high schools have of the school in terms of the parent-school relationships?
    a. How do they put these expectations into practice?
4. What expectations do administrators of urban Catholic high schools have of parents in terms of parental involvement?

Methodology

This section discusses the qualitative research elements that aim to answer the above research questions on parent and administrator expectations in terms of parental involvement and parent-school relationships. These elements include the following: research sites, participants, sampling method, data collection, analysis, limitations, and validity.

Research Sites

Three Los Angeles Catholic urban high schools were chosen to reflect the heterogeneous population of low-socioeconomic urban students. These high schools were located in various urban areas of Los Angeles with an emphasis on interviewing

parents who were considered to be of the lowest socioeconomic background in the school in order to give those voices that are often the least heard an opportunity to make their expectations known (Carreón et al., 2005; Hatch, 2002; Maxwell, 2005).

Not all students enrolled at the three high school sites were from low-socioeconomic families; Table 1 demonstrates how these high schools accommodated the various economic levels of the parents by providing several tuition options. The schools are labeled by their pseudonyms. Option A provided parents with the option of paying the actual cost to educate the students, and two of the high schools allowed parents the opportunity to waive the service hour requirement and fund-raising fee with this option. The principal at Good Shepherd chose to include Option A because some parents felt the less-expensive high school tuition reflected a lesser value in the education their children received. Nonetheless, no Good Shepherd parent had yet chosen Option A.

St. Francis showed a greater discrepancy in tuition costs between Option A and B, which reflected the more diverse economic family backgrounds that the high school had to accommodate.

Table 1

High School Tuition, Service hours, and Fund-raising Fee

	Option A			Option B			Option C		
School Pseudonym	Tuition[1]	Parent Service hours	Fund-raising Fees	Tuition[a]	Parent Service hours	Fund-raising Fees	Tuition[a]	Parent Service hours	Fund-raising Fees
Good Shepherd (GS)	$8,500	0	0	$6,750	30[b]	$110	$5,750	60[b]	$250
Our Lady of Peace (OLP)	$7,800	0	0	$6,350	15	$300	$5,995	25	$300
St. Francis (SF)	$9,105	25[c]	0	$6,900	25[c]	0	—	—	—

[a] Actual tuition cost.
[b] $20 per hour not served and $25 missed meeting.
[c] $15 per hour not served or a total of $375 nonparticipating fee.

To account for the differences in population and dynamics of high schools, one coed, one all-male single-sex, and one all-female single-sex high school were chosen. I chose three high schools to provide a maximum variation sample because the purpose of this study was to investigate parents' expectations in urban, low-socioeconomic schools and to observe how these high schools actualized their expectations and diverse needs in respect to the Catholic school mission (Maxwell, 2005). The high schools chosen allowed for such a sample and are described in detail in the following paragraphs and in Table 2.

Good Shepherd is an all-male single-sex high school located in East Los Angeles. The enrollment for the 2011-2012 school year totaled 454 students. The predominant ethnic group was Hispanic, composing 94% of the student population. The remaining ethnic groups consisted of 3.01% Black, 2.43% Asian, and 0.22% White.

Our Lady of Peace is an all-female single-sex high school located in mid-city Los Angeles. The school enrolled 359 students in the 2011-2012 school year. The majority ethnic population consisted of 88.02 % Hispanic, followed by 4.46% Black, 3.34% Asian, 1.95% Filipina, 1.67% multiracial, and 0.56% White.

St. Francis is a coed high school located in a suburb of Los Angeles. The total enrollment for 2011-2012 consisted of 357 students, with the majority ethnic group being Black at 55.74%. Hispanic students comprised 27.45% of the student population, and there were 8.96% multiracial, 3.92% White, 3.64% Asian, and 0.28% Filipino students. The student population did not reflect the local population, which the 2010 U.S. Census Bureau determined as 75.93% White (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011).

Table 2

2011-2012 School Enrollment and Population by Race

		Population											
		Hispanic		Black		White		Asian		Filipino		Multi-racial	
School	Enrollment	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Good Shepherd (GS)	454	426	94.0	14	3.01	1	0.22	11	2.43	0	0	0	0
Our Lady of Peace (OLP)	359	316	88.02	16	4.46	2	0.56	12	3.34	7	1.95	6	1.67
St. Francis (SF)	357	98	27.45	199	55.74	14	3.92	13	3.64	1	0.28	32	8.96

Research Participants

The 12 parent participants were chosen from a purposive sampling at each of the three Catholic high schools in this study. To account for the diversity within the urban high schools and to limit the variables of the population, I chose participants according to five stratifying criteria. The first stratifying criterion was that parents must have children who were juniors and seniors. Junior and seniors were specifically chosen because their parents had been in the high school environment long enough to understand the nuances of a high school parent-school relationship. Also, they might have different expectations about relationships and involvement due to future college concerns and preparations. For example, they might expect more college information or consider involvement as helping their son or daughter prepare for college. Five of the parent participants had junior students and seven had senior students. Table 3 demonstrates a breakdown of the parent participants and their pseudonyms.

The second criterion was that the student must have attended that high school for a minimum of 1 year, regardless of the student's grade level. All 12 participants met these criteria.

The third criterion was that the families come from the lowest socioeconomic backgrounds of the school. Eight of the parents received scholarships for their children. Three parents did not receive scholarships but struggled to pay the tuition. Charlotte's (study participant) economic status did not meet this criterion, and yet as a full-time working mother and a parent board member for the junior class fund-raisers, she worked with all junior parents of St. Francis to help raise funds for the junior class. Her story

represents the parent-school relationship space that parents choose to create, regardless of each parent's economic levels, in order to support their children's education and their school.

Table 3

Parent Participants

School	Parent Pseudonym	Student	Ethnicity	Marital Status	Immigrant	Scholarship Recipient
Good Shepherd (GS)	Dolores	Senior	Hispanic	Widow	No	Yes
	Gabriela	Junior	Hispanic	Married	No	Yes
	Catherine	Senior	Hispanic	Married	No	Yes
	Lupe	Junior	Hispanic	Married	No	No
Our Lady of Peace (OLP)	Jasmine	Junior	Hispanic	Married	Yes	Yes
	Yesenia	Senior	Hispanic	Married	Yes	Yes
	Angela	Senior	Belize	Married	Yes	Yes
	Isabel	Senior	Hispanic	Single	Yes	Yes
St. Francis (SF)	Julia	Senior	Hispanic	Widow	Yes	Yes
	Marisol	Junior	Hispanic	Single	Yes	No
	Sydney	Senior	Black	Single	No	No
	Charlotte	Junior	White	Married	No	No

The fourth criterion was that the participants must be parents, not guardians, with a mixture of single- and two-parent families. All 12 participants were parents; seven of them were married, three were single, and two were widowed. It is important to note that all participants were women. One father I had spoken to by telephone was going to do the interview, but later asked his ex-wife, Marisol, to be a participant instead. They often shared service hour duties, but he was more comfortable in helping behind the scenes because of his limited English, and she took the duties that required more interaction and speaking with others. Although she was confident in English, Marisol chose to do the interview in Spanish. There were a few fathers waiting for their spouses nearby during the interviews; Catherine's and Charlotte's husbands waited in the car while she and I conducted their interviews, but both husbands were actively involved in the school. Dolores' dad helped with his grandson's football by being in the school's Quarterback Club. Julia's husband had been actively involved in the school before he passed away. Study participants Catherine, Lupe, Jasmine, and Yesenia all mentioned that they helped at the school while their husbands contributed by working and providing the money for tuition.

The final criterion was that parents represent a racial mix of Hispanic, Black, and immigrant parents and second or third generations according to each school's demographics. Whereas Charlotte was White, her adopted son was Hispanic, and as many parents from different cultures, she has learned to navigate between the culture of her son, the school, and home. Her lens brought a different perspective but reflects the

similar expectations of the parents in the study and repeats the same story of the 12 parent participants, who all shared a mutual interest: the child.

Field Test

The parent interview questions were field tested in December 2010 with two parents to determine the comprehension of the questions and the estimated time frame needed for the interviews (Creswell, 2009; Maxwell, 2005). The field tests showed that my questions were understood and that the probing questions were useful (Krathwohl & Smith, 2005). I discovered that the communication questions were usually answered within the questions on parent expectations and parental involvement, but I did not remove them from the protocol to ensure that I covered them if they were not discussed in those sections. From the interviews, I realized that sports also played an important role in linking parents' social capital, parental involvement, and the parent-school relationships; therefore, I added this to the prompts in the parent protocol located in Appendix A.

I met with a Catholic high school principal from a female single-sex high school to field test the principal protocol in December 2010. The protocol included questions asking how the Catholic school mission is addressed and what the Catholic high schools' concerns are regarding parental involvement. The principal in the field test also discussed ways she wanted to increase parental involvement. She mentioned parents as important in helping with enrollment and wanted to have parents more involved in meeting prospective students and their parents. With information gained in this interview, I finalized the principal protocol shown in Appendix B.

Sampling Method

Parent participants were selected at each high school by initially using a purposeful sampling technique that selected parents based on the five criteria previously stated and shown in Table 3. These criteria were the following: (a) parent of junior or senior; (b) children had attended the high school for at least 1 year; (c) parents were of the lowest economic background; (d) they were parents and not guardians, with a mixture of single and married; and (e) they represented a racial mix of ethnic minority backgrounds. Not every participant met all five criteria due to limited availability of parent selections, and I acknowledge that this limitation reduced the maximum variation sample (Creswell, 2009; Gay et al., 2009; Maxwell, 2005).

The gatekeeper, who selected parent participants, varied according to the high school site. At Good Shepherd high school, the principal directed me to work with the secretary, who in turn directed me to Dolores as my gateway contact. The parent gatekeeper identified three Good Shepherd parents, and I met Lupe while attending Good Shepherd's Back-to-School Night. All the interviews at Good Shepherd were conducted in English. The interviews were conducted from August 2011 through October 2011 in various locations: a conference room, a picnic table, an outside bench while the parent waited for her son during football practice, and one by telephone.

The principal identified the parent participants at Our Lady of Peace, who were all members of the PTO executive board. The fact that these parents were active members of the board limits the generalizibility of this study. These parents may also represent only those parents who were comfortable enough to be involved in the school or who

already had a positive relationship with the school. Catherine's dedication was evident when she took a half-hour bus ride to meet me at school. Nonetheless, the fact that they were all immigrants and chose to maneuver in a different cultural space to support their children and school provides insight for the school on what motivates and supports parents.

Two interviews were conducted at Our Lady of Peace in a conference room. The other two interviews were conducted by telephone, although I had previously met these parents at a board meeting. Due to the chronic illness of Angela's husband, she could not leave the house. Three of the interviews were conducted in Spanish.

Two of the St. Francis high school parent participants were contacted on the principal's recommendation. The other two participants were contacted following my attendance at the parent association (PA) meetings and contacting several parents on the parent board. I interviewed Sydney by telephone, Marisol in the teacher's lounge, Charlotte in the school lobby after a Parent Board meeting, and Jasmine one Friday night on the school steps after she had taken four buses to volunteer at the high school football game. She came an hour early to meet with me. Two of the interviews were conducted in Spanish and two in English.

The principal participants came from the same high schools as the parent participants. I chose these high schools after having spoken with the superintendent from the archdiocese department of secondary schools, who identified a list of high schools based on the urban and low-income criteria. Following the meeting with the

superintendent, I met with the three principal participants in February 2011 to obtain permission to have their schools participate in my study.

Gaining Entry

Gaining entry into the site required a series of steps involving a variety of gatekeepers. The first three gatekeepers were the Catholic high school superintendent, the regional supervisor, and the principals. The participants, both parents and principals, were the ultimate gatekeepers. As part of the relationship building, I met the principals first and then the parents. I introduced myself to the parents at parent-school meetings in order to build a relationship with the school and participants (Hatch, 2002). I also attended various school functions and parents began to recognize me and speak with me when they saw me on campus. During the interviews and observations, I continuously reflected on a basic strategy given in Maxwell (2005), which required me to put myself in the participants' position and ask how I would feel if I were being observed and interviewed. My parent lens, and the fact that my daughter attends a Catholic high school, allowed me to more easily place myself in the parents' position.

Role and Bias of the Researcher

My role as researcher required me to gain the participants' trust to make them feel confident in sharing their expectations and insights (Hatch, 2002; Maxwell, 2005). My original concern stemmed from my being an outsider and whether parents would be comfortable enough to tell their true story. However, I discovered that the parent participants were very willing to speak with me openly. I introduced myself as a parent and a researcher, and the parents expressed interest in having the opportunity to voice

their expectations of the parent-school relationship and parental involvement. I found that being a parent of a Catholic high school student, having taught public school in the participants' community for more than 7 years, and speaking Spanish fluently helped build their trust. In addition, at each interview, I explained the confidentiality and anonymity of the research and emphasized that the parents would be helping the school and other parents by participating in this study.

I understood that my parent lens contributed to my researcher bias; nonetheless, this lens proved beneficial in building a trusting relationship. My position as an educator added a balance to the parent lens, allowing me to better understand the perspectives of the school.

Data Collection

To provide a more complete and accurate account of my findings and to reduce threats to validity, I triangulated with the following multiple data sources that allowed me to understand the high school setting and parameters that parents were working within and verify the consistency of the results: interviews, observations, and unobtrusive data (Creswell, 2009; Hatch, 2002; Maxwell, 2005). Unobtrusive data in this study consisted of artifacts and documentation. Appendix C and D provide detailed information.

Interviews. The qualitative nature of this study required that parent and principal interviews be semistructured in order to determine their perspectives and allow for anonymity and openness (Patten, 2005). The questions were open-ended because the intent of this study was to gain insight into the parents' expectations of parent-school relationships and parental involvement without imposing my own assumptions. The

same interview protocol was presented to all the participants to ensure reliability (see Appendix A). Parent interviews were not tape-recorded in order to relieve parents of any concerns that their participation could have repercussions with the high school. Parents were not offered a choice to be taped out of concern for those who may have agreed solely out of compliance or respect. Reassuring parents of their anonymity and confidentiality at the beginning of each interview served to limit parents' concerns and strengthen reliability of the account. Appendix E shows the consent form that each parent signed. During the interviews, I employed the verification technique of member checking by paraphrasing what the participants said to ensure I was writing their statements accurately (McMillan & Wergin, 2010). Parents were given a copy of the interviews to review for accuracy. Interviews were conducted in English or Spanish as per request of the parents.

Principals at the three sites were interviewed for 1 hour during April 2011 with the same semistructured protocol found in Appendix B. One question asked of the principals, but not of the parents, was which aspects of the Catholic school mission guide how the high school develops the relationship with parents and their roles in parental involvement. I tape-recorded the principal interviews and took notes as they spoke.

Observations of parent-school relationships. Interactions between parents and high schools were observed during various family-school activities in order to assess the concrete aspects of the relationships. The parents observed were not exclusive to the parent participants whom I interviewed. I created an observation checklist based on Epstein's (2001) six types of parental involvement, the literature review on parent-school

relationships, and the parent and principal participants' responses (see Appendix C and D). These checklists targeted factors including culturally relevant communication, two-way communications, and frequency of communications as determined in the literature review and shown in detail in Appendix D. Observations included meetings and activities such as Back-to-School Night, PTA meetings, Open House, and a family mass and barbeque. A more complete list of activities observed is shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Interview and Observation Data

Interviews	Observations	Documents
High School Parents (*n* = 12)	Back-To-School Night (2)	Handbooks
High School Principals (*n* = 3)	Booster Club Meetings (1)	Handouts at Meetings
	College Night (2)	Websites
	Family Activity (3)	
	Football Game (1)	
	General Parent Meetings (4)	
	Office Visits (10)	
	Open House (3)	
	Parent Board Meetings (2)	

Observations of parental involvement. I observed and validated the parents' and principals' expectations for parental involvement and how these expectations were actualized in the schools.

Unobtrusive data and symbolic artifacts. Hatch (2002) referred to artifacts as objects that "participants use in the everyday activity of the contexts under examination" (p. 117). In this study, I considered these symbolic objects meaningful, and therefore, even noting their absence could have meaning. I derived this term, symbolic objects,

from Gay (2002), who defined symbolic curriculum as embedded symbols such as mottoes, awards, and bulletin boards that reflect the high school culture, beliefs, and parent-school relationship. The following were examples of symbolic artifacts I gathered or observed: computers in the hallway for students and parents, placement of chairs, and refreshments (or lack of) served at parent meetings (see Appendix C). Documents were another type of unobtrusive data I collected, also shown in Appendix C. Hatch (2002) stated that "Documents are powerful indicators of the value systems operating within institutions", and this study included official communications consisting of administration bulletins to parents, parent newsletters, school websites, handbooks, and parent awards (p. 117). I gathered the symbolic artifacts and documentation in order to answer research questions 2a and 3a, which ask how parents and administrators put into practice their expectations of parent-school relationships and parental involvement. School documents, online sites, and artifacts are identified by their generic name or by their association with the relevant school throughout this dissertation, thereby preserving anonymity and avoiding the impression that further information may be retrieved.

Data Analysis

The analysis was an ongoing process throughout the data collection. I transcribed the data from the parent and principal participants promptly after the interviews. I conducted a typological analysis of the interviews, coding for specific references to trust and various aspects of communication in regard to parent-school relationships. Next, I coded separately for the components of parental involvement as defined by the social capital theories, current educational frameworks, and given expectations of both parents

and principals. Then, I coded the interviews, observations, and unobtrusive data for emerging themes from the following five components of the Catholic school mission: parents as primary educator, collaboration, community, diversity, and social justice (Hatch, 2002).

To discover preliminary categories and topics emerging through a more inductive process, I open coded each principal interview and regrouped each of their answers into a summary sheet, looking for frequency, similarities, and differences among the participant responses (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997; Robson, 2002). I proceeded to axial code by searching for interconnections and relationships between the categories (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Robson, 2002). I identified the following three emerging patterns: principals' roles and expectations, a partnership built on a student-centered mission, and the parents' roles and expectations.

I coded the parent transcripts originally by the frequency and similarities of their responses. Next, I repeated the same open- and axial-coding process, and a few new topics emerged from this analysis. Then, I conducted a pattern analysis of these topics and categories and the following four patterns emerged for this study: (a) the underlying child-centered mission, (b) the parents' role in supporting the student, (c) the parent-school relationship created to support the student, and (d) the principals' role in creating a trusting environment that promotes parental involvement (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997). Finally, I designed the diagram found in Figure 1 to illustrate the interconnectedness among the three patterns and how the underlying child-centered

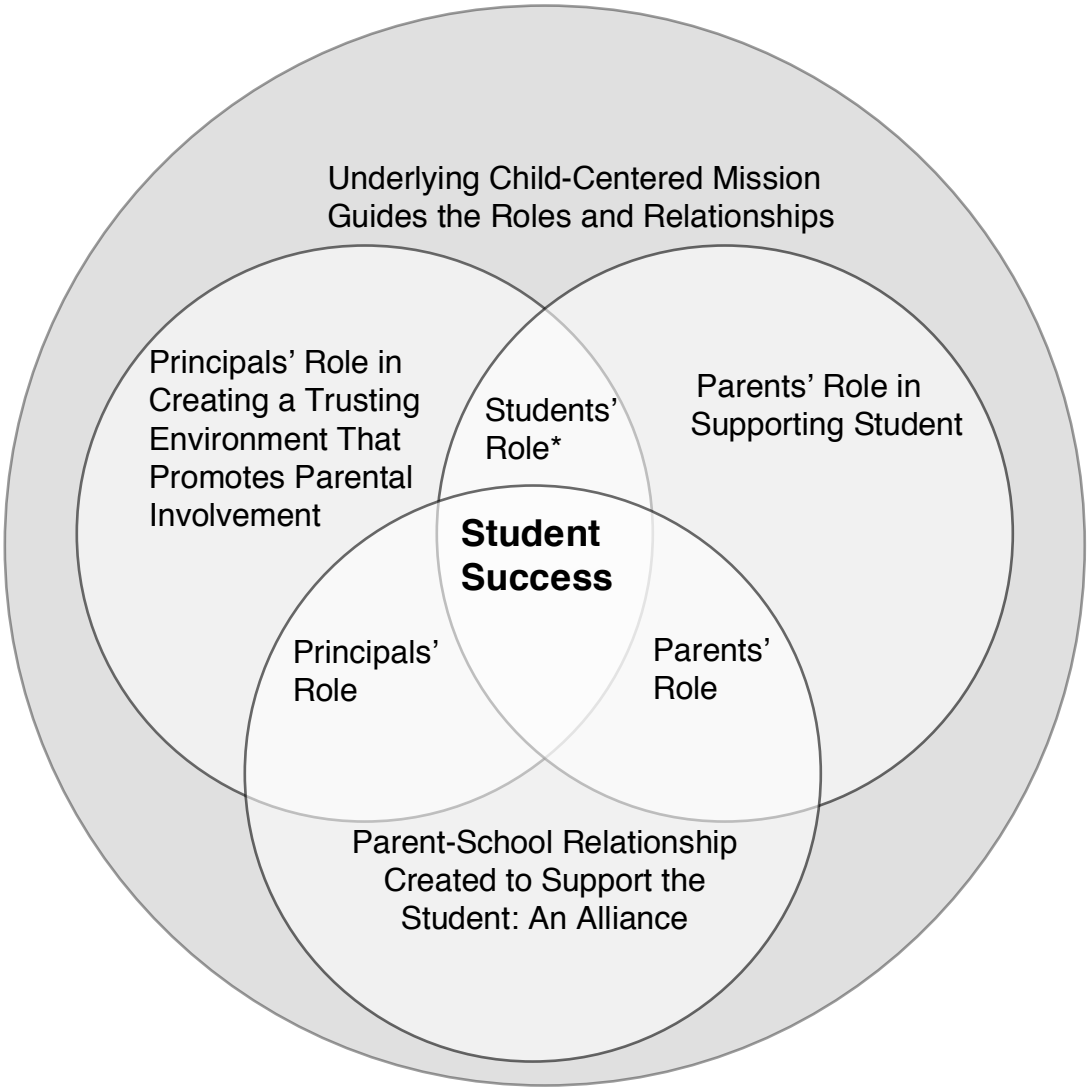

Figure 1. The Interconnectedness of the Mutual Parent-School Relationship and Roles Created by Principals and Parents to Promote the Student's Educational Success.

***** This study acknowledges that the student role is not explored in depth in this research.

mission creates the parent and principal roles and alliance in order to promote the student's success.

In order to triangulate the interview data with the data collected from symbolic artifacts and observations, I coded these documents for frequency, similarities, and differences. I employed connecting strategies that allowed me to analyze the data in terms of connecting statements and events to understand the data as a whole rather than in separate categories and topics (Maxwell, 2005). This analysis included taking notes on the parent handbooks, which included looking for specific details such as the languages the handbook were written in, the school mission and philosophy, the type of parent association and volunteer opportunities, the number of service hours required, the communications available to parents, and how parents were notified of grades.

Validity and Reliability

This study had two prespecified areas of interest: parent-school relationships and parental involvement (Krathwohl & Smith, 2005). From investigating the prespecified interest areas, this study branched into an emergent design to limit the threat of the researcher's bias and assumptions. I acknowledge, however, that as a researcher, I can never eliminate this bias.

To increase the accuracy of the findings, the following validity strategies were implemented: field testing, setting criteria for the participants, using purposive sampling of the parents, member-checking the interview with each participant, and triangulating the data with the various sources previously discussed (Creswell, 2009).

Limitations

A limitation of this study was selectivity, which resulted from the fact that because the parents participated in my study, they were more likely to be involved with the high school and were more comfortable in talking about parent-school relationships and parental involvement (Bauch & Goldring, 1996; Gay et al., 2009; Krathwohl & Smith, 2005).

A second limitation was the generalizability of this study, which is limited to the expectations of the 12 female parents and three principal participants and the observation of the three high schools.

The third limitation was experimenter bias and the possibility that parents might have told me what they thought I wanted to hear for my research.

Delimitations

The first delimitation is that this study acknowledges that the students' and teachers' roles were not explored. This study explored the two other key roles that lead to student success: the parent and principal roles.

The second delimitation is that although five stratifying criteria were set to select the parent participants, not all parents met this criteria; this was explained in detail earlier in this chapter.

The third delimitation is that although my position as a parent may pose a bias, this is balanced with my position as a teacher, having taught in both public and Catholic schools more than 20 years.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH EVIDENCE AND ANALYSIS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate parents' and principals' expectations of the parent-school relationship and parental involvement and to determine how both actors realized these expectations in their Catholic urban high school setting. In addition, it sought to understand the intrinsic aspects that shaped the relationship, including how the Catholic school mission was perceived and integrated. This study did not explore the students' role, and it is acknowledged that students provide the basis for the parent-school relationship. In order to obtain rich data, I chose to focus in depth on the parents' and principals' roles and expectations in supporting the students.

This chapter presents the evidence that was collected through the principal and parent interviews; the observations of the meetings, events, and office visits; and the collection of school artifacts as they related to parent-school communications. To provide clarity, comments and quotes by study participants are identified by their pseudonyms, followed by categories (parent, principal) and acronyms representing the relevant school, as in (Angela, Parent, OLP) and as (Fawkes, Principal, SF). When specific detail is not needed, the parenthetical identifying information is not used or is scaled back to limit redundancy.

Through an ongoing process beginning with a typological analysis for references of markers derived from the Catholic school mission and the literature review, continuing with an inductive analysis for categories and topics, and ending with axial coding for

interconnections and relationship, four major patterns emerged. These findings are organized according to the four patterns presented in Chapter 3: (a) the underlying child-centered mission, (b) the parents' role in supporting the student, (c) the parent-school relationship created to support the student, and (d) the principals' role in creating a trusting environment that promotes parental involvement. The remainder of this chapter presents evidence by abbreviated titles, and includes an explanation of subpatterns that were discovered in patterns 2 through 4.

The Underlying Child-Centered Mission

"So this year, it's just been a blessing, everybody's student focused."
(Fawkes, Principal, SF)

This quote by Principal Fawkes (SF) describes the first pattern, the child-centered mission, that emerged in this research as the unifying pattern among parents and principals as well as the foundation for the three other patterns: the parents' role in supporting the student, the parent-school relationship created to support the student, and the principals' role in creating a trusting environment that promotes parental involvement. This underlying mission guided the expectations that parents and principals had for themselves, the schools, and each other in regard to their roles, relationships and involvement. The parents' and principals' definition of student success included completing high school and continuing on to college, although there was an implied general consensus that everyone wanted the best for the student despite their particular definition of success.

Principal Fawkes (SF) spoke of the parent-school relationship and how he approached the relationship from his first days at St. Francis with a unifying goal. He stated that once "they [the parents] began to see some commonality and common mission they really got on board." The commonality Prinicpal Fawkes observed was to educate the student, and this common goal was reflected in the mission of Good Shepherd, which required that to educate the students, a teacher must also know them. Principal Campos (GS) explained, "A Good Shepherd educator must be present at all times. You must know the students before you can teach them."

Principal Kingsbury at Our Lady of Peace, in speaking about parents' expectations in the relationship said the following: "You rarely come across a parent that doesn't want the best for his or her child. And so they do the best they can, some parents are not as skilled as others."

Jasmine (Parent, OLP) exemplified one of the parents that Principal Kingsbury (OLP) spoke of, a parent who wanted the best for her children despite having only a sixth-grade education. Jasmine explained to me that she could not help them with their homework because of her limited sixth-grade education, but she made it her job to find them a mathematics tutor who accepted meals as payment. She felt confident that she had done her best when her daughters informed her of their excellent grades in school, and she proudly acknowledged that she had done everything to help them succeed. She explained that "la educación es importante y en esta escuela van a recibir una buena educación" (education is important and at this school they will receive a good education).

Yesenia (Parent, OLP) reinforced the underlying student-centered mission when she told me the reason she helped at school was chiefly to support her daughter's education. Dolores (Parent, GS) justified her active involvement with the school by her admission, "I am taking my son's interest in mind." Similarly, Isabel (Parent, OLP) expressed the reason for her involvement: "Me gusta ayudar, y es para mi hija. El propósito de la participación es sacar mejoras" (I like helping, and it is for my daughter. The purpose of participation is to make improvements).

Angela (Parent, OLP) believed that everyone should be involved, including parents, teachers, and the staff. She was concerned that more parents needed to be involved and was going to talk to the parents at the Back-To-School Night event and tell them the following: "We [the parent board] need support. This is for the betterment of your children." Charlotte (Parent, SF) also wanted to become involved in order "to make a better place for the students." In addition, the 2011-2012 handbook at Good Shepherd spoke directly about making the school a better place for the students and educating the whole child.

At St. Francis, the parent association (PA) secretary led with a prayer at the PA general meeting, "Lord, help us make decisions to benefit the children."

Principal Fawkes (SF) expounded this same belief of the child-centered mission:

> I was struck by the parents when I first came here. They were very anxious to have a principal that would care for their kids, and the school had gone through numerous principalships. I think I was the fourth one in six years or something like that… They wanted to be assured that their children were in good hands, and they wanted to get to know my philosophy of education, my system of communication, of discipline, of academics. All those sorts of things. I felt that they wanted somebody that they could partner with, who could we partner with in

this case. … I think there was a unity that developed between myself and them when we saw we were on the same page and with the same direction.

The Parents' Role in Supporting the Student

"No school is perfect, but what helps is your involvement in your child's education." (Sydney, Parent, SF)

Sydney's (Parent, SF) statement reflected the second pattern, the parents' role in supporting the student. This pattern emerged as parents and principals spoke of the important role parents played in the students' education. This section is divided into the following two subpatterns: (a) the parents' expectations of supporting the student and (b) the principals' expectations of the parents' role in supporting the student. Within the first subpattern, five elements were identified related to how parents expected to support the student: through knowledge, through presence, by defining responsibilities, through secondary support for other students and parents, and through leadership. The second subpattern is divided into four topics of how principals expect parents to support the student: (a) through knowledge of the school system, (b) through presence, (c) through responsibilities, and (d) through leadership.

The Parents' Expectations of Supporting the Student

Throughout the interviews, parents reiterated the importance of being involved in their son's or daughter's education, although the method and degree of involvement varied from parent to parent. Nonetheless, five common elements emerged as parents discussed their expectations of how to best support their child's education: (a) through knowledge of the school system and of their child's progress, (b) through their presence in their child's life at school and home, (c) through their own responsibilities to their

child and school, (d) through their secondary support of other parents and students, and (e) through their leadership and innovation.

Through knowledge. Accessing information about the school and their students' progress clearly defined the parents' involvement and need for communication with the school. This is consistent with Epstein's (2001) list of two-way communication as one of the six types of parental involvement. She stated that two-way communication requires that parents, teachers, and the school provide information on the students' academic and social progress. Seven of the 12 parents emphasized the importance of parents knowing and understanding the school system in order to have good communication with the school. It became clear that these two components—involvement and communication—were integral components in the parents' expectations of support.

The avenues for communication varied, but parents consistently mentioned the following: attending meetings, reading the bulletins, and keeping in touch with the teachers through e-mail or through one-on-one communication. All the parents agreed that the schools provided ample avenues for communication or involvement. Lupe's (Parent, GS) comment concurred with the parents' general expectations when she stated that "the school opens the doors for communication; we just have to come and get it."

The parents at Our Lady of Peace strongly believed that parent meetings provided an important avenue for communication and involvement. All four parents expressed concern about the low numbers of parents attending the meetings. Jasmine (Parent, OLP) acknowledged that whereas reading the bulletins every month provided useful school information, parents still needed to attend the meetings in order to better comprehend

what was happening: "Si no vienen, no saben, y se necesita ser comprensivo" (If they do not come, they do not know, and one needs to understand).

Angela (Parent, OLP) also believed that it was important to attend the meetings to stay informed on school activities and policies. She described her optimal parent-school relationship as one in which parents were more involved by helping with fund-raising activities, attending the meetings, and remaining knowledgeable about current school messages and activities. Yesenia's (Parent, OLP) optimal parent-school relationship centered on parents attending the meetings, and she thought that gaining information about the school would improve the relationship.

The PTO at Our Lady of Peace believed so strongly that parents should attend the meetings that they asked Principal Kingsbury (OLP) to impose a fee on those who failed to attend. They had heard that other Catholic schools charged similar fees and were confident that this would improve attendance at meetings. In addition to improving the communication between school and parents, Isabel (Parent, OLP) suggested that attending the meetings would allow parents to discover more volunteer possibilities.

Dolores (Parent, GS) conceded that attending meetings provided an excellent resource for learning about involvement opportunities at the school. She described Good Shepherd's system of accessing general information on parental involvement as three tiered. The first tier entailed minimal involvement and required reading the monthly parent bulletins. The second tier was joining the PTO, which helped parents become acquainted with other volunteer opportunities. She described the third tier as joining the executive board, and Dolores felt that this tier allowed the parents to learn about the

school in greater depth. She believed she had finally earned the school's trust at this level.

Knowledge about the school system aided parent-school communication, but the parents considered involvement and communication essential to learning about their own child's academic progress. "We have to be involved in their lives," Lupe (Parent, GS) said, stressing the parents' active role.

For Charlotte (Parent, SF), a junior high school teacher, parental involvement included "seeing your child's grades, knowing what assignments are due, and keeping track of attendance and tardies." She actively communicated with her son's teachers and would attend his class when his behavior was an issue. Her attendance at the college night meeting was another aspect of parental involvement because it helped her know what was needed to help her son succeed.

Angela (Parent, OLP) expanded the scope of involvement and communication. She thought it imperative that parents not only read the handbooks to stay informed, but that they should also ask their children questions about how their school day went.

Jasmine (Parent, OLP) was adamant that involvement be an avenue for helping support the students. She stated, "Lo más importante es apoyar a los estudiantes" (The most important thing is supporting the students).

She had seen an improvement in parent participation and thought this resulted from parents helping spread the word about its importance. She summarized this by saying, "uno corre la voz" (it only takes one to spread the word) (Jasmine, Parent, OLP).

Communication, as the parents explained, was not limited to knowing about the school and the students' progress but also included talking directly with the students. Jasmine (Parent, OLP) thought that parents could be involved by simply asking their children, "¿Cómo les fue en la escuela?" (How did your day go at school?).

Marisol (Parent, SF) mentioned that whereas she was more involved in her son's elementary and middle school, her involvement now consisted of knowing what was happening in her son's life and discussing it with him. Once when she asked him how school was going, she found out that he had experienced some trouble with a few of the male students who did not allow him to sit on one of the school benches. She was not sure if it was racially motivated but counseled him on how to handle the situation. She encouraged him to defend himself in a calm, confident manner and not to back down from sitting on the bench. Later, when she asked him how he had resolved the situation, he said things had worked out, and he was getting along with those students.

Through presence. At first, Marisol (Parent, SF) explained that she had not been as involved since her son had entered high school and because her limited English sometimes made it difficult to participate. However, as she continued the interview, she realized she was much more involved than she had originally imagined. She told me how she sold Christmas trees during the holiday fund-raiser, helped at the book fair, and stayed involved in learning about her son's friends and his behavior at school. She related that she had become acquainted with his friends when she brought balloons after school to celebrate his birthday. His friends gathered around, and she talked with them as they celebrated with cake. Marisol considered her presence in her son's life to be an

aspect of involvement, and she wanted other parents to know that involvement was not limited to their attending school functions. She proudly told me, "Estoy metida pero no sé mucho inglés" (I am involved but I do not speak English).

For Sydney (Parent, SF), her presence at home motivated her son, and she often told him, "You're a smart kid." As a single mother working two jobs, she worried about her son. He did not excel academically and needed to be pushed into completing his homework. She had "tried to be involved in the beginning" and viewed his education as a priority.

Eight of the parents specifically viewed involvement as helping their children through their encouragement or presence in their academic success. Catherine (Parent, GS) reported that she was involved at home with structuring her son's homework schedule and overseeing the completion of his work. She mentioned that Good Shepherd had encouraged parents to become involved in making sure the student completed the work, but she declared that the parents were the ones responsible for this task. Jasmine (Parent, OLP) was determined to be involved with her twins' education, despite her own sixth-grade education and her limited ability to pay for a tutor. Charlotte (Parent, SF) explained that her involvement included making sure her son was completing the homework and keeping an eye on his progress. She was adamant about supervising her son's homework habits and had him turn off the television before he started his assignments. In fact, she saw this aspect of monitoring her son's homework as "the key to involvement." She found that her presence in this manner demonstrated to her son that she cared about him.

Parent presence was important at the sports events, Lupe (Parent, GS) thought, because it helped "get the students motivated." She added that her presence also motivated herself and added, "The more I'm motivated, they [the students] get happy."

Jasmine (Parent, OLP) described this type of important presence in her daughter's schooling as "una vigilancia con la niñez" (supervising the children). She considered her vigilance and supervision as motivating and supporting her daughters. She motivated her daughters because "uno tiene que estar motivándoles para que tengan un buen futuro" (one has to motivate the children so that they will have a good future). She had even taken her daughters past the welfare line to demonstrate an alternative future if they did not choose to continue their studies. She pointed to the line and warned them "aquí van a ser línea" (here is where you will be in line) if they did not persist with their education.

Sydney's (Parent, SF) presence was sometimes needed at the school when her son was misbehaving and disturbing the class with his comedic behavior. When she walked by her son's classroom in the middle school, he would always straighten up without her having to say a word. She would show up to his class and "he would know he was in trouble." She had wanted to do this at the high school, but the teacher told her not to come up to the classroom. She felt frustrated with the teacher's decision and told me, "I'm paying tuition, and I can't come to get him straightened out."

Sydney (Parent, SF) felt the school was giving mixed messages. On the one hand, the school says they "want parents involved in the education process" and yet on the other, they do not allow parents to become involved in areas such as the student's discipline at school. She decided to use the moment as a learning experience for her son

and reinforced the lesson that he must be responsible for his actions. She told him, "I can advise you, but it's your future. I'm backing off because I'm trying to prepare you for your future. You're responsible now. The world is different than at home."

Through defining responsibilities. The definition and details of responsibilities varied among individuals, although parents made consistent references to a responsibility to support the student, the teacher, and the school. Marisol (Parent, SF) thought that the responsibility for providing the children with a good education began at home, and as previously mentioned, she emphatically told me "la casa primero" (the home first). Julia (Parent, SF) also thought the parents had the responsibility to teach their children respect and "la buena educación" (how to be a good person).

Sydney's (Parent, SF) concern about the school's mixed messages did not deter her from involvement, and she considered her commitment to her son's education to be her responsibility. She believed that "no school is perfect, but what helps is your involvement in your child's education." Her advice to parents was, "You may not be able to be involved as much as you want to be, but try as much as you can."

Isabel (Parent, OLP) thought that coming to the parent-school meetings defined responsibility and that at her school, "mucha gente compresa sus responsabilidades de no participar" (many people compromise their responsibilities by not participating). Attending the school meetings allowed parents to be aware of important information on student deadlines and functions and to find out further information on volunteer possibilities. Julia (Parent, SF) wanted to help, and fund-raising was a way to give back to the school and show her thanks for the financial aid they provided. She said, "Hago

mis horas mi lucha, y me siento bien realizada" (I make service hours my personal fight, and I feel I have accomplished this).

Lupe (Parent, GS) presented a general view of parental involvement responsibilities, saying it encompassed "a little bit of everything: supporting your child in sports, voicing what you have to say, talking to the teacher, and volunteering."

Through secondary support for other students and parents. Coleman (1988) referred to social capital as a characteristic of family and community connectedness within an organization. This connectedness or collaboration is motivated by the mutual interest in the students' success (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000). Throughout the interviews, parents spoke of how their involvement provided support for all students at the school and for one another as parents.

Gabriela (Parent, GS) explained that her involvement effectively helped other students. She recounted the story of how she had helped her son's friend during one of the school's off-campus track meets. The friend had forgotten to bring money to the meet and did not want to impose on Gabriela. Her son insisted that his mother would be happy to buy a bottle of water for him, and she was delighted that he could depend on her to help his classmates. She liked being involved because it provided her the opportunity to become acquainted with the boys at Good Shepherd. She noted, "The kids like having a mom on campus. They know that I am always here for them, and they can always say, "I could go to her and ask her for help." She spoke for all those parents who were involved when she said, "We're always there."

Lupe (Parent, GS) connected to the students through her involvement in her son's sports. She wanted to have a parent club for every sport because she saw how parental involvement motivated the boys. Even though they were in high school, she observed how the boys' "faces light up" when she brought them snacks, and she gladly let them call her "aunt" or "mom," accepting it as an honor that they felt comfortable enough to address her in this manner. During our interview on the outside bench, several boys stopped to greet her in this manner.

In addition, 10 parents mentioned involvement as an important avenue for connecting with other parents. Involvement with the school provided Isabel (Parent, OLP) with the opportunity to "conocer a los padres de las niñas" (to meet the parents of the girls) because she did not often see the parents outside of school functions. She confidently described herself as "una madre sincera" (a sincere mother) who made friends quickly. Angela (Parent, OLP) thought that being involved kept parents in touch with each other and suggested initiating an International Day, a new event that would give parents another opportunity to spend time together.

Catherine (Parent, GS) observed that whereas the parents had initially been "pushed in together" when their children entered the same high school, they developed a close relationship over the years. She interpreted this relationship as essential to the parent-school relationship, and whereas the school talked about unity and being a family, she placed emphasis on the parents and said, "parents are unity." For Gabriela (Parent, GS), this parent-parent relationship resulted in "creating a camaraderie of women," which

was developed through the family atmosphere at Good Shepherd and strengthened by her involvement on the parent board.

Through leadership. A leader can lead from any chair, at any level, and from anywhere (Zander & Zander, 2000). This was true of the 12 parent participants as they led from different positions, levels of education and backgrounds, and from the home and the school, although none of the parents described themselves as leaders during the interviews.

Dolores (Parent, GS) was the most outspoken of the parent participants in terms of describing her strengths and her determination to help the school be the best for her sons. She called herself an "anomaly" because she was so involved in the school. She attributed her active involvement to various factors such as being a teacher and a widowed parent, and her father's "hands-on" example when she was in school. Dolores' involvement included answering phones, going to the games, taking her boys and the children of others to practices and events, and helping other parents simply by listening to them.

Dolores (Parent, GS) considered herself as parent who could be there for other parents when they were unable to assist with school activities. She described herself as a "liaison" between the school and other parents, and reassured them, "If you need anything, I'm always here." Some parents would speak with her directly rather than the school because of "their fear of retaliation." She herself did not hesitate to speak with the school when she had a concern, and she was "willing to make a fight" if she needed to

resolve a problem. Dolores' expectation of the administration was not that they give her all she asked but that they listen to her and consider the problem.

Sydney (Parent, SF) understood that everyone had different perspectives, but she tried to make herself heard. She did this by her presence in the parent association and by giving the association her suggestions. Sydney confided that it was difficult at times to be taken seriously because of her quiet childlike voice, but she persistently worked hard on being heard by the association. She was committed to being on the board and told me she helped steer "the PA board back on track" when they became distracted during the meetings.

The four parent participants at Our Lady of Peace presented their concerns about low meeting attendance to Principal Kingsbury (OLP) and asked him to change the current policy and charge parents a fee for missing the mandatory meetings. Although he was not in favor of the new policy, he allowed the parents to try the policy for the upcoming year. The parents spoke about the new policy during their interviews with me, and they were certain that more parents would attend the meetings that year. At the November 3rd general parent meeting, 105 parents attended. One of the PTO board members mentioned to me that she thought this higher attendance was a result of the school's imposed fee for missed attendance. Yesenia (Parent, OLP) spoke of her part in this decision and her rationale for the change. She was certain of the following:

> Con la multa se sientan más obligados. Los padres tienen que cumplir a las juntas, y pueden dar sus opiniones, pero que estén atentos a las opiniones de los otros. (With the fine, they feel more obligated. The parents have to attend the meetings, and they can give their opinions, but they must be attentive to the opinion of others.)

Jasmine (Parent, OLP) wanted to charge parents a fine because she knew it would lead to an improvement in attendance and the parent-school relationship. For Jasmine, the optimal relationship would be when the parents came to the meetings and participated as much as they could. Together with the parent board and other parents who attended the meetings, she believed that "los padres corremos la voz" (as parents, we spread the word).

Angela (OLP) was in favor of the board's decision to charge a fine, and during the interview she started questioning why "something [was] keeping the parents back from participating." She decided then that at the Back-To-School Night she would ask the parents, "What do we [the parent board] need to do to get you involved?" During that meeting, she wanted to let the parents know that "we [the parent board] need more support" and that their participation "is for the betterment of your children."

Parent leadership was visible in different manners and degrees during the parent meetings. At Our Lady of Peace, Principal Kingsbury led the board meetings. The president came prepared and brought up suggestions for future events. She frequently translated for the principal, although he translated much of the meeting himself. During the general meetings, the president translated for the principal and was present before and after the meetings to answer questions.

Jasmine (Parent, OLP) listened quietly during the board meetings, and later during the interview she explained that she did not usually speak up because of her limited English. Nonetheless, she wanted to be at the meetings and be involved. During her daughter's first year at Our Lady of Peace, she had decided that she wanted to find a

way to become involved using her own talents. She said that she "tenía dispuesta el apoyo" (was ready to support) the school. She presented her idea to Principal Campos (GS), who gave her permission to make *pupusas* to sell as a fund-raiser during the walkathon. She was already planning on similar fund-raisers for the following year and had other suggestions for future activities to bring parents together. She was considering having a celebration for September 15th, which is Independence Day in many Latin American countries. She explained, "Me gustaría que la escuela celebre el 15 de septiembre. Se puede vender botanitas y cada país puede tener su bandera" (I would like the school to celebrate September 15th. They can buy food and bring their country's flag).

At Good Shepherd's parent meetings, the parent board president led the meetings and made a conscious effort to finish in a timely manner in order to respect the parents' busy schedule. During the September 14th meeting, the president explained the parent board's expectations for the parents and the service hour requirements. In addition, she spoke of the board's purpose to serve as a liaison between parents, school, and students. She told them the board was there for "parents to help out each other" and to be a voice for the timid. This was consistent with what Dolores (Parent, GS) had discussed during her interview.

The parent association at St. Francis conducted the board meetings and most of the general parent meetings I observed. At the Back-To-School Night, each of the executive board members introduced themselves and took turns leading the meeting. The vice president told the parents to "be proactive so our children will be active too." She

went on to explain the 4-year journey that the students of St. Francis would be making and what parents could expect, including various activities and college planning.

At the parent association board meetings, the president frequently asked for ideas, and at one meeting, Charlotte (Parent, SF) suggested that the parent association needed to "get the word out" about the meetings. She thought it was important that they resolve the issue presented regarding incorrect parent phone numbers and e-mails so that the freshmen parents could "feel in the loop." At the meeting of October 20, 2011, the president discussed ways of obtaining more current e-mail addresses and sending out e-mail blasts (an e-mail sent to all parents simultaneously) with specific information to each grade level. The secretary of the parent association agreed and suggested phone information blasts in addition, commenting to the group, "more information is better than none." The junior parents at the meeting expressed interest in receiving general information for the junior class, a timeline of events and deadlines such as given at the Back-To-School night by the parent association president, and advance notice for test preparation classes such at SAT or the ACT.

The St. Francis PA was active in planning Grandparent's Day, and the president of the PA was in charge of the event. She held planning meetings with a small subcommittee and discussed the event at length at the general PA meeting on October 20, 2011. At the event, the president took charge of the icebreaker and had a student begin the event with a prayer. In her prayer, the student asked that God "help families to value the role of parents." The vice principal gave the official school greeting and a brief talk about the gift of time that grandparents can give to their grandchildren. Parent volunteers

greeted grandparents and grand-friends at the door, served the lunch, helped with the icebreaker activity, and had set up the previous night.

Julia (Parent, OLP) did not attend the PA meetings often but chose to volunteer at the various school events. She thought it was important for the parents to be connected and celebrate various activities. This would provide numerous excellent opportunities for parents to meet and socialize. She enjoyed the August family breakfast and suggested having a Mother's Day celebration or a fund-raising "Kermés" (carnival). At the Kermés, she detailed how parents could bring foods from their countries, become better acquainted, and learn more about one another's culture. In addition, she suggested selling pizzas at the school's Stay and Study nights. On these nights, teachers remained at school from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. to tutor students. She surmised that the school could benefit from this fund-raiser and was hoping to suggest this, although she had not done so yet.

The Principals' Expectations of Supporting the Student

The second subpattern is the principals' expectations of supporting the student. In an effective relationship, it is important that both parties understand the expectations of the other. The purpose of interviewing both parents and principals was to gain a better understanding of whether or not the expectations consistently matched or complimented one another. As in any relationship, there are similarities, differences, and misunderstandings, and neither can be judged as correct or incorrect. The following section reflects the principals' understandings and perceptions.

Through knowledge of the school system. Communication had been a primary concern in building the relationship for all three high school principals interviewed. This was consistent with the parents' expectations of wanting to stay informed by the school, although parents emphasized their own responsibility and involvement in obtaining the information rather than the school's responsibility. Parents stressed the importance of attending meetings and considered attendance as part of being involved in their child's education. The four parents at Our Lady of Peace equated communication with knowledge of the system and focused on attendance at the meetings as the key to a successful relationship.

Principal Kingsbury (OLP) addressed the parents' concern about charging a fee for missed meetings, but at the time of his interview, the decision to impose this fee had not yet been made; as previously mentioned, he was not originally in favor of the fee. He explained the following at that time:

> One parent said, "We need to fine them when they don't come to the meetings," several parents [have mentioned this], because that's what they do in the elementary school, and I said, "That's not the message that we're sending at this school", and they didn't like that answer. They kept on saying it because they said that will make more people come.

By August, the decision to charge a missed parent-meeting fee had been made, and it was a major component mentioned by the PTO parent participants, who regarded meeting attendance as essential. Whereas the concept of charging a fee could seem demeaning to some, the parents at this school believed it necessary to improve parental involvement and communication. They did not find the fee derogatory but rather hoped this would help parents gain knowledge of the school. This situation reflected the fluid

ecologies of parental involvement described by Carreón et al. (2005) and demonstrated how parents' experiences and resources affect their choice to become involved. Moreover, it reflected the complex nature of parent expectations and the conflicts that arise even as parent and principal seek the same underlying child-centered purpose.

Principal Campos (GS) spoke of the parent meetings and how the administration encouraged their participation. There was a fee charged for missed meetings, but this was only on the third tier of the tuition schedule (see Table 1). Whereas he considered the meetings important, Principal Campos also respected the parents' time and told me:

> I think the idea is to make it friendly for everybody. It works. Not bombard them with so many meetings. And the other thing is, and I'm a big fan of this, short, to the point and let's get out of here. And I think parents appreciate that.

As previously noted, the Parent Board at Good Shepherd was conscious of their time at the meetings. The president of the PA was also conscious of the parents' time and at the September 14th meeting, the president noted that the meeting began at 6:14 p.m. and reported that the meeting ended at 7:12 p.m. She told the parents she understood that everyone had a busy schedule, and she respected their time. This was not a mandatory meeting, but approximately 30 parents attended. Principal Campos (GS) told me about the general school meetings:

> The general meetings are the ones they prefer. We don't have a lot of them. We have the two parent-teacher conferences, which are well attended. We'll have general meetings, I believe it's three a year, and they are well attended as well, but there's always a catch to it. There's always [the catch], "we're going to announce this." One of them is the first year of school so it's the welcoming gathering. I think it's pretty close to 100% and then we do a financial aid deal, so we get probably about 80 to 90% on that one.

Only two of the parents used the e-mails for communication and information, but all of them appreciated the monthly mailed newsletters. Principal Kingsbury (OLP) recognized the need to meet the diverse group of those who use the computer and to be aware of those who either did not have one or remained uncomfortable going online. He described the relationship at Our Lady of Peace in terms of communication:

> (Kingsbury) In general, they're pretty good, and I think in part it is because the school goes out of its way. I mean there's always more you can do, and we've gone out of our way, we continue to go out of our way trying to make sure we communicate with the parents. And so in the last few years we've added a variety of means to do it. There are e-mail blasts to parents that have e-mails, and they find that very, very helpful. It reminds them that this is due, payments are due, and many have reported that they find that the most beneficial way to communicate.
>
> (Interviewer) Do they have to sign up for the e-mail blast?
>
> (Kingsbury) We ask for their e-mails and see, but half the families don't have e-mails so it's not completely effective for that reason. It would be nice to get them to do it. We send out monthly newsletters and then occasional other announcements. And then the parents can now access student grades, and that's a new thing this year. Each year we are trying to do more and more things and so as one student said, "The parents can know, we can't hide our grades from our parents."

Through presence. Arthur (1994) and Bryk et al. (1993) found that Catholic schools defined involvement in terms of service hours and fund-raising. This was true for the principal participants, all of whom confirmed this when I asked them about parental involvement. Principal Kingsbury (OLP) echoed the parents who spoke of being involved as a way of giving back and getting to know the school rather than resulting from the service hour requirement:

> I think that the parents who are involved in the school are involved because they want to be involved. Yes, we require service hours, but there are many who will go out of their way to find ways not to have to come on campus to do it. They

> will take the path of least resistance. I think it's part of the culture of a private school, not just Catholic, that have a service hour component, just as the charter schools now have, a service hour component is expected so you just do it because you want your child in the school. The parents who are very involved, service is important to them. The parents that are, as I said, the ones that always donate, the ones that always serve, the PTA board, [for] those people service is more important. They're getting something back in return. They get to know the school better. They maybe get to control the agenda a little bit better.

Although the parents did not mention the Catholic school component or the school's mission in parental involvement, the principals used the school's philosophy of being a home or a family as instrumental in encouraging parents to become involved in the high school. Principal Campos (GS) stated:

> [In] Catholic elementary schools, you'll see a lot of parent participation, a lot of parent involvement, and I try to make those parents feel that we are the same as their parish schools. They don't expect it, but I try to tell parents, I try to make them feel very similar to that. Again going back to we're a family, this is a home.

The parents had spoken of presence as motivating their children to succeed in their education. Jeynes (2010) referred to presence and motivation as subtle aspects of caring and part of caring and involvement was the parents' presence. This was more extensive than the principals' description of home involvement, however, which was limited to parents being involved in making sure the students completed their homework. Principal Campos (GS) was pleased with the parents' involvement with their children's studies. In an optimal parent-school relationship, he said he would like "more support for homework, although from where we are and the education level of our parents, I'm really pleased with the results [of how much parents already support the students with homework]." Principal Kingsbury (OLP) described his expectations for parental

involvement in the home in terms of creating a space for studying and helping to oversee the completion of homework:

> They would like support for student learning, that they make sure the students get the homework done and maybe can answer some of the questions that the students have. Unfortunately, many of these parents aren't skilled in the more advanced math and science classes. I mean, I can't even help my daughter in her math class because I went the language route as opposed to the math route, and so you're going to find parents, especially when the kids get into geometry, algebra II, pre-calculus, chemistry, [and] physics, that the parents, even some biology, they don't have the experience to help them there. If they're not English speakers they don't have the experience to help them with their English-language writing essays and reading assignments. And so then the reading is cut across the board, so I mean the parents, the teachers recognize that but at least the environment where the kid could actually get the work done, the parent makes sure that the student is doing the work and turning it in on time.
>
> (Interviewer) And finding a space to do the homework.
>
> (Kingsbury) Yes, finding the space. And that's hard because some of them live in very small apartments and some of them, when they get home, they have to take care of the younger siblings. And so during the meetings they find themselves saying that.

Principal Fawkes (SF) alluded to the subtle aspects of caring as he described communication between parents and their children as an optimal parent-school relationship that reinforces what is taught at school and reflects the parents' expectations of being involved in their children's lives:

> I used to ask the parents to ask their kids, "What [did] you learn today at the dinner table? What did you learn today [that] you didn't know before? What meaningful thing happened in your classroom or your lunch yard or whatever?" and to [have them] get kids to reflect so that when they leave class, they know I'm going to get a question from my parents like, "What did you learn? I've got to think of something like what did I learn today?" I think teachers would love to have the parents say, "What are you reading in literature?" or "What period are you studying in history?" or "What topic are you studying in physics or chemistry?" I think teachers would love to have parents ask their students that, ask their children that, and see what kind of dialogue takes place.

Responsibilities. Parents' and principals' expectations of the parents' responsibilities in the parent-school relationship corresponded when they emphasized supporting the student, the teacher, and the school, but the expectations varied to the degree of responsibility and the type of involvement. They also differed in the terminology and understanding of the concept of primary educator. Although none of the parents described their role using Catholic Church terminology, they did characterize their primary role as that of raising and educating their child. For example, Marisol (Parent, SF) had expressed her role as educating her son at "the home first," and Julia (Parent, SF) outlined her role as teaching her son to be a good person. The Catholic school mission recognizes that parents are the children's primary educators but accepts the responsibility and trust of the parents to educate these children when they attend school. In all three of the parent handbooks, parents are recognized as primary educators. The 2011-2012 Good Shepherd handbook referred to parents as the primary educators, which was a core aspect of the Good Shepherd philosophy.

The schools' role to accept the parents' role as primary educators, as well as the schools' own responsibility to continue this duty, complicated the parent-school relationship and each actor's understanding of their roles. This shifting responsibility from parent to school left a gray area that some of the parents and principals misinterpreted as lack of parental involvement, and which some of the parents attributed to the independence needed for high school students.

Principal Kingsbury (OLP) thought that the parents did not comprehend the concept of parent as the primary educator but that they accepted the school's

responsibility to continue to enhance the spiritual, emotional, and educational development of the children:

> The whole concept of the parent as primary educator is something I don't think parents really understand. And when you bring it up, some of the parents like that idea, but they really expect you to do all of it. They like it on paper, but they expect you to do all of it.
>
> I think that the mission of the Catholic education, more of the faith formation, is more important to them. And again, the real reason why they send their kids, mostly is the safe environment and the structure. And they know that if their kid goes to a Catholic school, they're going to get a strong education even if it's not gold plated. They're going to get a stronger education than they would get in a comparable public school in the neighborhood. Their daughters will have a greater chance of going on to college. And most of the parents hope they're going to go to college. Even if they start at the community college, they know their daughters will continue. So they know that the foundation is there. They know that the faith formation foundation is there, even if they lapse from the Church, which a lot of 20-year-olds do, they tend to come back.

The St. Francis 2011-2012 handbook referenced the parents' role primary educators and the school's role to support parents in helping develop their child's spiritually and academically.

Principal Fawkes (SF) believed that the primary educators and the school had a mutual responsibility to reinforce the student's learning at home and school and to trust that each actor is following through with the responsibility. He explained the following:

> I still consider, often times in my letters and talking to the parents, that we're only trying to reinforce what they're talking with their children. They want their kids to go to church on Sunday, they want their kids to study hard, they want them to be hard workers, and they've been working on that since they were little, and we try to reinforce that. Hopefully they reinforce that at home.

Through leadership. The three high schools observed in this research had the common Catholic school decentralized governance model, and this allowed the principals to maintain a large degree of autonomy. Each school had a parent board, but through

parent interviews and observations, I observed that decision-making was limited to fund-raising decisions and voicing concerns about teachers, sports, and a particular parent-school function. Principal Kingsbury (OLP) described the parent board as follows:

> This year's board is much more school driven, and four years ago the board was more school driven, and it really depends on the parents you have in there year to year, and before that the parent board really didn't do much of anything. So it's been trying to build it back up. My predecessor started building it back up, and I've been trying to push it. This year's board is actually more active, and you're seeing more and more parent involvement, and there's still communications even among the board members and among the parents when they're trying to get activities, but we've tried to create some parent sponsored activities. They're not big ones, but service to the school; they beautify the school. Another is they have a Father-Daughter picnic which we're going to evolve next year into something a little different, like a family picnic but a walkathon to raise some money because they try to raise some money. And then there's the Mother-Daughter tea, and that's the last thing coming up. And these are recent things, we haven't had these for a long, long time. … The board is more active.

Principal Campos (GS) talked of the governance structure and empowering the parents:

> My first year here we had no parent organizations for example, and now we have four or five parent organizations. We have several events, several events that are 100% parent run. There was a Mother-Son dance that was run just this past weekend for example. That's 100% parents. I hope that they feel empowered to say, "Hey, we can do this."
>
> I think parents would say that the parent organizations and the parent structures here is not top down. It's the parents, themselves, who are generating the energy and everything. Now there will probably be some parents that see that as a negative, and that may criticize me or the administration, but I've done it purposefully, I've done it purposefully, again the whole thing about that this is your school, not my school. If you want to have a parent, a Mother-Son dance, do it. I'm not. … because there was a Mother-Son brunch forever, okay, okay, if you want to have a dance, have a dance.

The principals recognized that there were more opportunities for leadership than just being on the parent board. Principal Campos (GS) discussed how parents trusted that the school was teaching the necessary curriculum in the classroom and did not want to

make changes in this area; nonetheless, when they saw the need for improvements in areas of their expertise, the parents took charge. As Principal Campos explained,

> I think most of them trust that what is going on in the classrooms, and they're not going to do that [make changes]. I have a group of parents who are into landscaping and are here regularly. One dad every Saturday, I showed up on Saturday, he's out planting something or doing something. And that's one area that he saw, and a group of families saw, we need the landscaping needs to be improved here; we're taking it on.

Principal Kingsbury (OLP) wanted to encourage parents to apply their talents and knowledge in different areas of parental involvement (which would be another form of leadership), in addition to the standard parent boards. He wanted to see parents take on more:

> Coming in and presenting, as a guest speaker. Even if they're just in the homerooms, like class mothers, or homeroom parents, just to help coordinate that. The parent organization wants that. The PTO wants that. They would like to have more volunteers to come in and be willing to come during the school day to communicate the parent things, and you know, work with the homerooms. Not as much in the classroom, but we do have some parents who now help out in other ways a little more, and we have one that is actually is subbing when we need a sub because she's qualified to sub in this area, and next year we are going to have a parent who has clerical skills teach computers to adult education.

The Parent-School Relationship Created to Support the Student: An Alliance

> "Es una relación mutual. ... los padres tienen que apoyar también."
> (This is a mutual relationship. … the parents have to help also.) (Julia, Parent, SF)

The parent-school relationship created to support the student emerged as the third pattern in this research. As parents and principals both spoke of the relationship, the underlying child-centered mission clearly guided the roles and relationship. In the literature, the term *partnership* has been discussed to describe a relationship with mutual

responsibilities, but in this research, parents and principals had different definitions of what the partnership should entail or how to label the relationship (Carreón et al., 2005; Epstein, 2001; Henderson et al., 2007; Reynolds, 2009). According to Epstein (2001), this concept of partnership is the product of a complex, shared relationship of responsibilities, communication, and actions between parents and the school. Amongst the parents and principals interviewed, the complexity of the shared relationship became apparent as they described their various expectations and concerns. The following section presents the two subpatterns: the parents' and principals' expectations of the relationship. The former subpattern is further divided into the following topics: the relationship with the actors, the characteristics that contribute to the complexity of the relationship, and barriers to an effective relationship. The latter subpattern is also divided into two topics: the relationship with the actors and the barriers to an effective relationship.

The Parents' Expectations of the Relationship

One complexity in the parent-school relationship I observed was that the parents' expectations of the relationship itself varied greatly from parent to parent. No common definitions or features were given, and some parents differed as to whether the relationship should be considered as equal, a partnership, or as a business model, although the terms *mutua*l and *respectful* were two components consistently referenced. Dolores (Parent, GS) began the interview by unequivocally telling me that parent-school relations "are not an equal partnership," nor did she expect them to be; she wanted them to be honest about this reality of the relationship. Gabriela's (Parent, GS) expectation of

the parent-school partnership was one that entailed equal participation of both parents and staff. Angela (Parent, OLP) concurred that the relationship required equal participation. She thought it was important that everyone be involved for the children, including parents, teachers, and the staff. Julia (Parent, SF) saw the relationship as a mutual one, in which the school should be respectful of the parents, and the parents should be supportive of the school. Respect was a common factor included by parents in their description of the parent-school relationship. Five of the parent participants specifically mentioned the importance of respect in the relationship.

One consistent defining factor mentioned by the parents raised was that the relationship was guided by the mutual child-centered goal. They defined the relationship in terms of the mutual benefit for the student. Here, I used the term *alliance*, which revolves around supporting the students' needs, to best describe the relationship expressed by the parents interviewed. Catherine (Parent, GS) described this alliance as one "to make sure our kids do well." Lupe (Parent, GS) best described this alliance by saying that the parent-school relationship should reflect "not what we want but what the students need."

The following section presents the parent-school alliance and its complexities in terms of the parents' expectations of the following: (a) the relationships with the actors in the alliance and the responsibilities parents expect of each actor, (b) the identifying characteristics that parents see contributing to the complexity of the relationship, and (c) the barriers to an effective relationship.

The relationships with the actors. The four dominant actors mentioned by the parents in regard to the parent-school relationship are the following: teachers, coaches, principals, and parents. During the interviews, the parents spoke of the role that these actors played in defining the relationship.

The teachers. The parents' expectations of the teachers' role consisted of respect, open communication, and educating the children. Julia (Parent, SF), in reference to respect said, "Los maestros deben mostrarlo y enseñarlo también" (The teachers should show respect and teach it also). This respect included a welcoming, honest environment, and for Julia, one where "los maestros me atiendan" (the teachers listen to me). Sydney (Parent, SF) reiterated the importance of teachers respecting the parents. She had had a negative experience with a teacher at St. Francis, who had not greeted her in the hallway, which troubled her because she felt that the teacher was being disrespectful by not acknowledging her. She remarked that she would like "to be treated to a point where you feel comfortable enough to speak with the teachers."

In addition, because Sydney (Parent, SF) was paying tuition, it bothered her even more when it came to a teacher not acknowledging her presence. She considered the parent-school relationship similar to a business relationship, and as a business, the school should strive to please the clients. She noticed, however, that when she saw the principal, he acknowledged her by nodding or saying hello. "I see the changes the school is trying to make," she added, and appreciated what the principal was doing in improving the parent-school relationships.

Parents placed importance on having an open line of communication. Nine of the 12 parents used the Internet, but only five chose to e-mail the teachers. One of these five, Catherine (Parent, GS), had e-mailed teachers at Good Shepherd but preferred to contact them in person. She did not like e-mail because she noticed that the responses were not timely or messages were not answered. She discovered that teachers responded well at the beginning of the year, but then their responses declined. Lupe's (Parent, GS) e-mail experience at Good Shepherd was completely different; she usually got a response within 24 hours, but if she did not receive a response, she did not hesitate to call. She liked the way school was "on top of keeping parents knowing what is going on" (Lupe, Parent, GS). If she did have a conflict with teachers, she had no problem meeting with the teachers face-to-face.

Yesenia (Parent, OLP) did not use the Internet and preferred communication through the monthly envelopes sent home, but if she needed to speak with a teacher, she contacted the school directly or made an appointment via her daughter. If the teacher did not speak Spanish, the teacher would ask another student to translate. She appreciated that Principal Kingsbury (OLP) explained how to fill out the financial aid forms with his PowerPoint presentation during the parent meeting. She did not feel that this was demeaning but found it very informative because some of the questions on the form were difficult to understand. I was at the November 3rd parent meeting where the forms were distributed, and Principal Kingsbury conducted the same bilingual PowerPoint presentation Yesenia had mentioned.

Catherine (Parent, GS) described communication and action as essential in a good parent-school relationship. She had experienced some problems with communication during the first semester of her son's ninth grade. She had spoken with the teachers about his learning disabilities and about his Individual Education Program, but because he was a quiet, respectful student, his academic struggles remained undetected. At first, the teachers did not respond to the conversations she had with them, and she had to keep asking that they "call [her] right away and don't wait until my son fails." She viewed it as the teacher's job to teach and stated, "I'll do my job as a parent [and asks the school and teachers to]. … do your job, which is to make sure the students learn and do well."

Charlotte (Parent, SF) described the role of the teacher in an optimal relationship as keeping the parents aware of their child's progress. Marisol (Parent, SF) preferred to speak with the teachers in person about her son's academic progress and his behavior. All three schools had an online grading system that allowed parents to check the grades, but five of the parents continued to rely on the grades sent by mail.

Our Lady of Peace and Good Shepherd had placed computers in the main lobby that students and parents could access. The principals hoped this access to computers would help the parents. Principal Campos (GS) mentioned that in addition to the computers, he instructed teachers to help walk parents through the online grading process. He said:

> We do the online grading, PowerSchool, and that has helped communication in that, if parents come in and say, "I didn't know" that gives us the opportunity to educate and say well, this is what you can do. At parent conferences I would encourage the teachers to have printouts on the students, their page on the computer with the password, to again educate the parents, well, this is what you

need to do. We have teachers available to actually walk them through on the computer.

The coaches. Parents considered teachers, counselors, and coaches to have the same role and responsibilities in terms of respect, communication, and educating the whole child. They wanted them to be accessible and respectful. Sydney (Parent, SF), a single mother, said that the coaches played an important part in her son's life as role models and provided an excellent avenue in "male bonding." Her son looked up to the coaches and wanted to perform his best for them. She wanted the coaches to "realize how much they affect the kids" and to set a good example for the children. She thought that the ultimate goal for coaches should entail character and morale boosting rather than winning as the ultimate goal.

The principal. The parents' expectations for the principal's role in the parent-school relationship were similar to those for the teachers. They expected the principal to provide and encourage open communication and to show respect. Parent-school relationships involved trust in the school, and Gabriela (Parent, GS) felt the principal could earn this trust by keeping the parents informed. Jasmine (Parent, OLP) described the principal at Our Lady of Peace as respectful and "sencillo, no tiene orgullo" (unpretentious, not proud) which was an important characteristic for her in building the parent-school relationship. Sometimes the parents' perceptions of the relationship differed even within the same school. Gabriela (Parent, GS), did not think the principal could identify the parents by name. In contrast, Lupe (Parent, GS) and Dolores (Parent, GS) felt the principal encouraged communication, and they did not hesitate to contact him if needed. Overall, the parents viewed the principal's role in the relationship as the

person who should take charge. Dolores believed that there "need[ed] to be a captain at the helm" to make the final decisions because the parents had different styles and points of view about what should be done.

The parents. The final actors mentioned in the parent-school relationship were the parents themselves. They spoke of the importance of their own involvement and responsibilities in the mutual parent-school relationship. The parents at Our Lady of Peace consistently referred to the importance of parents attending the school meetings in building strong parent-school relationships. Julia (Parent, OLP) explained that "en una relación familia-escuela los padres tienen que apoyar también" (in a parent-school relationship the parents have to help also).

Others considered a good parent-school relationship one in which parents also taught respect and were involved at home and school. The parents gave various examples of involvement: going to the games, attending meetings, helping with fund-raisers, being a part of the parent association, motivating your child to do well, making sure he/she was completing the homework, and as Charlotte (Parent, SF) stated, finding "your niche." For Lupe (Parent, GS), this involvement included contacting the school by phone and speaking to the teacher or principal directly. She believed it was the parents' responsibility to find out how their children were doing in school and said, "We have to be involved with their lives." Julia (Parent, SF) reaffirmed this belief by saying it is important that the children receive a good education, and it is the responsibility of the parent to ensure that this happens. "La casa primero" (it begins at home), she explained. She added, "Los padres deben venir a la escuela a ayudar y conocer a los maestros, y

empujar los grados." The parents should come to school to help, get to know the teachers, and encourage good grades.

The characteristics that contribute to the complexity of the relationship. During the interviews, parents spoke of characteristics they thought affected the parent-school relationship. These included the following: needing financial aid, having different cultures, speaking other languages, and being a single parent. They did not see these characteristics as barriers but rather as possible explanations for how a parent chose to participate in their child's education. Sometimes parents attributed a particular characteristic to different levels of involvement. All the parent participants stressed involvement as the parent's responsibility to their children, but the type of involvement differed more on an individual basis than in terms of any particular characteristic.

Dolores (Parent, GS) was grateful for the financial assistance she received and wanted to help the school as a way of showing her appreciation. Jasmine's (Parent, OLP) selling of *pupusas* was her way of giving back to the school. Eight of the 12 parent participants received financial aid, and all of them were actively involved in some way, either at school or home.

Differences in cultures and languages added to the complexity of how parents chose to be involved and take part in the parent-school relationship. Six parents were immigrants and saw knowledge of the school as essential to the relationship. All the parents interviewed at Our Lady of Peace were immigrants, and they considered attending the school meetings and learning about the school critical to a successful parent-school relationship.

The parents all felt comfortable in contacting the schools, even at St. Francis, which often had English-speaking-only parent volunteers helping at the front desk. Since the population at St. Francis was 55.74% Black and 27.45% Hispanic, it was difficult for parents to participate when few people spoke Spanish. The day I met Marisol (Parent, SF) for her interview, she had arrived early and went to the front desk to check if I had arrived. Although the parent volunteer did not speak Spanish, she was able to help Marisol, and called me on my cell phone to verify our appointment time. Marisol's husband spoke less English and yet he was the parent in the household who completed most of the mandatory school service hours. She told me he preferred to volunteer to do tasks that did not require him to speak much. When speaking was required, he asked her to volunteer. Although Julia (Parent, OLP) and Marisol found communicating with other parents a little difficult, they continued to be involved and participated at the football games and fund-raisers. Marisol felt comfortable speaking with the secretary in the office and with the parent helpers, whom she described as "amables" (kind). Julia enjoyed helping with the football games and was not intimidated by doing security, even though she was a small woman who spoke little English.

The secretaries at Good Shepherd and Our Lady of Peace spoke Spanish, and most of the parent participants, such as Isabel (Parent, OLP) and Yesenia (Parent,OLP), preferred contacting the school in person. Jasmine's (Parent, OLP) limited English did not prevent her from attending the meetings, and she chose to participate by using her culinary talents rather than focusing on her language limitations.

Barriers to an effective relationship. Parents were asked to give examples of what did not help the parent-school relationship. Several of the following recurring themes emerged from the interviews: the impact of financial aid and tuition on parents' participation and their freedom to give their opinions, the difference that being a high school had on the relationship, the parents' failure to become involved, and problems created by other parents.

The parent participants who received financial aid were grateful for that aid and wanted to become involved as a way of giving back to the school, but Catherine (Parent, GS) suggested that financial aid could possibly have an adverse affect on parental involvement. She said they were "grateful for the scholarships but feel uncomfortable to speak up" for fear of losing the scholarship money, and she wondered if the school was aware of this barrier. She reiterated that she was not afraid to speak, but had talked with other parents who had told her they felt this way.

In contrast to financial aid creating a barrier to the relationship and involvement, Angela (Parent, OLP) suggested that parents might not participate precisely because they are paying tuition. They may assume that the tuition is their involvement and that removes them from further responsibilities or duties. Dolores (Parent, GS) raised the same concern and said that even though parents pay tuition, the school still needs their help. On the other hand, Sydney (Parent, SF) believed that paying tuition demanded that her parent-school relationship should be better than she thought it was.

High school itself presented a barrier to the parents. Bauch (1987) noted that the type and the amount of involvement were different than for elementary or junior high,

partly because of the students' growing need for independence. Dolores' (Parent, SF) sister called her a "helicopter parent," but Dolores disagreed. Her boys still needed her in high school, and she enjoyed being part of their lives. By college, she said, "the boys will already be adults."

Lupe (Parent, GS) enjoyed being involved, but at the high school level, she did not want to coordinate the various activities because she found "it is too stressful at this level [high school]." At the high school level, she thought that the events had to be financially successful to support the school.

Isabel (Parent, OLP) noticed that the parent-school relationship and parental involvement in high school were very different than in junior high; nevertheless, she said that it was important. In fact, the purpose of involvement was about "sacar mejoras" (making improvements) for the school, and she felt it was essential that parents become involved in order to maintain a good parent-school relationship. Parents had many options for becoming involved, such as "recaudar los fondos en vender los chocolates, ayudar en los eventos, venir a las juntas" (fund-raising by selling chocolates, helping at the events, and coming to the meetings) (Isabel, Parent, OLP). Involvement allowed parents to "get in the loop" and know what was going on with the school and their child (Charlotte, Parent, SF).

One barrier that has not been frequently discussed in literature, but was of concern to the parent participants, was the barrier created by other parents. Lupe (Parent, GS) no longer attended the parent board meetings because she did not like the drama she observed or the strong football parent voice at the two or three meetings she had attended

when her son first came to Good Shepherd. She thought that parents might be "more intimidated by the other parents than the staff." Gabriela (Parent, GS) did not have a problem with the parents at Good Shepherd. She felt that the parents at this school were more open to having anyone help, but she had experienced a similar problem at her son's other school, where she noticed that parents had formed a clique, and those that had been at the school longer tended to dominate the activities. Sydney (Parent, SF) noted that the parent association board at St. Francis could "be a little bit cliquish." However, this did not deter her from participating on the board.

Another parent barrier observed by the parents was the complaining that occurred amongst themselves. Marisol (Parent, SF) said that some parents wanted to share their opinions about the school, but at times, these opinions were "delicadas opinar" (sensitive to express). She herself did not want to complain about the school, but some parents thought that complaining was "una forma de voz" (a form of expression). Yesenia (Parent, OLP) wanted parents to come to the meetings and give their opinions, but asked "que estén atentos a las opiniones de los otros" (that they be attentive to other's opinions). She sometimes had observed that "no toman [los padres] en cuento las opiniones de los otros o los problemas de los maestros" (they [the parents] do not take into account the opinions of others or the teachers' problems).

Dolores (Parent, GS) saw that this form of expression sometimes weakened the parent-school relationship. She explained how the booster club parents got frustrated and began complaining about other parents and coaches, and finally the group went to the administration to complain. She said that some parents were trying to take control, and

the administration responded by disbanding the booster club and converting it to a council of seven, one representative from each sport, chosen by a coach and overseen by the athletic director. The president of the booster club explained the new system to the 16 parents present at the meeting on May 16, 2011, and afterward, the parents remained quiet. The president commended them for all their hard work. Someone voiced concern that the director might not understand the system for the snack-stand buying, but most of the group expressed that they were willing to adapt to the new system.

The Principals' Expectations of the Relationship

The relationship with the actors. The principals spoke of the same four dominant actors in regard to their roles in the parent-school relationship: teachers, coaches, principals, and parents. Their own role was focused on supporting these actors in order to have everyone working toward the students' benefit. At times, this proved difficult, and the principal intervened. This section addresses the principals' expectations of the teachers, coaches, and parents in their role of supporting the student.

The Teachers. Principal Fawkes (SF) discussed the problems he had with a few teachers the first year he came to St. Francis and how he needed to change the school culture to reflect a positive and caring student-centered environment. He had observed, "There was a sense of, a sense that we needed to develop a cheerfulness among ourselves, our faculty, our students."

To begin this healing, he adopted the maxim "we are a community of learning, and leadership, and love" and stressed this repeatedly. Once this culture of caring was in place, he explained, the relationship between the school and the parents could begin to

improve. He stated that "unless the parents see that you really care about their kids," they find it difficult to support the school community. Principal Fawkes (SF) described the process he took to change the school culture:

> It was a struggle at the beginning. I think a whole year in fact. There were a couple of disciplinary issues that had come up, and I went against a couple faculty decisions about expelling kids, and I said, "No, we're going to give this kid another chance." I kind of got a reputation among the faculty that I care more about the kids than I do about the teachers. It was a few, but they were the ones that talked the most. And the kids were saying finally someone is listening to us. So the kids' attitude was that [Mr. Fawkes] will listen to you whereas [in] previous administrations they had no access. So, I had to have some faculty meetings explaining, kind of clarifying my decision, and why I made it. And I kept reiterating, "God sent these kids to us for whatever reason. We don't know. But it's not by accident that this kid is in your classroom." I said when I feel the kid would be better served by having them leave, I will definitely make that decision. I've been an administrator for a long time at many different schools. The faculty that didn't buy into that kind of thinking didn't come back. So this year, it's just been really a blessing, everybody's student focused. There were instances last year where some teachers would get back at a kid by just giving them a lower grade, not giving them that extra few points for this or for that. It was some real battles between us and them that took place, but those folks didn't come back.

Our Lady of Peace included the school's expectations for teachers, staff, administration, and parents in the 2011-2012 handbook. They discussed such topics as respect, communication, and having a positive outlook.

The Coaches. Four of the parent participants had concerns about the sports, the coaches, and their children not having enough playing time on the field or there being too much emphasis on one sport, as Principal Fawkes (SF) had mentioned. One of the parents was from St. Francis. Sydney (Parent, SF) had spoken of her expectations that the coaches provide a role model for the students, and Dolores (Parent, SF) had talked about the importance of the athletic department being honest about what they expected of

the parents. In addition, she addressed her concerns about the problem she had with the department not wanting to let her son play on two sports teams in one season. She realized her over protectiveness in these matters, but she attributed it to the death of her husband. Sydney acknowledged her protectiveness and attributed it to being a single parent.

The principals at St. Francis and Good Shepherd had experienced problems arising between parents and coaches. Principal Fawkes (SF) ascribed some of the problem to the over protectiveness of the parent, but also to the relationship each coach had with the parents and the coaches' ability to encourage parents to get involved. He addressed the issue of parental involvement and the coaches:

> I think that depends on the coach too. There are some coaches that really involve the parents and get them involved with concessions and a little bit of security and organizing some fund-raisers, and some coaches do that really well. Other coaches, they don't look upon that as an important role as their job as coach, and so not a lot happens and so some of the parent volunteers try to get things to happen, and they get pretty frustrated with the low involvement with some of the parents in the sports.

The parents. Principal Campos (GS) explained that keeping the school student-focused improved the parent-school relationship. He explained this interconnectedness of the parent-school relationship with the parents, students, and principal. He said, "I start with the students, if the students are happy in the classroom and with what's going on with the school, then the parents are happy. If the parents are happy, the principal's happy." Principal Campos described the relationship as a partnership and expected the parents' role to be one of working together:

> I think first of mission, what we always preach, and when we recruit parents and have parent meetings and our newsletters and any publications that we promote,

> anything whatsoever, we talk family. And we talk partnership, and we talk working together. Whenever I talk to a group of parents, I remind them that this is their school, not my school, not our school. This is their school. I need their input, and I need to have them feel welcome in our school. I need them to work with us.

As part of working with the school, the principals expected parents to be involved in supporting the learning environment at home. Principal Kingsbury (OLP) described the expectation this way:

> In general, the school wants the students and the teacher wants the students to have an environment where they can learn, which means there's a variety of factors that go into that, the distraction free, chore free, that there's a time for chores. They need a few hours where they can focus on the studies, then for those kids that are easily distracted and you can't trust that they're doing it, the parents need to monitor a little more.

There is a delicate balance between providing a quiet space conducive to studying and encouraging the student to complete the assignments, and not being overprotective and not allowing the high school student to learn responsibility. Dolores (Parent, GS) had referenced this overly helpful type of parent as a "helicopter parent," but she also saw her sons needing more supervision in high school than college.

The parent participants wanted to support their children's education and held high expectations that their child would do the same. They spoke of teaching the student the value of education, and Sydney (SF) specifically spoke of teaching her son to be responsible for his actions. The difficulty for principals arose when some parents placed more emphasis on supporting the student than teaching them responsibility. Principal Fawkes (SF) understood the need to support, but he also saw the need for parents to let the students be responsible for their actions:

> The parents, I think, need to start thinking about teaching these kids responsibility. Another example is playing time on sports teams. The parents will come to me, will want a meeting with me because their child is not getting enough playing time on that court, on the field. And I'm saying, "Why are you telling me this? When they're in college, you're going to [go to] the coach in college, and tell them they're not getting enough playing time or are you going to go to their professor when they're in college and say my child didn't get that test done." [They say,] "It's my fault because my husband left me when I was just having a child." You've got to get rid of those excuses, and they're not going to let them fly when they become an adult. So I think that's one of the things I'd love to try is to wean the parents from doing everything for their child and always backing them up when they've got to let the child stand on their own. You always want to support; you always want to encourage.

Principal Campos (GS) acknowledged that parents have different parenting styles:

> It takes all kinds. There's a group of parents that want to know what they had for lunch, what the English teacher gave for homework or the math teacher gave for homework. And then there are the parents, who [ask], what are your grades like? Then [there are] the parents who [ask] are you behaving, are you showing up every day? And then it is the parents who maybe aren't so connected. It takes all kinds.

When asked what type of involvement he thought the teachers would like to see, Principal Campos (GS) mentioned more homework involvement, although the school was considering whether too much homework was being assigned. His response was tentative:

> (Campos) Maybe the homework thing. Making sure students study and things like that.
>
> (Interviewer) Just for parents to make sure the students are doing the homework? Some of the schools are starting to look at homework as being a lot or too much. Has [Good Shepherd] had trouble with that or are you finding a good balance?
>
> (Campos) We talked about not giving as much homework.
>
> (Interviewer) Is that a first?
>
> (Campos) No, no, some people, some parents, even students, see that as we're not tough enough. I think the conception of the society in general [is that] if

> you're getting 10 hours of homework a night it must be a good school. It takes all kinds.

Principal Fawkes (SF) expected parents to support their children through homework also, but again, he referenced the importance of balance and allowing students to learn responsibility:

> I've seen over the years that parents buy in or try to give the kids allegiance by backing them up when they shouldn't back them up. For example, if the child is not doing their homework or a child is not passing their tests, certain parents will blame the school or blame the teacher and not look to their child.

Principal Kingsbury (OLP) discussed the opposite spectrum of parents who tended to be less involved in high school. He had observed parents who did not participate enough in their child's education or allowed their daughters too much freedom. He explained his observation on the differences between parents' participation in high school:

> Because in an elementary school everyone is in the PTA, and all the parents are room mothers, and they're busy because. ... in part, it's a parent's fear of letting go of their child. By the time the child is in high school, the child is old enough to do things on their own, and parents give too much carte blanche. And so, they're not active enough in their schools and then they often are more surprised when something happens.

Barriers to an effective relationship. The barriers that arose from the principals' interviews were technology and time, communication and a lack of understanding of the school system, parents and their personal agendas, and the need to create a caring environment.

Technology and time. The principals had different responses regarding these barriers to an effective relationship. Principal Kingsbury (OLP) mentioned technology and time: Two of the parents at Our Lady of Peace did not use the Internet, and only one

parent used it for both e-mail and the online grading system. When asked to give examples of any barriers he thought might impede the parent-school relationship, he said, "It's technology and language. And again, it's how you phrase it, their time. If they're working two jobs, it's hard to come to the school when the school is available for them." Principal Kingsbury considered time to be a barrier in the parent-school relationship:

> It's lack of time, transportation, a variety of things, it's not intentional per se. You know, they would like to do more, but they can't always do that, but if they get started on a project, they usually will try to make it.

Principal Campos (GS) was aware of the parents' time constraints and related that he kept the mandatory meetings to a minimum. He disagreed with the idea that technology created a barrier for the non-English-speaking parents at his school. He thought that the students would help the parents overcome this difficulty just as they did for the language barrier. As a child, his brothers and sisters had translated for his parents, and he believed that the students helped in the same manner with using the technology. When I asked if he saw technology as enhancing communication, he answered, "definitely" and further explained:

> Still, I think it's a misconception that people say that there are still people who don't have a computer, or [that] people in this community don't have a computer because people don't speak English, they don't know how to use a computer. I think it's a misconception. I think it's a very, very small percentage of people that do not have a computer or have access to the computer. Just like myself, I grew up in a Spanish-speaking home. I was the youngest so it didn't fall on my shoulders enough to say that I experienced it, but my older brothers and sisters were the interpreters, and if someone came to the door, it was my brothers and sisters who did the interpreting for my parents or a letter in the mail or what have you. I think that's what's going on with technology. I think the students are being the interpreters. The other thing is everyone has a cell phone and more and more [they have] the smart phones. I really believe, I don't have anything to hang my hat on, but I really believe it's a misconception that people do not have

computer access, technology, whether it's them themselves or through their sons or daughters.

Communication and a lack of understanding of the school system. The parents had mentioned lack of knowledge about the school system as a barrier to the parent-school relationship. They believed there was a mutual responsibility for parents and the school to communicate to remove this barrier. The parents considered going to the meetings, reading the newsletters, and keeping in touch with the teachers as the primary communication resources. The three schools observed provided various avenues for communication, including the school website, e-mails, phone blasts, monthly newsletters, general parent meetings, and a school parent board. Nonetheless, Principal Fawkes (SF) wanted to improve communication with the parents by instituting an electronic biweekly newsletter. The parents at St. Francis had also observed some difficulties with the electronic communications, and as previously stated, the PA was looking at ways to get access to more current e-mail addresses to improve the effectiveness of the e-mail blasts. Sydney also wanted to see current photos of the students on the school's website, which she used for checking the calendar of events and the online grading. Although posting current photos did not affect the communication directly, it symbolically reinforced open and honest communication with the teachers, as she had noted in the previous sections. She thought uploading the current pictures of students attending the school would represent the school more realistically.

Our Lady of Peace communicated everything in English and Spanish, although Principal Kingsbury (OLP) was concerned that they did not translate publications for the Korean parents. In addition, he noted that the school had previously experienced

problems resulting from parents not understanding the school's organizational process or the needs of all students on campus, not just the needs of the one child. He stated that it was a cultural misunderstanding at times or simply a case where parents only heard their children's side of the story. When miscommunication occurred, the parent-school relationship became strained. Principal Kingsbury noted the following:

> It's. … when a parent gets irate some of it's because of, it's all communications related but it's mostly a misinformation and assumptions, assumptions on their part, misinformation, things that they've heard or they have not heard the whole story because again, teenagers will play parent against parent and parent against school. [It's] a lack of understanding of the process. That's the other issue in a relationship, that when you serve a population that is immigrant, not that they're not educated, but their educational experience is very, very different. Then they come here, and the American system is foreign, and so the assumptions that they make about American education are based on their own experience, and that comparison is false. When the misinformation happens, miscommunication happens, and they go back to what they understand, and what they understand exacerbates the misunderstanding.

Parents and their personal agendas. Principal Fawkes (SF) discussed the barrier of parents trying to protect their children. He attributed this barrier to the difficult balance of parents supporting the students but giving them more responsibility for their actions. This desire to protect their own children and to support their success created a barrier to the parent-school relationship and a barrier to other students' success at times. Principal Kingsbury (OLP) referred to this as the "parents personal agendas." Six of the parents mentioned other parents creating a barrier to the relationship, although only one parent was from Our Lady of Peace. Principal Kingsbury believed that most parents wanted to serve the school, but he found there were a few parents who wanted to further their own agenda. When he discovered that a parent had a personal agenda, he tried to take control of the situation to keep the board focused on all the students. He also

understood that other parents grew tired of the conflicts created by parents' forcing their individual goals. He spoke of the parents' involvement:

> […] Some of them are there just to serve, most of them are there for their own personal agendas, and they are a little more savvy. They have a little more experience with the educational system in America, and they believe that's how they can control what happens. The ones that have the less experience are more trusting about it, but we have more and more parents who are involved because they want to serve and not so much because of the agenda.

He understood that parents wanted the best for their child, but his role required him to be an advocate for the entire student body. Principal Kingsbury (OLP) continued:

> I don't want to demean that they want the best for their child, and that they're a strong advocate for their child, but I have to look at all the children, and I have to look at the whole school, and they unfortunately can't see that. The parents that can see the whole picture are the ones that are the more productive when you have a working relationship with like a parent teacher organization, the ones that understand the whole picture do a lot better.

In the 2011-2012 handbook at Our Lady of Peace, the school listed the expectations for the parents including communication, involvement in school, staying informed, and upholding school rules and policies.

The need to create a caring environment. Principal Campos (GS) and Principal Fawkes (SF) noted one paramount aspect in strengthening the parent-school relationship: building the bridge between home and school. Principal Campos saw that providing a caring family atmosphere connected parents to the high school in the same way they had been connected in the smaller elementary school. He welcomed parents to the school and reminded them that Good Shepherd was a home. He stated that a component of the school's mission was to serve the local community. Principal Campos explained the mission of connecting the community and parish as follows: "They don't expect it, but I

try to tell parents, I try to make them feel very similar to that. Again going back to we're a family, this is a home, the [Good Shepherd] home, school, church, and parish."

For Principal Fawkes (SF), creating a caring environment was developing the "community of learning, and leadership, and love" and required changing the culture of the school and teachers' expectations of the students. In addition to clarifying the teachers' roles of exhibiting a caring attitude, Principal Fawkes wanted to build a bridge between the home and school by serving the local community. He did this by encouraging parents and relatives to visit the school through Shadow Days and Grandparent's Day. The school already had started the successful Grandparent's Day during his first year at the school, and he had planned to institute a Parent Shadow Day that allowed prospective parents to visit the school during the day and see the teachers and students while school was in session. He planned to extend the invitation to current parents, who would have the opportunity to "see how [their] child is doing in the class, and it's a good little way to see what's happening inside the school and also see what kind of student [their] child is without, they're different at home, often times."

The Principals' Role in Creating a Trusting Environment That Promotes Parental Involvement

"I'm the parent, and I'm trusting you."
(Charlotte, Parent, SF)

The final pattern observed in the interconnectedness of the parent-school relationship was the principals' role in creating a trusting environment that supported the relationship and promoted parental involvement. Four major themes occurred within this pattern and are divided by the parents' and the principals' expectations of each of the

following: the need for communication, living the Catholic school mission, supporting parents, and the principal's leadership. These four themes created the trusting environment parents believed necessary for a successful parent-school relationship and for encouraging parental involvement.

The Parents' Expectations of the Principal's Role

The parents expected the principal to take charge in leading the way for open communication and laying the foundation to encourage parental involvement. Many times, the parents' expectations did not directly address the principal, but as the school's leader, they believed he should be instrumental in creating a trusting and supportive environment. Following are the four themes that unfolded as parents described the essential components in the parent-school relationship and the principal's role, whether direct or indirect, in developing the relationship: communication, living the Catholic school mission, supporting parents, and leadership.

Communication. Nine of the parents noted the importance of communication and five specifically mentioned that communication required mutual responsibility for a successful relationship. Lupe (Parent, GS) pointed out the responsibility of parents in obtaining the information, and her statement that the school "opens the doors" for communication expressed the important role the school and principal played in providing parents with the information they needed to be supportive of the school and active in their child's education. Parents found newsletters and monthly mailings to be useful methods of communication. Those who used the Internet mentioned that e-mails and e-mail blasts were useful as well. Gabriela (Parent, GS) mentioned that due to her busy work

schedule, e-mail aided communication, although she would always go to the school if she needed further information. St. Francis frequently used e-mail blasts to remind parents of upcoming meetings and deadlines. Good Shepherd mailed out bulletins, but at one of the monthly parent board meetings, the teacher moderator reviewed some of the topics that were covered in the first bulletin. He reinforced the flex-tutoring program the school had initiated. It included tutoring in music, advanced placement (AP) courses, athletic training, and core subjects. He gave the deadline for the whooping cough vaccine and stressed that they had "hasta el viernes para las vacunas" (until Friday for the vaccines) or they would not be allowed back into class. Finally, he reviewed the dress uniform requirements for the first school mass.

One concern among the parents at all three schools was that the information should be timely and presented to the parents as well as the students. Gabriela (Parent, GS) thought that the verbal information her son brought home was too vague. At the St. Francis senior parent meeting on September 21, 2011, parents voiced concern that they had not heard about the SAT preparation course being offered at the school and suggested that the counselor send them such information via e-mail. When the counselor alluded to the college information binder that she had given to the students the previous year, many parents said they had no knowledge of such a binder. They asked her to send them a hard copy, or at least an online version of the binder. The parents explained to the counselor that although the students may have received it the previous year, some of them never saw the binder, and that it would be helpful if such information could be sent directly to the parents.

Parents wanted to have direct and timely communication about their children's progress. The online grading system made the grades much more accessible, but parents who did not use the Internet stated that they were satisfied receiving the grades through the mail. Catherine (Parent, GS) mentioned that although she did use the Internet, it was not often, and she preferred to contact the teachers directly about her son's progress.

Another feature that aided communication, according to the parents, was the welcoming manner of the principal, teachers, and secretaries. All 12 of the parents concurred that they were comfortable with contacting the school when they had a question or needed to speak to a teacher. Lupe (Parent, GS) told me she appreciated how the school "made us feel." She liked how this welcoming atmosphere extended to the students at the school in the same way. When she was looking at high schools, she searched for a school that had a welcoming atmosphere and "someone her son [could] talk to and not be ignored." Overall, she was pleased with the communication at Good Shepherd, and she thought the "united" and welcoming atmosphere had helped the school increase enrollment over the past few years. Sydney (Parent, SF) wanted to see some of the teachers at St. Francis be more welcoming to the parents; however, she was pleased with the principal's warmth and welcoming attitude. Charlotte (Parent, SF) agreed and said that Principal Fawkes (SF) made "everyone feel warm and show[ed] respect for all the students."

Living the Catholic school mission. During the interviews, the parents never initiated discussion on the Catholic school mission and its effect on the schools. I did not directly ask about the Catholic school mission in the parent protocol because I wanted to

see if the parents themselves would raise this topic without prompting. Only two parents, Yesenia (OLP) and Julia (SF), initiated the topic of Catholic characteristics in regard to faith and religion. When prompted with a reference to Catholic schools specifically, five parents mentioned that they observed the schools reflecting Catholic characteristics, six parents did not notice any particular Catholic characteristics, and one parent thought that the characteristic, respect, should be more present than she had observed. Whereas most of the parents did not articulate their expectations for the principal living and maintaining the Catholic school mission, their expectations reflected this theme. They looked for the following characteristics in the schools: teaching about God, the reflection of honesty, respect, kindness in the principal, teachers' and staff's behavior, and discipline.

Yesenia (Parent, OLP) appreciated that the school had "clases de religión y le hablan de la religión" (religion classes and that they spoke of religion). She observed that although some of the girls did not believe in everything taught in religion class, it was important that "las niñas sepan que existe un Dios" (the girls know that God exists). Overall, she observed that "el director, las secretarias, y los maestros se ven muchos católicos" (the principal, secretaries, and teachers demonstrate Catholic behaviors). She recounted how she was impressed with the way the school had decorated for the Lenten season the past year. In the main lobby, there was a large wooden cross adorned in purple cloth with plants and rocks at its feet; this served as an invaluable focus on the season. To Yesenia (OLP), this visible display demonstrated the importance the school placed on the religious celebration. She wanted to see the school have a similar display

during the month of May and suggested they place a statue of Mary in the lobby with flowers from the students.

Marisol (Parent, SF) felt that the school's ability to speak of God enabled the school to develop "la unión de la familia" (the family union) and to "refuerza los valores de la familia y el respecto" (reinforce the family values and respect). Although they came from different schools, Julia (Parent, SF) concurred with Marisol about the importance of speaking about God. She emphasized that the school should "les [los estudiantes] enseña que son hijos de Dios y que deben poner Dios en primer lugar" (teach them [the students] that they are God's children and that they should put God in first place).

In addition, Julia (Parent, SF) referenced the Catholic school characteristics when she detailed her expectations of the parent-school relationship and how the school should reflect the Catholic mission. She considered it important for a Catholic school to teach each student to be respectful and "ser humano, ser honesto, y ser buen caritativo" (to be a good human being, honest, and very generous), and she expected the secretary, the teachers, and the principal to model these behaviors for the students and the parents. She remarked that the school treated the students and parents as "hijos de Dios" (children of God), and she saw that the school lived this philosophy because "se refleja en el buen humor del personal" (it is reflected in the good temperament of the personnel). She was glad the school demonstrated these characteristics, and as part of a mutual relationship, she expected that parents should reciprocate by giving their support to the school.

Sydney (Parent, SF) was not as happy with some of the teachers' behavior at St. Francis

because she expected the teachers and administration to live the Catholic mission and be respectful of the parents. She did, however, appreciate that the principal was working toward this goal.

Jasmine (Parent, OLP) did not articulate the Catholic school mission directly but referred to the school's kind atmosphere and "el buen humor de los maestros, las personas en la oficina, y el director" (the good temperament of the teachers, office staff and the principal). She explained how their kindness made her feel good and encouraged parental involvement. She found that the principal was "sencillo, no tiene orgullo" (unaffected, not arrogant) and this strengthened the parent-school relationship.

Isabel (Parent, OLP) appreciated the Catholic school characteristic of "gran control" (discipline). She worked long hours and trusted that her children were in a safe place where they could learn. She placed herself in the category of Catholic school parents who want the reinforcement of morality, values, discipline, and the high expectations that Catholic schools have for schoolwork.

I observed subtle aspects of the Catholic school mission during the parent-school meetings. Before the Back-To-School meeting, Principal Fawkes (SF) wheeled out a large life-size cross next to the podium. He greeted parents at the door before leading the opening prayer. During the family mass at Good Shepherd, Principal Campos (GS) told the congregation, "Faith is the base of our family, our school. Whatever we do at school should come back to faith."

Supporting parents. As the parents recounted their expectations for the optimal parent-school relationship, they frequently mentioned the importance of being supported

by the school. Expectations varied on how the schools could best support the parents, but the most common themes that arose included allowing a space for empowerment and being heard, being present and involved, and providing a welcoming environment. Some of these themes overlapped with other topics and with the previous patterns, which further demonstrated the interconnectedness of the parent-school relationship.

Space for empowerment and being heard. In the interview protocol, I asked parents if they were involved in any decision-making in the school, and if not, whether they would like to be involved in any of the school decisions. Three parents stated that they did not want to be involved in decision-making at the school. Marisol (Parent, SF) stated that she did not want to make decisions about the school as long as the teachers and administration continued "agarrando la confianza" (earning trust). Catherine (Parent, GS) did not think she needed a role in the school's decision-making. She said, "I'll do my job as a parent" and then asked that the school and teachers "do [their] job of making sure the students learned and did well." Charlotte (Parent, SF) emphatically stated, "I'm the parent, and I'm trusting you [the school]."

None of the parents wanted to have a role in the curriculum decisions. Charlotte (Parent, SF) remarked that making decisions about curriculum was "not the realm of where to be involved" and explained that teachers should be involved in curriculum decisions. Gabriela (Parent, GS) reiterated the parents' sentiment: "Parents shouldn't have a voice in the way curriculum is in school. That's the school's job."

Lupe (Parent, GS) asserted that any decisions should be made "not what we [the parents] want but what the students need." She worried that if parents were given more

parental decision-making, "The more they give us the more we [the parents] expect." She considered her part in the decision-making process to consist of voicing her suggestions and concerns, and "as long as they're happy [the students], I'm happy."

Nine of the parents related that decision-making centered on having a voice to express concerns and suggestions. For many of the parent participants, the parent boards provided an avenue for decision-making. All four parents at Our Lady of Peace envisioned decision-making that revolved around making suggestions about how to encourage parental involvement and about fund-raising. Angela (Parent, OLP) explained that the PTO was involved with deciding about the events and fund-raisers, and could decide on new activities. In regard to suggestions on school policies, safety, or budget, she thought it should be the school's decision.

Parents placed more emphasis on being heard rather than decision-making. They expected that the school would make the ultimate decisions, but wanted the school to consider the parents' concerns and suggestions. Gabriela (Parent, GS) felt that the parent board provided an avenue for making suggestions on "how to make something better," such as the tutoring program the school had implemented. Her main concern was that the school needed to "to take complaints seriously." She did not have personal experience with this problem, however, because when she had a concern, she chose to go directly to the source, whether it was the coach, a teacher, the vice president, or the principal, and felt comfortable in raising her concerns.

The parents expected the schools to be honest in clarifying the role they wanted the parents to play in decision-making. Dolores (Parent, GS) accepted that the school

made the final decision, and she preferred that the school be "open and upfront right away" and tell her exactly what they expected of the parents. She met with the athletic director at the beginning of the year and frankly asked him what he expected of the parents on the new booster council. He responded that he needed the council to do as he asked, and she respected him for his honesty. She concluded, "Parents want to know where they stand."

Welcoming environment. The parents valued the welcoming environment they felt at the schools. This environment allowed them to feel comfortable in contacting the school. The secretary and office staff contributed to how comfortable the parents felt in approaching the schools. Good Shepherd's philosophy asserted that the parents and school were a family. They had banners of the school's mission placed in the school's courtyard and reinforced the philosophy in the school handbook. The family philosophy was mentioned at the mass and the Open House. Gabriela (Parent, GS) asserted that at Good Shepherd, she felt "surrounded by family" and noticed that this family atmosphere helped the boys develop "life long friendships." This feeling of home resulted in Lupe's (Parent, GS) decision to enroll her son at Good Shepherd. She had attended the Open House, and she recounted how the school's family atmosphere made her feel good when she walked in.

I wanted to observe this particular family atmosphere that Lupe (Parent, GS) spoke of during Good Shepherd's Open House on November 14, 2011. Principal Campos (GS) greeted parents and prospective students in the courtyard. He appeared periodically in the different classrooms that were part of the tour, and he was the final

speaker at the end of the tour. He talked about the success of Catholic schools with students graduating and going to college. He spoke of community and how Good Shepherd contributed to the community, how the students return to the community to help. He mentioned that many faculty members themselves had graduated from Good Shepherd. He spoke of faith and how important it was to have "faith in action." Finally, he reiterated Good Shepherd's four pillars: home, church, academics, and playground.

The counseling office was the first stop on the tour. The counselor told the tour, "your son is joining a family." During the tour, one student speaker told the new families, " I feel like they are my brothers." One football player from grade 12 told the parents during the tour to the gym, "I love the atmosphere. It's a family. A brotherhood." He talked about how academics come first and which colleges had recruited him. His teammate added, "Good Shepherd is a home. It's a great place to be."

This warmth toward students and families was felt at St. Francis. Marisol (Parent, SF) was comfortable in contacting the school and secretary. Julia (Parent, SF) mentioned how she was also comfortable contacting Principal Fawkes (SF) and explained, "con él, hay caridad" (with him, there is kindness, good-will). In general, Julia (SF) could see that the school "le da un ambiente de caridad y lo espiritual" (gives her an atmosphere of kindness and spirituality). Sydney's (Parent, SF) personal experience in this regard differed from the other parents at St. Francis. Whereas she commended the principal for his warmth and respect, she took issue with the lack of respect some of the teachers had exhibited by not acknowledging her on campus.

Charlotte (Parent, SF) remarked that she liked the approachability of the school and how they included grandparents and others in the school family. She detailed the Grandparent's Day the school had celebrated the year before and looked forward to the next one in the fall. Her mother had attended the previous year, and this year her mother, uncle, and her son's godmother would be attending. This event gave other family members a chance "to be part of their lives" and was especially important in high school, where there were fewer occasions for the grandparents and others to see the children.

Leadership. The principal leadership theme emerged as I listened to parents discuss the ideal parent-school relationship and what parents needed to facilitate participation in their child's education. The principals' role required leadership to build strong parent-school relationships that united parents, teachers, and staff to work toward the common child-centered goal.

Parents at Good Shepherd wanted to be involved, but found it frustrating when the principal cancelled or delayed an event. Gabriela (Parent, GS) said the principal "throws a wrench in our planning" when a few days before the event, he cancelled the function. Later in September, the administration cancelled the school's annual *tardeada* (carnival). I was present at the Back-to School Night and at a parent board meeting when this was announced. The parents at both meetings did not show frustration or concern at the news of the cancellation. One parent at the September 14th meeting asked the teacher moderator why it was cancelled, and he explained it was the result of "problems with manpower."

The Principals' Expectations of the Principal's Role

The principals' expectations of their role were similar to the four major themes identified by the parents, although at times, the principals' focus was slightly different in order to accommodate parents, students, and the needs of each individual school. Communication was an expectation, but this theme has been covered in the section on perceived barriers and how the principals addressed these problems. The following section will be divided by three themes, but they have been modified to reflect the views of the principals: teaching and living the Catholic school mission, supporting parents, and the principal's leadership. These three themes were the basis for the trusting environment the parents believed necessary for a successful parent-school relationship and for encouraging parental involvement.

Teaching and living the Catholic school mission. One of the objectives of this study was to investigate how the Catholic school mission played a role in the parent-school relationship, and principals were asked directly in the protocol if there were "any aspects of the Catholic school mission that guide how the school develops the relationship with parents and their roles of parental involvement?" (see Appendix B). In the interview responses, the following five of the Catholic school mission components were mentioned: trust, community, cultural diversity, solidarity and social justice, and parents as the primary educator.

Mission of trust. The Catholic schools recognize that a mutual trust is created between parent and school when parents must be trusting of the Catholic schools if they choose to enroll their children, and the schools have the duty to respond to that trust by

accepting the responsibility of teaching these children (Grocholweski, 2008). During the family mass on September 1, 2011, the priest at Good Shepherd reinforced the Church mission when he thanked the parents for their trust. However, according to the parent and principal participants, this was not where the mutually trusting relationship should end. Both principal and parents actors addressed the need to build trust through living the mission, which included respect, caring, and communication. Principal Kingsbury (OLP) believed that some of the population of parents that the school served had enrolled their children with a "blind trust" in the school, and he felt it was the school's responsibility to "maintain and earn that trust." He admitted that this trust was tenuous, and "there are times where the system fails and the parents do get irate," but frequently clear communication prevented those misunderstandings. Principal Fawkes (SF) spoke of the trust that parents at his school had in the Catholic education system:

> You know, we have a high African American population here, and many of them trust the Catholic school system. Many of them have gone to Catholic schools even though they themselves are not Catholic nor are their families, but they got their education at Catholic schools, and there was a trust there that was quite solid.

Sydney (Parent, SF) did not have automatic trust for her son's school based solely on choosing a Catholic school. She believed that the school must also demonstrate respect for her as a "client" to earn her trust. She mentioned that the St. Francis principal had been kind and respectful to her, and she expected the teachers to do the same. Principal Fawkes (SF) had observed a similar lack of caring as Sydney, and found he needed to re-establish trust the first year he arrived at St. Francis. The school had been through a difficult transition of four principals in the past 6 years and parents "were very

anxious to have a principal that would care for their kids" (Fawkes, Principal, SF). This frequent turnover of principals caused parents to be distrustful of the administration, and Principal Fawkes found it necessary to build trust through open communication and caring. He explained:

> So they just wanted to be assured that their children were in good hands, and they wanted to get to know my philosophy of education, my system of communication, of discipline, of academics. All those sorts of things. I felt that they wanted somebody that they could partner with, who we could partner with in this case.

Mission of community. Faith and values are the foundations for the Catholic school community, and according to the NCCB (1972), these foundations must be taught and lived by parents, students, and school. Not all families are Catholic, but the foundation of value brings a respect for different religious backgrounds. Two of the parent participants were not Catholic, but they had observed a certain respect. Catherine did not identify or verbalize any Catholic mission components, but her description of the strong bonds and friendships among the boys and their respectful manner with one another depicts the foundations the Catholic school mission seeks to achieve. Charlotte said her son did not have a difficult transition from a private secular school to a Catholic school because the school was respectful and supportive of all religions.

The faith foundation encompasses faith, community, and safety. Principal Fawkes (SF) reinforced this community aspect when he introduced the phrase "we are a community of learning, and leadership, and love." Principals Campos (GS) and Kingsbury (OLP) talked about the top three reasons parents gave for attending their schools: the safe environment, the small community atmosphere, and a strong education. Principal Campos spoke of these reasons and asked, "But isn't that the faith formation?

They may not say it but I believe it's one and the same." He continued to reinforce the Catholic mission of community by saying "this is family, this is home." He explained in further detail how faith formation and community were integral aspects of the school, although parents might not openly express this connection:

> Maybe if you ask parents, "Is religion class important? Is celebrating liturgy important?" maybe they might not answer 100% yes, but that's part of the reason we have a family atmosphere, why we're safe. I think it goes hand in hand.

Mission of cultural diversity. The mission of cultural diversity is an extension of the universal Catholic community component. "Universal" applies to respecting people of all races, cultures, or religions. The three schools varied in the proportion of racial, cultural, and religious diversity. Our Lady of Peace had the highest Hispanic immigrant population and was the school that had the most bilingual communications. In the 2011-2012 handbook of Our Lady of Peace, the school described its philosophy as one that accepts the rich diversity and providing an environment that allows the girls to learn and respect each other. Principal Campos (GS) was concerned about the need to address the Korean population as well:

> Everything we send out is bilingual because at least 50% are Spanish speaking. The Korean community, it's an assumption that they at least read or write English, though that might be a bad assumption for some of the families, not many, maybe a few.

Principal Campos (GS) was an alumnus of Good Shepherd and understood the community well. He described the diverse background of Good Shepherd this way:

> I think we're pretty diverse in that area. Some of our families are well educated and are professionals and white collar, and some of our families are blue collar, and some of our families are unemployed, and some of them are illegal immigrants, and some of them are fourth-, fifth-, sixth-generation Americans. I

> think the people that come, [they] understand maybe the culture and the whole thing.

St. Francis had the highest Black population and the most non-Catholics, although three of the four parent participants I interviewed were Catholic. Principal Fawkes (SF) explained how the school embraced the religious diversity:

> Almost all our kids come from a strong faith background, and I say 98% are Christian, [with a] real strong emphasis on prayer and faith in Jesus and on scripture. We try to stress those things as much as we can.

The school had to explain the various Catholic rituals—such as the mass and the rosary—to the non-Catholic students to avoid misunderstandings and disrespectful behaviors. The week I interviewed Principal Fawkes (SF), he had worked with a student who was disrupting the prayer of the rosary one day in chapel, and he noted the following:

> If you explain the rules, you know a little bit more, and secondly you tell her, "but this is a sacred kind of practice and devotion by many Catholics, and if you're going to disrupt our time to say the rosary, then this isn't the school for you. Find some other school that may be more akin to your own religions traditions." And most of the kids are very respectful of the Catholic devotions and traditions. This young girl is a sophomore, and so she's kind of in a rebellious stage, and I'm sure even in other areas of her life.
>
> Next year we learned that we need better orientation for our incoming freshmen. The incoming freshmen come from many different parishes and many different elementary schools, many different religious backgrounds, and faith journeys. We really have to do a good job of explaining the Eucharist to the freshmen because they go to their first mass, and they have no clue what are all these sit ups, sit downs, sit downs, stand ups.

Mission of solidarity and social justice. The Catholic schools espouse this final mission component and view their role in teaching in urban areas as critical. In addition to their academic success in low-economic urban schools, the principals included serving all students as part of the Catholic mission. They were concerned that students who were

behaviorally difficult should be given the opportunity to improve and grow. This reflects the mission of solidarity, which acknowledges the interconnectedness of all community and school members. Principal Fawkes (SF) explained:

> God sent these kids to us for whatever reason. We don't know. But it's not by accident that this kid is in your classroom. I said [to the teachers that] when I feel the kid would be better served by having them leave, I will definitely make that decision.

The Good Shepherd handbook addresses the school's dedication to developing young men's character, faith, and academics. Principal Campos (GS) understood this philosophy to mean inspiring all the students and treating them with compassion, a philosophy inconsistent with the "zero tolerance policy" common in schools. This is a current policy that requires school administration to take prompt disciplinary action—which is usually expulsion—regardless of the degree of offense or the number of times the offense was committed. Zero tolerance applies to infractions involving drugs, weapons, or violence. Principal Campos related the following:

> I don't believe in a zero tolerance policy. I think that it's contrary to our Catholic education, definitely a Good Shepherd education. I believe teenagers take risks. I believe teenagers experiment. And I believe in educating them. I've told people here [the teachers] if you want to go be a punisher or an enforcer, you got into the wrong business. You're an educator, you're a Catholic educator, and you're a Good Shepherd educator.

Mission of parents as primary educators. The mission of the parent as primary educator was discussed by the principals quoted in the section that detailed their expectations of the parents' responsibilities in supporting the students. The principals recognized the duality of the responsibility, although they did not think parents understood the actual term "parents as primary educators," and their interpretations of the

mission varied. Principal Kingsbury (OLP) thought that parents considered the faith foundation to be more important than the mission of primary educators. Principal Campos (GS) considered that the concept of family was connected to the mission of the parent as the primary educator. Principal Fawkes's (SF) statement, "we're only trying to reinforce what they're talking [about] with their children" was also reflected the St. Francis 2011-2012 handbook.

Supporting Parents. The principals' expectations of supporting the parents were consistent with the parents' expectations, although the principals' expectations focused on developing a Catholic school mission environment where all students succeed. This section discusses supporting parents, the second of the three themes (teaching and living the mission, supporting parents, and leadership), but is viewed from the principals' perspective and realizations. The following subtopics for supporting parents are presented: hearing parents, presence, and principal involvement, providing a space for empowerment, a welcoming atmosphere, and parent education.

Hearing parents. The parent participants had repeatedly stressed the importance of being heard in the parent-school relationship. They wanted to be heard when they had a concern about their student, a teacher, or a coach. In addition, they wanted a voice in planning fund-raising events and to be told honestly the expected level of decision-making the school would allow; ultimately, they expected that the principal would be the school leader and make the final decisions.

Principal Kingsbury (OLP) had listened to the PTO at Our Lady of Peace when he agreed to change the fee policy for a missed meeting. The four participants strongly

believed that requiring a fee for not attending the mandatory meetings at the school would improve communication and involvement. During their interviews, they each expressed their appreciation that Principal Kingsbury (OLP) was willing to try this system for a year. Originally, he had not wanted to send a negative message to other parents with this policy, but the PTO believed that this was necessary in order to bring parents to the meetings.

Principal Kingsbury (OLP) mentioned that he was pleased with the current PTO and their involvement. He discussed the difficulties of having parents who would try to force their own objectives during meetings and expressed his appreciation for that year's PTO. Previously, he would have had to "manipulate the situation" to make sure parents did not overshadow the other views and student needs. He explained his position:

> I have to look at all the children, and I have to look at the whole school, and they unfortunately can't see that. The parents that can see the whole picture are the ones that are the more productive when you have a working relationship with a parent teacher organization. The ones that understand the whole picture do a lot better.

Principal Fawkes' (SF) expectation of this working relationship with parents was that "you've got to listen to your stakeholders." Principal Kingsbury (OLP) referred to listening to the parents as part of the "customer service aspect" of the school. This aspect required a balance of listening to their concerns and explaining the procedures for voicing concerns:

> There's a whole customer service aspect that the school needs to do at all times, and you want to work on strengthening that, the customer service aspect, so that the parents don't become angry when they do have the question or they feel they're not being heard. Some of it we just have to continue to clarify the path because at an elementary school you go straight to the principal all the times but in a high school there are channels you go to. [First] you go to the person who's

> involved, and then the supervisor, and before it ends up the higher … [it's] the chain of command, which is something new, and it's a skill the parents need to know. (Principal Kingsbury, OLP)

Principal Campos (GS) had considered setting up a forum where parents could go to be heard and share ideas or voice complaints, but he hesitated because he was worried that the same parents might repeatedly attend the forums, which would defeat the objective of hearing all the parents. In regard to the forums he said the following:

> We don't do that. Some parents might say to you, you might hear this from some people, maybe, maybe not, that they feel they don't have a forum to speak and that may be true. The parents that are on the parent board or what have you, those parents do speak up and feel comfortable speaking up but maybe others may not. And that's one thing I've thought about over and over, providing a forum to… Some ideas, I've heard some principals once a month or something like that, like coffee with the principal, things like that. I've thought about it. …

Presence and principal involvement. The principals' presence was observed through their attendance at general parent meetings, Open House, fund-raising events, Grandparent's Day, and the family mass. This study focused only on the principals' presence in regard to parents and did not address their presence on campus for the students. Parents' expectations varied on the amount of principal presence they wanted. Only one parent, Catherine (GS), mentioned she wanted to see more administrative involvement at the events and football games. Lupe (GS), on the other hand, attended the same school, and she commented, "90% of the teachers attend the games."

The principals at Good Shepherd and St. Francis did not always attend the parent board meetings, but the teacher moderators were always present at the meetings I observed. At these two schools, the parent board president led the meetings. Principal Campos (GS) had set up the board and other parent groups this way not only to empower

parents but also because with the size of Good Shepherd, he could not realistically take charge of them all.

Providing a space for empowerment. The expectations principals had for parental empowerment consisted of providing avenues for the parents to be heard, within certain parameters as previously mentioned, and providing a space within the parent boards for planning parent-school events and fund-raisers. Principal Kingsbury (OLP) discussed various avenues through which parents could give feedback: "They can go through the parent teacher organization, they can come and talk directly, and some have, to whoever they need to talk, be that the moderator in charge of the activity or directly to me."

He recognized the limitations of Our Lady of Peace's decision-making opportunities in curriculum:

> That's one area where the parents actually say they don't have enough say in decision-making. Unfortunately, there's not a lot of places that you can in a high school. I don't think that they can have as much decision-making where they probably would like it, and some of them want well you should have these kind of classes. Well, that's not necessarily realistic given the budget or the size of the school or the needs of the rest of the students in the school.

Principal Campos (GS) spoke of several ways he created the space to empower the parents:

> … I've done it purposefully, again the whole thing about that this is your school, not my school. If you want to have a parent, a Mother-Son dance, do it. I'm not. … because there was a Mother-Son brunch forever, okay, okay, if you want to have a dance, have a dance. It wasn't a mandate from the administration [that stated] "no we're not going to have a Mother-Son dance." So I get the feeling parents won't say that, again there will probably be parents that say, "No, it should be more structured, and the administration should dictate what we do or what we don't do."

> There was a Mother-Son dance that was run just this past weekend for example. That's a 100% parents. I hope that they feel empowered to say, "Hey we can do this."
>
> I don't say no very often. When they come up with an idea and they feel empowered, [I say] "Let's do it." I don't say no very often, but I think people know, like they say we're going to do it, it better be good.

Welcoming atmosphere. The principals' expectations for creating a friendly, welcoming environment were similar to one another. Principal Kingsbury (OLP) did not address his expectation of a welcoming environment during the interview, but it was observed when I attended the meetings, events, and office visits, and the parents spoke of his kind, nonpretentious demeanor. Although he had not studied Spanish in school, he always translated as much as he could during the board meetings. The parents were patient, and the president of the PTO would help fill in a word from time to time.

Principal Fawkes (SF) spoke of community and family, and the parent participants appreciated his welcoming attitude. He explained his method as follows:

> I'd like them to feel that it's their school. I've always talked about the [St. Francis] family, and [that] we are a community and that [they should] feel welcome. Parents do feel pretty welcome to come on in, and they do business at the front office, and they're involved with some of the concessions and some of the booster organizations, and they get to the games.

Principal Campos (GS) provided a welcoming space and confided in the parents that he relied on them to help create a family atmosphere:

> I need their input, and I need to have them feel welcome in our school, I need them to work with us. So, I'd like to say it's a strong relationship. I hope that our parents feel welcome. I hope our parents feel like it is their school.

Parent education. The final subtopic that emerged from the theme of supporting the parents was parent education. The schools had various informational nights

throughout the year, including one regarding the college application process and one on completing financial aid forms. There were also more subtle forms of parent education that I observed or learned through the interviews. Principal Fawkes (SF) described his discussions with parents who were being overprotective this way:

> I'm gentle with it, I don't slap them in the face with it. I just kind of say [to the parents], this is what I see happening. I could be wrong, but this is what I see, and I'm kind of concerned about when they get to be 19 and 25 and 31 that they're still doing this kind of, [saying], "Mama, can you help me with this or can you get me out of this mess again?"

Principal Campos (GS) commented on another subtle aspect of parent education regarding the online grading system:

> We do the online grading, Power School, and that has helped communication in that, if parents come in and say, "I didn't know, I didn't know, I didn't know," and that gives us the opportunity to educate and say well, this is what you can do.

He also suggested that the teachers explain the online program during parent conferences and point out that computers were also available in the entryway for parents to use: "At parent conferences I would encourage the teachers to have print-outs of the students, their page on the computer with the password, to again educate the parents, well, this is what you need to do" (Campos, Principal, GS).

Leadership. Dolores (Parent, GS) explained that she expected the principal to be the leader, the one to make the final decisions after listening to the parents, teachers, and the various opinions. The principals discussed the need to make decisions that were for the good of the entire school while balancing the concerns of individual parents and the teachers. As leaders, the principals recognized their limitations and sought ways to improve.

Principal Campos (GS) discussed changes he would like to institute to improve the parent-school relationships through creating more booster club options. Good Shepherd had sports booster clubs, but often the parents of academic students did not have opportunity to make the same connections. He stated: "We've talked about, we haven't gotten the ball going, but we've talked about an academic booster club. The National Honor Society, they do events for parents, not as much as the others, but they're not as connected."

He realized that the school could always improve in regard to the parent-school relationship and said about the optimal relationship, "I don't think we're there." He knew the limitations of his perspective and believed that parents' feedback would be the best indicator of the relationship: **"**I'm probably not a good indicator of where we are. I think, you ask parents themselves or faculty what their impression is probably [is] a better indicator than asking me. From where I stand, I can only see so much" (Campos, Principal, GS).

Principal Fawkes (SF) saw his limitations in the area of communication and wanted to implement a biweekly newsletter. He explained that the current communication system was "not effective right now." This was observed during the parent meeting when parents voiced concern about not getting e-mail blasts and not having access to correct e-mail addresses.

The principals also saw their role as working with the teachers in improving the parent-school relationship. Principal Kingsbury (OLP) identified one of the barriers to

the relationship as technology, including teachers' use of technology. He talked about the hesitancy of some of the teachers to send e-mails and their fear of computers.

This role included helping teachers stay focused on the Catholic school mission. Principal Campos (GS) admitted that he needed to review the concept of the Good Shepherd educator and added, "Do they get complacent? Yes. Do we need reminders? Of course, I need reminders."

One of Principal Fawkes' (SF) primary roles when he first arrived was to change the school culture and attitude. He had to change the teachers' perceptions of the students before he could begin to work with the parents. He said, "There was some healing that had to take place. … and my focus wasn't on the parents as much as on the kids." He explained the situation he observed his first year:

> There was a culture almost, of us against them. Them being the students, us being the faculty. …I had one teacher that just didn't believe they were good kids. Even in their faith, that these kids are not believers, that they're not religious, not spiritual, they're not holy or whatever. It was that kind of, they would play, they would act out of that kind of sense. We had to kind of change that. Basically, it wasn't that many, it was a few. … they would talk in the faculty room a lot, talk in the workroom, talk in the lunchroom about the dissatisfaction. They found out that I wasn't going anywhere.

Principal Fawkes (SF) also had to work on changing the students' attitudes and acknowledged that there was more work ahead in this area:

> And it went both ways; the kids felt the same way, and so we really made an effort to get rid of that, to destroy that kind of thinking. It's still a long way to go; I really want to get the kids much more involved in decision-making and some leadership of different activities. [I tell the students], "Now this is your school. I'm not going to pick up papers. If you're proud of your home and take care of it, you're going to pick up papers." It's a sense of ownership that has to be there with students, and faculty, and administration. The parents buy into that too.

This change in the students' attitude required a shift from focusing on ethnic cultures to the St. Francis culture, the community of learning, leadership, and love:

> There is a generic youth culture that they all buy into that is separate, sometimes, from their ethnic cultures. We try to develop our own culture here. We are trying to create an atmosphere where there is a St. Francis culture. (Fawkes, Principal, SF)

Conclusion

In summary, through detailed pattern analysis and axial coding, the research findings were organized according to the four major patterns and subpatterns discovered. The findings demonstrated the parents' and principals' expectations of shared responsibilities in supporting the students and the similarities and differences in how they defined the responsibilities. A strong emphasis was placed on parental knowledge of the school, communication, the importance of presence in parental involvement, and principal leadership. The following chapter discusses the findings in terms of the literature review and the patterns discovered. Finally, it provides implications and recommendations for Catholic schools and for education as a whole.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to research the expectations of 12 parents and three principals in regard to parent-school relationships and parental involvement in three urban Catholic high schools. Many urban Catholic schools are faced with the threat of closure due to financial hardships, but because these schools have proven successful for the students, they provide a vital resource to the community (Bryk et al., 1993; Greeley, 2002; Higareda et al., 2011; James, 2007; Litton et al., 2010). This study did not directly explore possible financial solutions, but focused instead on the parents, who are the stakeholders in the Catholic schools and in their children's education. Achieving parent satisfaction requires that administrators understand the parents' expectations concerning ways in which they want to be supported. Most importantly, it is fundamental for the schools and parents to understand how their relationship contributes to the success of the student. An additional component that contributes to the students' success is parental involvement, which was the main focus of this study (Bauch & Goldring, 1995; Jeynes, 2008; Ramirez, 2006). To fully understand parental involvement and the parent-school relationship within the Catholic schools, this study considered components of the Catholic school mission as they pertained to the parents and how principals realized the mission within their schools. Finally, this study examined how both parents and principals actualized their expectations within the urban Catholic high school

environment and the parents' own experiences. The four research questions in this study were the following:

1. What expectations do parents of urban Catholic high school students have of the school in terms of parent-school relationships?
2. What expectations do parents of urban Catholic high school students have of themselves in terms of parental involvement?
    a. How do they put these expectations into practice?
3. What expectations do administrators of urban Catholic high schools have of the school in terms of parent-school relationships?
    a. How do they put these expectations into practice?
4. What expectations do administrators of urban Catholic high schools have of parents in terms of parental involvement?

The data from the questions were collected through the parent and principal interviews, and evidence of how the expectations were actualized was collected through school handbooks, office visits, and observations of parent-school meetings and events. Typological and inductive analyses were conducted, followed by a process of axial coding for relationships among the emerging patterns. The findings were then coded with the following four patterns: (a) the underlying child-centered mission that guides the roles and relationships, (b) the parents' role in supporting the student, (c) the parent-school relationship created to support the student, and (d) the principals' role in creating a trusting environment that promotes parental involvement.

Through analyzing the data and their patterns, it became evident that the parents' and principals' expectations were interconnected by their common goal of supporting the students' success and shared their expectations of mutual responsibilities. Figure 1 demonstrated the three key roles of the parents, schools, and students that lead to the students' success and the overlapping responsibilities of the actors in this relationship. However, this study is limited to the roles of the parents and the principals. The research questions are answered in detail through the discussion of the four patterns in Chapter 4.

This chapter discusses the findings of this study in relation to the patterns that emerged, which were guided by the literature review, including Epstein's (2001) six types of parental involvement, Barton et al.'s (2004) ecologies of parental engagement, the components of social capital as they pertained to trust and relationships, and the Catholic school mission. Discussion of the findings is divided into the following three sections: (a) the school culture, climate, and organizational structure that promote the relationship; (b) the two theoretical frameworks of parental involvement and engagement; and (c) the significance of the five components of the Catholic school mission within these findings.

This chapter also presents implications for Catholic schools and the field of education. Finally, this chapter discusses recommendations for further research in the areas of parental involvement and promoting a culture of trust.

Discussion of Findings

The findings will be discussed in the three areas previously mentioned but utilizing the following abbreviated titles: (a) the school culture, climate, and

organizational structure (b) the two theoretical frameworks of parental involvement; and (c) the significance of the Catholic school mission.

The School Culture, Climate, and Organizational Structure

The school culture, climate, and organizational structure are three key factors that affect the quality of the parent-school relationship, the expectations of the roles, and how parents choose to become involved (Barton et al., 2004; Henderson et al., 2007; Owens & Valesky, 2011; Mapp, 2003). Parent and principal participants in this study addressed these key factors in terms of the elements of respect, a welcoming environment, and communication. They discussed how beneficial these elements were in supporting parents, encouraging involvement, and strengthening the parent-school relationship. The first element—respect—is part of the school culture, which includes the beliefs, values, and attitudes encouraged by the school. The second element—the welcoming environment—is part of the school culture and climate, which encompasses how both the parents and the school perceive the overall environment. The final element—communication—is part of the organizational structure, which was the most common factor that the parents and the principals stressed in supporting a successful parent-school relationship (Owens & Valesky, 2011).

The parents referred to respect in terms of the school culture and as an essential element in the parent-school relationship. They spoke of the respect the principals showed them and most of them felt the teachers were also respectful, except Sydney (Parent, SF), who stated adamantly that teachers should show respect by acknowledging parents. Jasmine (Parent, OLP) considered the positive attitudes of the principal, staff,

and teachers to be a sign of a respectful school culture. In addition, the nonpretentious manner of the principal made her feel respected and comfortable about approaching him. She described this atmosphere in which the principal and teachers were welcoming, saying, "they make us feel at home" (Jasmine, Parent, OLP). This culture of respect by teachers, staff, and principals had a positive impact on the parent-school relationship.

The principals referred to the second element, the welcoming environment, in terms of the school's culture and climate. They described the culture and climate as welcoming, familial, and focused on the students' academic and spiritual growth. They purposefully developed this cultural framework to be consistent with the Catholic school mission. Principal Fawkes (SF) found that he had to change the culture of St. Francis when he arrived because some of the teachers had assumed an antagonistic attitude toward the students, which in turn caused the parents to perceive the climate as negative. In order for the culture to change, he said, "There was some healing that had to take place." He needed the teachers to shift from an "us against them" culture to one of leadership, learning, and love. After the school culture changed to focus on the student, the parents perceived the environment as more caring and welcoming. The school had room for growth, however, as Sydney (Parent SF) pointed out, a few of the teachers needed to show more respect and improve their communication with the parents.

Principal Campos (GS) promoted Good Shepherd's culture of shared beliefs in family and in the students' academic and spiritual success. He promoted this culture with the parents during the Open House, the family-school mass, and at Back-To-School Night, and he encouraged the teachers to support the parents in understanding how to use

the online grading system. He realized that teachers, staff, and parents needed to be reminded of the school culture that valued each student as part of the Good Shepherd family, even when that student experienced setbacks and difficulties.

At Good Shepherd, Catherine (Parent, GS) referenced the need for teachers to be reminded of this culture of caring and the student-centered mission. She stated that teachers should remember that they were at the school because of the desire to help the children learn. For those teachers who had forgotten, she reminded them to "go back to your roots" (Catherine, Parent, GS). However, she did not understand the culture of tolerance that Principal Campos (GS) was promoting. She voiced concern that allowing students with problems to remain at the school was a poor reflection on the school's reputation, and she perceived this as a lack of leadership on the principal's part.

Within each school, different perceptions of the school culture and climate were found along with differences in the attributes given the most importance. Lupe (Parent, GS) attributed the family culture of the school to the parents and proudly told me that "parents are unity" and that they had created the family atmosphere. The three parent participants at St. Francis were happy with the existing amount of respect and communication, but Sydney (Parent, SF) had a different experience and perceived the climate to be very different than the others. One parent at Good Shepherd was concerned that the culture had a more concentrated focus on football and its fund-raisers, whereas another parent at the same school perceived that there was more focus on soccer.

The final element—communication—was listed by parents as integral in supporting an effective parent-school relationship, their involvement in the school, and

their role in their children's educational process. Communication is part of the organizational structure of the school and the principal participants acknowledged its importance as they continuously searched for new methods, such as technology, to improve communication. This finding is consistent with Dauber and Epstein's (2001) research in urban elementary and middle schools, which showed that the school's efforts to communicate with parents and provide information was a factor in determining the level of parental involvement. As students became more independent in high school, the parents saw information as an essential avenue to stay involved in their child's education.

Principals discussed the use of e-mails and phone blasts to allow access to the current information. Good Shepherd and Our Lady of Peace provided computers in the school entryway for parents and students to access. In addition, the schools made use of traditional forms such as monthly mailings and flyers sent through the students. The schools provided calendars and handbooks for parents, supplied additional information, and posted online grading on the websites.

Parents mentioned the importance of actually attending the parent-school meetings and considered attendance a form of involvement and communication. The parents at Our Lady of Peace were the most emphatic about the meetings, partially due to their need to understand the school system. All of the parent participants at Our Lady of Peace had immigrated to the United States and stressed a greater need to understand the American school system. Meeting attendance, although limited in mutual collaboration, was a form of mutual involvement by both actors and an opportunity for schools to reinforce the culture and climate they wanted to preserve. At these meetings, it was

critical for schools to demonstrate a welcoming, respectful environment. At the Back-To-School Night, teachers were introduced, but little was discussed about the parent-teacher relationship and avenues for communication.

In summary, these findings demonstrate the importance of building a structure of culture, climate, and organization that is based on respect, promotes a welcoming environment, and supports communication.

The Two Theoretical Frameworks of Parental Involvement

The two theoretical frameworks that guided this study were Epstein's (2001) six types of parental involvement and Barton et al.'s (2004) ecologies of parental engagement. The findings are discussed in this section in terms of these two frameworks.

Six types of parental involvement. Epstein (2001) built her six types of parental involvement framework on the concept of mutual responsibilities and the overlapping roles of parents and school. This study's findings reflected Epstein's framework, which demonstrated the intersecting roles and responsibilities of parents and schools. Epstein's framework (2001) illustrated that the parent-school relationship was built on three interconnected and overlapping spheres of influence, which consisted of family, school, and community. The findings in this study reflected Epstein's "overlapping spheres," as the parents and principals spoke of their expectations of their mutual roles and responsibilities. The findings also showed the interconnected nature of the parent-school relationship with a strong focus on the student, as depicted in Figure 1.

Parent and principal participants spoke of the mutual responsibilities required to support the student, which is consistent with the theory of shared responsibilities

described by Epstein (2001). To highlight the shared roles and responsibilities, Epstein referenced the term *parent-school partnership* (Epstein, 2001). The partnership represented a bond between parents and schools, where mutual support is provided to promote student success.

As evidenced by their frequent references to shared responsibilities, the parents in this study identified with the parent-school partnership concept. However, they did not expect that the partnership should be an equal one, as Dolores (Parent, GS) specifically mentioned. She felt that the term *partnership* alluded to an unrealistic representation of mutual decision-making. Although the parents deferred decision-making mostly to the schools, they still wanted to have their complaints taken seriously. They viewed their main responsibility in the partnership as supporting the school and being a part of their child's education. They expected that the school would assume responsibility for the curriculum, and provide information about the student's progress, the college application process, and school activities. These findings suggested that parents in the study viewed the parent-school relationship more as an alliance where the parents and the school worked together for the benefit of the children. In this alliance, each actor assumed responsibilities as defined by their roles and individual expectations of how best to support the student. A balance between mutual responsibilities and individual roles exists but needs to be addressed in further studies. Wanat (2010) questioned how to create such an effectual balance and hypothesized that it required respect for each other and a recognition of the individual talents and expertise to support the students' education.

Epstein's (2001) six components included communicating or communication, parenting, learning at home, volunteering, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. These six components were not designed as a checklist for schools to complete but as a guide for schools in understanding their own responsibilities in terms of supporting parents and recognizing the multiple ways parents could choose to be involved in their child's education. She noted that each of the six components was positively influenced by caring, trust, and respect. As presented in Chapter 4, parents reported that respect and trust were essential factors that they needed to support their relationship with the school.

The first component—communicating—was the one component most frequently discussed by parents and was presented in the previous section. Whereas accessing information was one aspect of communication, parents repeatedly stressed respect and trust as factors they considered necessary in order to speak with teachers about their child's progress and concerns. Their expectations for respect and trust were forthright and sincere. Sydney (Parent, SF) wanted teachers to greet her in the hallways; Jasmine (Parent, OLP) appreciated how the principal and teachers treated her unpretentiously; Dolores (Parent, GS) asked that parent roles be honestly defined; and Julia (Parent, SF) hoped that teachers would model the same respect they taught the students.

The second and third components of Epstein's (2001) parental involvement model were parenting and learning at home. These components were discussed by the parent participants in terms of motivating their children and being present for them at home and in school. Motivation and presence were factors of parenting and students learning at

home. Schools have overlooked parental presence as a component of involvement, but its importance and value have been re-evaluated and presented in Epstein's framework (2001) and Barton et al.'s (2004) ecologies of parental engagement, discussed later in this section. The parent participants viewed their role as supporting and encouraging their children to stay on task and to continue their education. Sydney (Parent, SF) believed her presence at home and at school played an important role in supporting and motivating her son. As the parents began to talk about how they motivated their children, they told me they had not realized how much they were involved until they reflected on this during the interview. Their motivation was an implicit component that they often did not acknowledge, but it identifies with Epstein's (2001) components of caring.

The principals' expectations for learning at home also centered around caring and motivation. Principals Fawkes (SF) and Kingsbury (OLP) wanted parents to ask their children about their day in school and what they had learned. They viewed parents' taking an interest in their child's education and being present in their child's life as motivating.

Parents also viewed the school's role in supporting parenting as one of providing information on students' college counseling and preparation. The schools offered college preparation nights and had various college representatives attend the school, although the representatives came more frequently during the day for the students. The counselors also played an important role in providing the information and in leading the college nights. The schools offered additional evenings for parents to come and receive help completing the application for Federal Financial Student Aid forms (FAFSA). Cultural

awareness was observed in the ways the schools presented the information. For example, counselors at Good Shepherd explained how to complete the FAFSA if a student's parent did not have a social security number, and St. Francis pointed out that many historically black colleges offered various scholarships that students might want to consider.

The fourth component of Epstein's (2001) framework of parental involvement was volunteering. For the parent participants, this included helping with the sports teams, assisting with the morning drop-off, and volunteering at fund-raisers and special events such as Back-To-School Night and Open House. Each of the schools had service hour requirements, and this component became both a way to fulfill the requirement and a way to connect with the school. The parents felt that the schools adequately communicated the various volunteer options available and that the flexible times were accommodating to their busy schedules. The parent groups also had various avenues for volunteering and had initiated multiple ways to invite parents to participate, including phone calls, e-mails, sign-up sheets at Back-To-School Night, reminders during the general parent meetings, and flyers. Isabel (Parent, OLP) mentioned that volunteering and parental involvement at the high school centered on fund-raising, but she did not oppose this because she believed it was all about helping to improve the school for the children. Principal Kingsbury (OLP) noted that parents who wanted to be involved were present regardless of the service hour requirement, and those who did not want to be involved remained absent despite the requirement. Principal Campos (GS) spoke about the school's beautification days and of the additional volunteer work that parents did to help beautify the school, saying that he had even seen one parent working in the garden on Saturdays.

A secondary effect of volunteering demonstrated by the findings of this study was social capital and the bonding with the other parents, students, and school. Putnam (2000) referred to social capital as connections within an organization that result from a common mission and goal-driven actions. Parent participants confirmed the development of these connections through volunteering and, in this way, supporting the school. The different activities provided the opportunity to connect with other parents and the teachers. Yesenia (Parent, OLP) said she was connected to other parents by being on the PTO board, and Angela (Parent, OLP) enjoyed working with other parents while she organized the Mother-Daughter Tea. For some of the parents such as Gabriela (Parent, GS) and Catherine (Parent, GS), the camaraderie and family atmosphere highlighted their positive relationship and experience at the school. Bryk et al. (1993) suggested that at Catholic schools, social capital and bonding arose from a faith-based foundation, but the findings of this study could not verify this. Some of the parent participants were not Catholic and some of the parents, who were Catholic, did not see the Catholic foundation connection. The principals, however, considered it their role to maintain the faith-based structure along with a respect for other religions. It is possible that this was such an inherent part of the culture that it went unnoticed by the parents. Nonetheless, they used descriptive phrases that could have stemmed from the faith-based culture, such as Gabriela's (Parent, GS) comment, "we are surrounded by family."

The fifth component was decision-making, and based on the findings of my study, this is the least understood and most underestimated component of parental involvement by both the parents and the principals. To understand decision-making within Catholic

schools, it is important to explore the governance structure, which has remained basically unchanged since the 1960s. This structure has limited the extent of parental decision-making to the PTOs, which ultimately affects how parents will choose to participate in the child-centered mission of the students' success. Hocevar and Sheehan (1991) suggested transforming the Catholic school governance structure to allow parents more power in the decision-making. Nonetheless, 10 years later, Ross (2009) found that Catholic school parental involvement was still primarily confined to volunteering and fund-raising and this finding held true for the parents I interviewed and observed in this study.

My findings mirror that of Byrk et al. (1993), who found that Catholic school parents, although involved in fund-raising and other volunteer activities, did not play a major role in decision-making. Epstein (2001) described decision-making as a process of working toward the child-centered mission, not as a power play against opposing points of view and interests.

However, parent participants described decision-making solely as curriculum based and did not view it as their role to make such decisions. Charlotte (Parent, SF) explained that it was a matter of trust that the school would provide the best curriculum for the students. Principal Kingsbury (OLP) mentioned that some parents in previous years had requested that certain classes be offered, such as home economics. Principal Fawkes (SF) talked about parents requesting that their children be placed in AP classes, and he was willing to accept the students into these classes provided the parents understood the amount of work the AP classes entailed.

In addition, they did not describe their participation in the PTA or the Archdiocesan parent surveys as avenues for decision-making. Parents who were on the parent boards did not connect this with parent leadership or consider leadership a component in decision-making. The parents' concern was that the school should provide a space to be heard and acknowledged and not necessarily a space for decision-making. Dolores (Parent, GS) noticed that parents would come to her if they had a problem and felt uncomfortable approaching the school, and she described herself as the "liaison between the school and other parents." This demonstrated leadership on the part of the parents, and although they did not recognize it as such, it is a form of decision-making.

One contention that parents and principals had about the leadership and the decision-making process was that sometimes a parent or a particular group would manipulate the situation on behalf of their own agenda. These findings are consistent with the potential power struggles that Epstein (2001) described, which could occur in any type of decision-making process. The parents' expectation was that they should have an avenue for being heard, but they did not want their voices to be overshadowed by the more outspoken parents. Lupe (Parent, GS) found personal agendas problematic because this caused parents to be "more intimidated by the other parents than the staff" (Parent, GS).

In the fifth component of decision-making, Epstein (2001) also included students among the actors with agency and responsibilities. Parents had not mentioned this aspect in terms of decision-making, but in terms of responsibilities. Principal Fawkes (SF) had discussed the students' responsibilities and the importance of providing them with

leadership roles. He spoke of his plan "to get the kids much more involved in decision-making and some leadership of different activities" (Fawkes, Principal, SF). He explained how he had to develop a culture of caring before he could begin to develop the students' leadership:

> Their one goal was to get out of here as soon as possible, and so I knew I had to really work with them and really change their attitude a bit, and so I started calling in student leaders, football captains, cheer captains, anyone that was here during the summer time. [I] called them in and said, "How can I help you make this senior year the best year of your life?" So after that conversation, they really began to say, "This guy really cares about us."

The sixth and final component in Epstein's (2001) framework of parental involvement is collaborating with the community. She delegated responsibility to the school for providing parents and families with community resources such as health, counseling, and recreational services. Further collaboration would include encouraging alumni to participate in school events and involving parents and students in community-service projects. Various forms of collaboration with the community were observed at the schools. Our Lady of Peace sponsored a health fair that included free health screenings and healthy-cooking demonstrations. All of the schools were involved with community-service projects such as beach and neighborhood clean-ups and Red Cross blood drives. The schools were incorporating alumni participation into their fund-raising and promotion. Good Shepherd has a high number of alumni return to teach at the school, and they used other alumni as contacts for student visits to colleges in California and other states.

Ecologies of parental engagement (EPE). Barton et al.'s (2004) EPE framework was designed specifically for the urban setting to demonstrate that low-

income, urban parents' involvement is affected by the setting in which they live and they way they choose to participate. Barton et al.'s (2004) EPE framework differed from Epstein's (2001) six types of parental involvement in that its focus was on the parents and how they maneuvered the school system. They referred to the term *engagement* instead of involvement to highlight the active process parents employ to be involved. The concept of ecology represents the effect of the context and situations on the relationships and the type of engagement. This framework did not underscore the concept of shared responsibilities, but it sought to understand the parents' perspective of involvement, how they obtained knowledge of the school, and how they established the parent-school relationship (Barton et al., 2004; Carreón et al., 2005). The EPE framework stressed the dual responsibilities and agency of the parent-school relationship and the schools' propensity to focus on parental involvement only in terms of parameters set by the school. The work of Barton et al. (2004) was influenced by the reproduction theory of Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), which took a critical look at how the schools are the ones that have defined the type of student and parent participation that should be meaningful. Barton et al.'s framework (2004) adapted the concept of mediating and spaces, similar to fields illustrated by Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), in order to understand how parents defined and negotiated their types of parental involvement in relation to the urban setting. This framework did not prescribe a checklist of actions for parental involvement but remained flexible to the spaces parents created.

In my study, I did not ask parents how they created spaces for engagement, and yet, the findings from the parent interviews reflected the EPE framework of parents

"authoring" their own space for involvement and interactions (Barton et al., 2004). The parents told their stories of how they chose to participate according to their own experience and expertise within the boundaries created by the school climate, culture, and structure. Jasmine (Parent, OLP) was determined to use her experience and talents to help support the school through her selling of *pupusas,* and she appreciated that the school was open to her suggestion to sell them. Angela (Parent, OLP) was a minority among the parents at Our Lady of Peace, but she joined the PTO, and did not hesitate to work with the parents and encouraged them to attend the meetings. She had been actively involved in her children's education in Belize and was determined to support them in this country. Julia (Parent, SF) was also a minority among the parents at St. Francis, but she enjoyed volunteering at the games and connecting with the other parents despite the language barrier. Barton et al.'s (2004) study illustrated presence as a space for involvement, and this is true of my findings. There are various conditions within the setting that affect the ways parents work within the confines of the urban setting that cannot be ignored, but these conditions should be addressed with caution because in stratifying the parents by the characteristic of urbanicity, we must not place hidden assumptions on how they choose to be engaged in their child's education. Although parents authored different spaces for involvement, they consistently told me that they valued presence, either at home or school, as a significant type of parental involvement.

The Significance of the Catholic School Mission

Trust, community, and respecting diversity have been identified as key factors in building strong parent-school relationships (Bryk et al., 1993; Coleman, 1988; Convey,

1992; Gay, 2002; Martin & Litton, 2004; Putnam, 1993). These factors are not exclusive to Catholic schools, but are embodied in the five components discussed in the literature review: trusting parent-school relationships, community, diversity, solidarity and social justice, and parents as primary educators. In this section, the findings will be presented as they are integrated into the five Catholic mission components.

Trusting parent-school relationships. The Catholic schools recognized that a mutual trust is created between parents and school, which has been discussed as one of the Catholic mission components. There is an inherent trust that parents place in the Catholic schools when they choose to enroll their children, and the schools have the duty to reciprocate that trust by accepting the responsibility of teaching these children (Bryk et al., 1993; Frabutt et al., 2010; Grocholweski, 2008). Principal Kingsbury (OLP) spoke of both aspects of this trust, noting that parents, particularly in the population he served, had great trust in the school. He said that many of the parents had enrolled their children at Our Lady of Peace with a "blind trust" in the school, and he felt it was the school's responsibility to "maintain and earn that trust." Not all parents felt that the school had earned their trust, and this weakened their faith in the school. Sydney (Parent, SF) did not contest that the school was effectively teaching her son, but disclosed that some of the teachers lacked the respect she had trusted the school to nurture. Parents expected the schools should provide an academic environment combined with a culture of caring.

Community. The foundation of the Catholic school community, which is the second component this section discusses, is built on faith and values (NCCB, 1972). The mission community is strongly reinforced in the school's teachings, and Bryk et al.

(1993) frequently heard the confirmation of "we are a community" throughout their observations (p. 275). Principals and parents in this study also reiterated the importance of the community culture at the school and affirmed its presence in all the schools. Principal Campos (GS) worked on building this community and stressed to the parents, "We're a family." The counselor at Good Shepherd reinforced this community culture at Open House, saying "your son is joining a family," and the students confirmed this, as one senior spokesperson said, "I love the atmosphere. It's a family." Principal Fawkes (SF) echoed the same purposeful mission as he explained to me, "I've always talked about the [St. Francis] family, and [that] we are a community." It is this building of community that Coleman and Hoffer (1987) referred to as social capital, the relationships parents build that contribute to the child's success, but in the Catholic school community, the faith foundation addresses the success of the whole child, both intellectually and spiritually.

Diversity. The third component of the Catholic school mission that is pertinent to the parent-school relationship is the mission of respecting diversity. The previous sections recognized the importance of respect in contributing to the caring environment that supports the parent-school relationship. A climate of caring requires that there be respect for all cultures, races, and religious beliefs. This mission of universality is documented in various Church literature and organizations such as the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (1977) and the NCEA (2004). Respecting diversity unites culture and faith, which helps to further build the community of caring (Martin & Litton, 2004).

It is necessary to understand Catholic schools' history of diversity because of the impact this has on the relationship. Historically, they have served an ethnically diverse population. In the early 20th century, they acculturated the European immigrant population into the American culture, and by the late 1960s, the Catholic urban schools served a different ethnically diverse population. During this change in ethnic diversity, there was a shift from acculturation to enculturation, which has affected the expectations and roles of the parent-school relationship. The schools I observed were attuned to improving communication through use of the students' home language and supporting the home cultures with the events and celebrations relevant to the cultures.

The two schools with the higher Spanish-speaking populations—Our Lady of Peace and Good Shepherd—had printed materials in Spanish and spoke Spanish during the meetings. Our Lady of Peace had the highest Spanish-speaking population and gave the most extensive bilingual presentations during the meetings. During Grandparent's Day at St. Francis, the PA provided a student translator if needed. Celebrations mirrored the ethnic backgrounds, with ethnic foods being sold at Our Lady of Peace; the school mariachi band playing during the Open House at Good Shepherd; and at St. Francis, the PA hiring a Black comedian, who, while playing the role of an elderly grandmother, proudly referenced her ethnicity during her Grandparent's Day show.

Solidarity and social justice. This fourth Catholic mission component contributes to an effective parent-school relationship in Catholic schools and was discussed by the parents and principals in this study. The Church has used the term *solidarity* to express the complex doctrine that all people are interconnected and

dependent on one another (Massaro, 2000). Through solidarity, the Church espoused the mission that people must work together for a positive and mutual benefit, which is also reflected in this study's findings of the parents' expectations that school and parents must work together toward educating the whole child (Code of Canon Law, 1983; USCCB, 2005). Solidarity requires that each person be afforded dignity and respect, which parents mentioned as being important in supporting the parent-school relationship.

The mission of social justice reinforces the ideology of solidarity, and the two components are not mutually exclusive. The Catholic Church extended the concept of dignity and interconnectedness to helping those in need, respecting all with different religious beliefs, races, and cultures, and promoting social change (Catarro, 2002a; Massaro, 2000). One particular area of social justice that has been addressed is the urban, low-income Catholic schools and how these schools have helped support the academic success of students in these areas (Bryk et al., 1993; Higareda et al., 2011; Litton et al., 2010). This study presents the findings as they relate to social justice, the parent-school relationship, and ways in which parents and principals mediated this relationship within the spaces of poverty and cultural, language, and religious differences. The evidence shows that parents had the same expectations as the Catholic school mission of solidarity, which emphasized mutual benefit and dignity.

The concept of dignity extended from parents to all students and was observed in this study as the principals spoke of their commitment to educate all children and promote a culture of tolerance. Principal Campos (GS) spoke of the current zero tolerance policy enforced in public schools, a stringent and broadly applied policy of

student expulsion when drugs, violence, or weapons were involved. He believed that such a policy did not correspond with the Good Shepherd and Catholic school mission, which was to teach all students. Principal Fawkes (SF) explained the school's mission in terms of their mission of solidarity by saying, "God sent these kids to us for whatever reason." The principals' commitment to tolerance was consistent with Bryk et al.'s (1993) study, which found that Catholic high schools had, on average, fewer than three students expelled per year.

The principals' commitment to helping all students was not always accepted or understood by the parents. There is an inherent challenge in following the mission of solidarity while collaborating with the parents' expectations. Catherine (Parent, GS) was concerned that Good Shepherd would get a negative reputation if the few "bad apples" were given too many chances and were not removed.

Parents as primary educators. The final component that must be discussed in this study is the mission of parents as primary educators. The Catholic Church has explained that parents have the right and responsibility to educate their children in both faith and values (Code of Canon Law, 1983; Pontifical Council for the Family, 1983; USCCB, 2005). This responsibility has been extended to their child's academic education, and schools interpret the role of parents as that of collaborators in spiritual and intellectual development (Bauch & Goldring, 1996; Code of Canon Law, 1983; NCEA, 2004). The role of the school is to work together with the parents and support them in their role as primary educator.

This mission poses an interesting dilemma for the schools: How do principals support parents in the role of primary educator if parents do not understand this role? The principals in this study thought that parents did not understand their role as defined by the Catholic mission, although all of the school handbooks mentioned parents as primary educators. Principal Kingsbury (OLP) thought that parents placed more importance on the school's role of supporting the faith formation. Principal Campos (GS) saw the family concept as an important part of the mission of primary educator, and Principal Fawkes (SF) considered the school's role the reinforcement of what the parents discussed at home. The parent participants spoke of this mission in different terms, viewing their role at home as encouraging and supporting their children's education. Only one parent, Jasmine (Parent, OLP), addressed the spiritual aspect involved in the role as primary educator.

Implications for Catholic Education

Parental involvement and parent-school relationships are significant factors for all Catholic, private, and public schools in striving for the success of the students. However, because the Catholic school mission manifests many of the components discussed previously, these findings suggest that Catholic schools have the opportunity to fully engage in and put into practice the existing mission in order to create an environment that promotes a strong parent-school relationship and meaningful parental involvement. These two implications—accessing the full potential the Catholic school mission offers and living this mission—will help schools promote and maintain beneficial parent-school relationships and parental involvement. This section suggests three additional

implications for Catholic schools based on the findings: (a) creating and sustaining the culture and climate of community, (b) differentiated parental involvement and respect of values, and (c) expanding the social justice mission component.

Accessing the Full Potential of the Catholic School Mission

Urban Catholic schools in the United States are faced with declining enrollment and budget deficits that threaten closure, and yet, if these schools are forced to close, many students who thrive in this environment will be turned away. As schools implement strategies to boost their attendance and reach out to the community for support, it becomes imperative to fully understand the function and influence of the parent-school relationship and parental involvement on the overall effectiveness and strengths of the Catholic schools. The literature on parental involvement and the parent-school relationships illustrates effective components that are reflected in the mission (Barton et al., 2004; Epstein, 2001; Gay, 2002; Mapp, 2003; Putnam, 1993). Catholic schools have the unique opportunity to realize the full potential of the characteristics that the mission embodies. The schools I observed have strong leadership by principals that access this potential through their reinforcement of the mission in their parent-school communications newsletters and with the faculty. It is important to understand that although parents may not overtly identify the mission, this does not lessen its impact, and parents will discern the mission in the overall culture and climate it creates, which was noted in this study's findings. The mission is not a panacea for flawless parent-school relations, as Sydney (Parent, SF) stated—"no school is perfect"—but it is an effective and genuine avenue for Catholic schools to provide a trusting environment that supports

the parents' role in their children's education and encourages diverse forms of parental involvement.

Living the Mission

In this study, parents did not reference the Catholic school mission directly and only a few stated that faith contributed in part to the community atmosphere. However, the parents discussed how important it was for principals and teachers to live what they taught. The most salient mission aspects addressed by parents and principals were the mission of respect and community. They frequently reiterated how important it was for the schools to actualize the mission in their relationship and comportment with the students and parents, in addition to teaching respect, community, and diversity to the students. Living the Catholic mission is pivotal if it is to be espoused by the schools, taught to the children, and expected of the parents.

Parents found the principals to be respectful, but at times there was an observed disconnect between the professed mission and the teachers' relationship and communications with the parents. Teachers have a close connection to the parents and their children, and they must understand how their own attitudes and expectations affect the parent-school relationship. Principal Fawkes (SF) noted the contentious attitude some teachers held toward the students, and this attitude was sometimes extended to the parents. The role of teachers is difficult and demanding and yet, teachers must understand that with respect and communication, the parent-school relationship can usually be improved. The common student-centered goal must be reinforced with the

teachers. As Principal Campos (GS) suggested, it is the principal's role to end this complacency and to remind teachers that Catholic schools should serve all students.

Creating and Sustaining the Culture and Climate of Community

The mission of community is no longer based solely on a shared Catholic faith because many of the families belong to other religions. However, the student-centered goal has not changed, and the alliance parents and school share in working toward that goal continues; it is the responsibility of the principal and staff to live and teach the shared beliefs and values of respect, dignity, and solidarity. This becomes the culture and climate of the school that will bond parents, students, and teachers, and create the community of caring. To be truly understood by the families, the culture and climate must be continuously reinforced at meetings, in the newsletters, and by the parent leaders. Good Shepherd reinforced the culture with large banners of the school's philosophy hanging in the main courtyard; Principal Fawkes (SF) kept reiterating the school's guiding phrase of learning, leadership, and love; and the secretary at St. Francis reinforced the goal in her prayer, "Lord, help us make decisions to benefit the children."

Differentiated Parental Involvement and Respect of Values

The mission of respecting diversity plays an essential role in all Catholic schools. It provides schools the opportunity to reach out to the students and families and to understand the cultural differences that may lead to misunderstanding and what is misinterpreted as a lack of involvement. The mission of diversity affords schools the opportunity to turn away from deficit-model thinking that regards culture and low-income status as negative factors impeding the relationship and instead consider each

family individually with various circumstances and needs, who have the same shared belief of supporting the student. The principals spoke with understanding of the busy schedules parents had and the various difficulties parents encountered, but they did not stereotype the cultural differences as a weakness. The degree of caring and respect the principals showed toward the parents was confirmed repeatedly by the parent participants.

This caring and respect extended to honoring the values the parents and families brought to the schools, including their choices about becoming involved. Jasmine (Parent, OLP) motivated her daughters to study diligently, and Marisol (Parent, SF) emphasized her presence in her son's life; in this manner, they were both involved in a meaningful way in their children's education. Parents did not always understand the importance of their motivation and presence until they expressed it during the interviews, and I realized that the schools have the ability to further support parents by addressing the value they place on the parents' role in the students' education. The mission of diversity allows for this differentiated involvement and respects the various types of involvement equally, without making judgments about which type the school views as the best. It provides the space for not imposing a "cultural arbitrary" or limiting the types of involvement because of cultural preferences (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977).

Expanding the Social Justice Mission Component

The mission of solidarity and social justice was addressed by the principals in their beliefs of tolerance and through their understanding of the different cultures and needs of the parents and students. It is important that all Catholic schools are firmly committed to the mission of solidarity and social justice. As the Catholic schools continue to serve urban students, the mission of social justice must continue to evolve and define how it will promote social change to further improve the lives of the students and community. Ross (2009) stated that the shared values have the hidden potential to bring about change. It is not enough that the schools are helping the underserved, but that they work together to help the community thrive in ways the community determines. Two examples of how schools can welcome the community's strength and resources were at Good Shepherd and Our Lady of Peace, where alumni returned as teachers and parents were asked to teach classes.

Implications for Education

This section presents implications that extend to education, both public and private, in the areas of understanding the complexities of parental involvement and principal leadership. First, the understanding and respect for differentiated parental involvement should apply to all schools. Second, the value that parents placed on the principal leadership holds an important implication for educational leadership studies.

Understanding the Complexities of Parental Involvement

The previous section on implications for Catholic schools spoke of recognizing and understanding differentiated parental involvement in terms of the Catholic school

mission. Nonetheless, it should be a universal expectation that all schools uphold in the quest for providing a socially just and inspiring educational community. It requires understanding and respecting how parents and schools choose to define meaningful parental involvement and how the schools can support them in this endeavor (Dauber & Epstein, 2001; Stelmach, 2005).

Schools have interpreted involvement as a way of tapping into the parent source to improve students' academic success, and numerous studies have shown its effectiveness (Jeynes, 2008; Keith et al., 1998; Ramirez, 2006). In accordance with federal regulations, many schools have parents sign contracts committing to be involved in their child's education by the prescribed types of involvement. However, as this study shows, the interconnectedness of parental involvement and the parent-school relationships requires that involvement be more than a one-way obligation arbitrated by the schools. It requires mutual responsibility, a relationship built on trust and taking responsibility to earn that trust, and an understanding that parental involvement is a fluid action that takes into consideration all aspects, including how parents choose to mediate the types of involvement. Schools need to reaffirm the forms of involvement that are not always part of the standard types specified in checklists and the literature.

Principal Leadership

Parents spoke of the principal as the "leader at the helm," and through the observations and interviews, it became clear that the principal played an instrumental role in developing the culture and climate for the parents and teachers. Parents relied on the principal to mediate communications and clarify the school expectations. Principal

Kingsbury (OLP) explained this by saying he wanted to "strengthen positive avenues of the communication." In strengthening communication, the principal has the opportunity to clarify the parent avenues for communication, including avenues for sharing concerns and being heard.

The area I observed that required the most parent mediation was their own space for being heard. All three schools had avenues for addressing concerns, but the parents chose to mediate their own space within these avenues. Dolores (Parent, GS) and Jasmine (Parent, OLP), for example, were confident enough to go directly to the principal, but although Sydney (Parent, SF) felt comfortable speaking with the principal, she was worried that her son would be embarrassed, and instead she went directly to the teacher or worked with her son. Lupe (Parent, GS) did not join the parent board because of internal conflicts, but she preferred to speak directly with the teacher if a problem arose. What helped the parents mediate their individual space was the caring environment created by the schools and their own determination to speak up. Principal Campos (GS) had considered starting a parent forum that would allow parents to speak, but he was worried by the fact that at other schools, this often resulted in meeting with the same parents monthly. Rather than allowing parents to dominate the discussion to complain, this forum has the opportunity to provide a space for parents to speak about and reflect on their involvement in their children's education and on their expectations of the parent-school relationship, similar to the interviews I conducted for the study. It is true that providing an area for open communication requires a difficult balance between allowing parents to feel comfortable to speak up and not allowing a few to take over with

their own agenda. The principals' role as leader is essential in maintaining this balance. They were continuously reevaluating the process and were open to changes.

Within principal leadership programs, principals should be made aware of parent leadership and learn how to develop this and encourage a balance between the single-agenda-driven parent and the parent who wants to be heard. The significant amount and variety of parent leadership within each school found in this study has implications that need to be explored within the principal leadership programs. This leadership role for principals and parents is significant in both public and Catholic schools.

As leaders, they need to balance support for the teachers and the parents and encourage a strong relationship that promotes communication and effectively supports the student. The parent leadership role has been underevaluated by both parents and principals in my study. Leadership is frequently connected to heading the parent board or coordinating the school carnival. Parents in this study demonstrated these types of leadership, but there were other subtle forms that may be undervalued by parents and principals. Literature has spoken of parental empowerment in decision-making (Bauch & Goldring, 1996; Carreón et al., 2005), but in this study, parents did not view it as instrumental in their relationship or involvement. This could be a misunderstanding of semantics or the fact that the parent participants viewed empowerment differently. They repeatedly spoke of knowledge as power, and this knowledge was facilitated by the school's culturally responsive communication, which Delgado-Gaitan (1991) found to be empowering for parents.

Recommendations for Future Research

This purpose of this study was to investigate the parents' and principals' expectations in regard to parental involvement and parent-school relationships in urban Catholic high schools. The data gained from the parent and principal interviews provided a rich understanding of the parent-school relationship, but it also demonstrated that two important actors, the students and the teachers, must be represented in future studies. Little research has presented students' expectations of the parent-school relationship; it would be interesting to examine how students perceive the school's role in promoting the parent-school relationship and whether a positive parent-school relationship builds students' trust in the school. The teachers play an important role in the relationship, and the way they view their role in supporting the parent, what they need in this relationship, and how parents and teachers mediate effective communication should be investigated. Further research is needed to explore the teachers' expectations and understanding of the Catholic school mission. Finally, how the principal works with the teachers in transforming the culture and climate in regard to the parent-school relationship is an important aspect that this study did not address and requires further investigation.

During this study, the importance of the leadership role of both parents and principals in regard to the parent-school relationship emerged. Further study should examine the various leadership roles parents have created at the schools. Furthermore, exploration into the role the principals play in guiding the parent-teacher relationship would be helpful in understanding and identifying effective leadership strategies that promote a culture of caring for both teacher and parent.

Conclusion

This study began as an exploration of the parents' expectations of the parent-school relationship and how they defined their roles and types of parental involvement. I originally hoped to give parents the opportunity to talk about their experiences and expectations of the parent-school relationship and involvement, but the parents gave me much more than a list of expectations. They generously shared their time and ideas with me and reinforced their expectations of parents' and schools' responsibilities, communication, and respect.

I have taught in public elementary and adult schools, and I know that parents and educators are all working for the betterment of the children. As such, I believe this study's findings are applicable to all schools. Nonetheless, I chose to focus on Catholic schools because of my own involvement in my daughters' schools, in addition to my experience as a Catholic junior high school teacher and previous research with Catholic schools.

However, in order to grasp the full scope of the parent-school relationship, I needed to understand the principals' perspectives. I am thankful that the principals opened up their schools to me, as it is not always easy to be under scrutiny. Without their help, I could not have obtained the school administration's perspective, and therefore would not have gained a balanced understanding of the parent-school relationship.

The importance of a caring and respectful environment in building a strong alliance unfolded as I heard the parents and principals speak of the culture and climate at the school. I realized that the Catholic school mission provided principals with the

potential and values needed to create such an environment and to lead the way in modeling effective parent-school relationships. The leadership role of the principal is pivotal in upholding the mission, helping teachers and staff to understand and live it, and supporting parents in their role as primary educators through communication and respect.

The goal of building a positive parent-school relationship based on strong principal leadership applies to all public and Catholic schools. Principal leadership must encompass building the relationship through respect and an understanding that parental involvement is not a laundry list of activities, but rather many differentiated actions that allow parents to support their children. The literature addresses empowering parents, but this study's findings led me to question what the exact definition of empowerment was for each parent. The parents in my study chose not to be part of the decision-making process but felt that gaining knowledge of the school and their child's progress was the empowerment they needed. I discovered that the interview process itself was empowering and provided the opportunity for parents to reflect on and define their own involvement in their children's education. This study has considered the aspect of differentiated parental involvement and how parents choose to support their children's education. Educators must further address the component of empowerment within parental involvement with the understanding that in defining the parameters, a respect for individuals and their values is required.

APPENDIX A

Parent Interview Protocol

Explanation and introduction to parents: "Hello, my name is Karen Holyk-Casey, and I am conducting a study on parent-school relationships and parent involvement in high school. Thank you very much for taking time out of your busy schedule to speak with me. I am hoping you will share with me some things that you believe are important for both you and the school and things you do to help with your son's or daughter's education. First, I want you to know that your participation in this study is voluntary and confidential. If you choose to participate, I will take notes during this interview. However, I will not use your name, your son or daughter's name, or the name of the school in my study. Your participation will be voluntary and anonymous. Any questions?"

The probing questions are in italics.

Expectations of Parent-School Relationships

1. What do you want to see in a parent/school relationship at this school? Can you tell me what you would like to see the school do in an optimal situation? *(Do you feel the school communicates enough? Do you want to come to the school more? Do you have opportunities to meet with the teachers and principal? Do you feel the school allows you to voice your thoughts and concerns about this?)*
2. Can you give me an example of what the school does that you like? Do you have an example of what does not help the parent/school relationship?

Expectations of Parental Involvement

3. What type of involvement do you have with the school? *(Volunteering, helping child with homework, fund-raising, attending school meetings, attending school/family functions, participating in committees, using resources such as adult education; English classes; sports events; encourage child; or do you feel you are involved?)*
4. What type of involvement do you think helps you feel the most connected to the school?
5. What do you think parental involvement includes?
6. Does the school provide suggestions on how to get involved? *(How so?)*
7. Is there any type of parental involvement you would like to have?
8. Are you involved in any decision-making in the school? Would you like to be involved in any of the school decisions? What kind of decisions? Is there any reason you would not want to be involved? *(School policies, review the curriculum, communication strategies, suggestions for safety, meetings, budgeting, how much communication should be provided when student needs help. ...)*
9. How do you think parents can be involved in the school?
10. Do you have any ideas or suggestions about parent involvement and/or school relations that you would like to mention?

Expectations of Communications

11. Why do you usually need to contact the school? (*Grades, discipline issues, teacher concerns, questions about courses to take. ...)*
12. Do you feel comfortable contacting the school? Why or why not? How do you usually contact the school? *(Phone, in person, e-mail)*
13. What is the best way for you to get information about your child and the school? *(Bulletins or newsletters, online, calendar of events, meetings, handbooks, notes from the teacher, school meetings, one-on-one communication with teacher.)*
14. Are there other types of communication that the school uses that you found helpful?

Parent Interview Protocol (Spanish translation)

Explanation and introduction to parents*:* "Buenas tardes, me llamo Karen Holyk-Casey y estoy conduciendo un estudio acerca de la relación familia-escuela y la involucración de los padres en las preparatorias. Gracias por darme el tiempo y hablar conmigo. Espero que comparta conmigo unas de las cosas que cree que es importante para usted y para la escuela y las cosas que usted puede hacer para ayudar con la educación de su hijo/a. Primero, es importante que usted sepa que su participación en este estudio es voluntaria y confidencial. Si decide participar, yo tomaré notas durante la entrevista pero no la grabaré. No apuntaré su nombre, ni el nombre de su hijo/a, ni el nombre de la preparatoria en mi estudio. Su participación es voluntaria y anónima. ¿Tiene preguntas?"

The probing questions are in italics.

Expectations of Parent-School Relationships

1. ¿Qué quiere ver en una relación familia-escuela en esta preparatoria? ¿Puede decirme que quiere usted que la preparatoria haga en una situación óptima? *(¿Piensa que la prepa se comunica lo suficiente, o quisiera venir más; ¿Tiene oportunidades de reunirse con el maestro/a o el director/a? ¿Piensa que la prepa le da una una voz para expresar sus ideas y preocupaciónes acerca de la relación familia-escuela?)*
2. ¿Puede darme un ejemplo de lo que le gusta que hace la prepa? ¿ Tiene un ejemplo de lo que no ayuda a la relación familia-escuela?

Expectations of Parental Involvement

3. ¿Qué tipo de participación tiene con la preparatoria ? (*Estar involucrado; ayudar a su hijo/a con la tarea; participar en las juntas escolares; recursos educativos como la educación adulta, clases de inglés, eventos deportivos, motivar a su hijo/a; o siente que usted sí está involucrado con la preparatoria?)*
4. ¿Qué tipo de participación piensa que le ayuda a estar lo más conectado/a con la escuela?
5. ¿Según usted, en qué consiste el hecho de que los padres se involucren?
6. ¿La prepa le da sugerencias de cómo involucrarse?
7. ¿Hay un tipo de participación de padres que le gustaría tener?
8. ¿Está involucrado en alguna decisión que hace la escuela? ¿Le gustaría que lo/la tomaran en cuenta en alguna de las decisiones de la prepa? ¿Qué tipo de decisiones? ¿Hay alguna razón por la cual no quisiera estar involucrado? *(Las reglas de la escuela, el curso académico, estar involucrado, estrategías de comunicación, sugerencias para la seguridad de los alumnos, juntas, el presupuesto escolar. ¿Cuánta comunicación se debe proveer cuándo un estudiante necesita ayuda?)*
9. ¿Cómo piensa que los padres pueden involucrarse en la prepa?
10. ¿Tiene algunas ideas o sugerencias sobre la involucración (la participación) de padres y/o la relación familia-escuela?

Expectations of Communications

11. ¿Por qué necesita contactar la prepa? *(las calificaciones, asuntos disciplinarios, preocupaciones del maestro/a, preguntas acerca de cuales cursos tomar. ...)*
12. ¿Se siente cómodo/a en contactar la prepa? ¿ Por qué sí or no? ¿Cómo contacta la prepa normalmente? *Por teléfono, corréo electrónico, o en persona?)*
13. ¿Cúal es la mejor manera para recibir información acerca de su hijo/a y la prepa? *(Boletines informativos, el internet, un calendario de eventos, juntas, guías, notas del profesor, comunicación directa con el profesor?)*
14. ¿Hay otros tipos de comunicación que encontró qué le ayudara?

APPENDIX B

Principal Interview Protocol

Explanation and introduction to the principals: Hello, my name is Karen Holyk-Casey. I am doing my dissertation on parent-school relationships and parental involvement. Thank you very much taking the time out to speak with me. I would like to ask your permission to record this interview. I will not use your name or the school's name in my study, and I will destroy the digital information on my recorder and my notes once I have completed the analysis. I will hold your responses in confidence and your participation will remain anonymous.

Expectations of Parent-School Relationships

1. How would you describe the parent-school relationship at your school?
2. Do you have an example of any barriers that might affect the parent/school relationship from both the parents' and schools' perspective?
3. How does the school eliminate these barriers?
4. What would you like to optimally see in parent-school relationships?

Expectations of Parental Involvement

5. What types of parental involvement does the school offer?
6. What do most parents seem to prefer in the way of involvement in their child's education?
7. Do you see any disconnect between what parents say about involvement and what they do?

8. What types of parental involvement do the teachers find most helpful to the students?
9. Do you have anything else to add about parental involvement and/or school relations that you would like to mention?
10. What are some of the avenues the school provides for parent-decision making?
11. Are there any aspects of the Catholic school mission that guide how the school develops the relationship with parents and their roles of parental involvement? (*Are any aspects of the Catholic school mission presented at principal meetings?)*

APPENDIX C

Checklist of Symbolic Artifacts and Documents

Artifact	Frequency	Language Used	How Disseminated
Communication			
Advance Notice of Deadlines			
Back-to-School Night Advertised			
Calendar of Events, Tests			
Flyers for Back-To-School Night			
Interim Reports			
Parent Handbook			
Parent Survey			
Parent-Teacher Conference Notice			
Report Cards			
System for Ongoing Assessment & Feedback from Parents			
Welcoming Environment			
Chairs for Visitors in Office			
Family Directory			
News Bulletin Posted			
Office Bulletin Board that Reflects Diversity of Community			
School is Clean & Well Kept			
Signs that Direct Visitors to the Office			
Parental Involvement			
Parent Involvement Policies			
Parent Survey to Find Their Expertise and Availability to Volunteer			
Parent Involvement Checklist			
Parent Education			
College Information			

APPENDIX D

Checklist for Parental Involvement

Activity	Frequency Per Year	Who Is Involved (parents, teacher, students, administration)	Where /When /Type	How Contacted	Language and Culturally Responsive Communication Style
Parenting & Parent Education					
Counseling Office					
Meetings, Information (Internet)					
Meetings, Information					
Meetings, Other					
Parent College Information Night					
Parent-Teacher Conference					
Workshop					
Sports Meetings					
Student Play/Concert					
Student Performances					
Workshops (Health)					
Communication & Fostering a Welcoming Environment					
Back-to-School Night					
Office Visits					
Open House					
Parent-Teacher Conferences					

APPENDIX D (continued)

Checklist for Parental Involvement

Activity	Frequency Per Year	Who Is Involved (parents, teacher, students, administration)	Where /When /Type	How Contacted	Language and Culturally Responsive Communication Style
Volunteering					
Booster Club					
Committee					
Fund-raiser					
Fund-raiser					
Mom's club					
Volunteer (Office)					
Volunteer (Classroom)					
Volunteer (Decorating, Cookies, etc.)					
Volunteer (Morning Drop off)					
Volunteer (Open House)					
Volunteer (Sports)					
Volunteer (Sports)					
Learning at Home					
Connecting School Work with Parent Experiences and Knowledge					
Does the School Let Parents Know this Includes Encouraging, Praising, Monitoring?					

APPENDIX D (continued)

Checklist for Parental Involvement

Activity	**Frequency Per Year**	**Who Is Involved (parents, teacher, students, administration)**	**Where /When /Type**	**How Contacted**	**Language and Culturally Responsive Communication Style**
Homework help					
Decision-Making					
Advocating Rights for Catholic Schools to Receive Government Sponsored Programs					
Church-School Function					
Committees					
Helping Senior Living Facilities					
Meetings, PTA, PTO, or PA					
Parent Leaders					
Parent Lobby for School Improvements					
Recycling Programs					
Work with Businesses					
Work with Health Resources					
Work with Universities					

APPENDIX E

INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS

Date of Preparation _____

Loyola Marymount University

Parent-School Relationships and Parental Involvement

1) I hereby authorize Karen Holyk-Casey, a doctoral student at Loyola Marymount University to include me in the following research study: Parent-School Relationships and Parental Involvement in Catholic urban high schools

2) I have been asked to participate on a research project, which is designed to understand parents' expectations of parent-schools relationships and parental involvement. My part in the project is allowing the researcher to interview me. The interview will last for approximately one hour.

3) It has been explained to me that the reason for my inclusion in this project is that a parent in this school.

4) I understand that if I am a subject, I will be interviewed by Karen Holyk-Casey.

   The investigator(s) will _____

   These procedures have been explained to me by Karen Holyk-Casey

5) I understand that notes will be taken of what I say during the interview. It has been explained to me that these notes will be used for teaching and/or research purposes only and that my identity will not be disclosed. I have been assured that the notes will be destroyed after their use in this research project is completed. I understand that I have the right to review the notes made as part of the study to determine whether they should be edited or erased in whole or in part.

6) I understand that the study described above may result in no more risks than present in daily life.

7) I also understand that the possible benefits of the study are that the school will better understand the needs and expectations of the parents in terms of parent-school relationships and parental involvement.

8) I understand that Karen Holyk-Casey who can be reached at _____ will answer any questions I may have at any time concerning details of the procedures performed as part of this study.

9) If the study design or the use of the information is to be changed, I will be so informed and my consent reobtained.

10) I understand that I have the right to refuse to participate in, or to withdraw from this research at any time.

11) I understand that circumstances may arise which might cause the investigator to terminate my participation before the completion of the study.

12) I understand that no information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent except as specifically required by law.

13) I understand that I have the right to refuse to answer any question that I may not wish to answer.

14) I understand that if I have any further questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may contact John Carfora, Ed.D. Chair, Institutional Review Board, 1 LMU Drive, Suite 3000, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, CA 90045-2659 (310) 338-4599, John.Carfora@lmu.edu.

15) In signing this consent form, I acknowledge receipt of a copy of the form, and a copy of the "Subject's Bill of Rights."

Subject's Signature _____ Date _____

Witness _____ Date _____

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