To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Nancy L. Tarsi entitled, "Parents' Experience of Culture With their Children's Schools." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Education.

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Parents' Experience of Culture With Their Children's Schools

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
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Nancy L. Tarsi
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DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to my Lord Jesus Christ,

and to

the memory of my dear mother, Mary Amoroso Tarsi

and my father, Charles Andrew Tarsi

with gratitude, respect and love.

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ABSTRACT

Parent involvement in schools increases students attendance and achievement. This intervention is most important for students from marginalized groups whose academic failure rates continue to rise despite years of programmatic attempts to ameliorate the problem. Parents are difficult to recruit and maintain in involvement programs, despite cross cultural studies that reflect strong and consistent verbal support for their children's academic success. This research proceeds from the belief that cultural mores effect educational relationships, some of whose traditions may be inconsistent with assumptions that are built into school-designed parent programs.

Phenomenological interviews with a fifteen parents were conducted in a rural mountainous community in the southeast. Through the use of non-directive techniques, the research garnered an understanding of the shared essence of the experience of parent involvement for one group of parents. Three themes were identified as making up the essential structure of the experience. The first is that parents' experience of involvement with their children's schools is relational, having familial overtones. The second theme identifies the goal of bringing students "up to the right level" with an emphasis on "everybody being even" among the children. The third theme conveys the importance of culture as both an underlying and conscious focus. The participants' narratives were strongly situated in the world (the mountains) and in time (historical), manifesting in the cultural mores of the community.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A paradox occurs when perspectives seemingly in agreement are incompatible. This study examines one such paradox: the ineffectual use of parent involvement programs to improve student attendance and achievement scores. Federal agents, school administrators and parents across the country agree on one point: they want children to do well in school. The government is legally bound to supply equal educational opportunities for all Americans. School administrators are influenced by a collective mission statement (first, do no harm) and by state and federal dictates that affect financial allocations to the school. Most parents want their children to succeed in school as well. Even parents categorized as "non-traditional" name traditional goals for their children. They want their children to stay in school, graduate, get a good job, be able to take care of themselves in the future, and be good citizens, (Becher, 1984; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Tarsi, 1994). This is surprising since disenfranchised groups often reject the mainstream American culture and the values it perpetuates, including educational achievement (Bordioux, 1986; Ogbu, 1987).

Therefore the parties are in agreement, each proceeding from some combination of motivations that lead to a shared goal. There is more good news: research conducted over thirty-odd years reports that parent involvement programs is one intervention that move children toward that shared goal. That is to say, the intervention "works" to improve attendance and achievement scores when the programs effectively generate

parent involvement. When this occurs the outcome is consistently favorable, affecting advancements that extend well beyond attendance and achievement gains (Becher, 1984; Epstein, 1987; Bempechat, 1990; Henderson &Berla, 1994). Encouraged by these reports, ongoing, varied, and creative attempts have been made across the country to foster and maintain parent involvement in schools. Research conducted on parent involvement programs that are effective have been repeatedly studied with the ultimate objective to replicate the more successful programs.

The paradox is after thirty years of implementing and evaluating parent involvement programs, federal investigators and school personnel are stymied as to what succeeds. Programs succeed or fail without leaving an interpretable clue behind as to why. A program that works well in one school is unsuccessful in another. Correcting for obvious differences between schools has yielded neither clarity nor predictive data. Essentially no discernible patterns have been found that can predict a program's success across settings (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; Smit et. al., 1993; Slaughter, 1987).

I witnessed an example of this situation while conducting a study on parent involvement several years ago. Our research team selected a number of schools to study on the basis of two criteria:

1. The staff and parents were willing to participate in a new curriculum model designed to increase the children's learning potential.

2. A minimum of 51% of the families that made up the school population were at or below the poverty level and qualify as a Chapter 1 school (Greenberg, 1991).

While conducting interview research I observed the following situation:

Alpha School had a successful parent involvement program in which volunteer parents attended social activities at the school after school hours. The school arranged transportation for parents to attend, provided child care services on school grounds for the duration of the activity, and provided a meal when the activity cut into mealtime. These get-togethers were well attended. The same strategies and others were used at Beta School - none worked to stimulate parent attendance. The Beta school staff continued to expend considerable energies in the hope of engaging parents in varied and specific aspects of their children's education. Not only did these measures fail in their objective, but staff reported the parents were increasingly hostile to staff attempts. Their collective frustration was obvious and debilitating.

This example of a program's success and failure in two "like" schools is not a unique one; the parent involvement literature is discouragingly consistent on this point (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; Smit et. al., 1993; Slaughter, 1987). Why cannot we explain or resolve this enigmatic situation after thirty-odd years of operation? I believe one answer is that the avenues explored to answer this query have not considered the concept of "parent involvement." Instead, similar strategies have been extended or elaborated upon, such as offering parent incentives to participate, the addition of a paid parent coordinator on school grounds, administrative involvement in the school's parent involvement program, etc.

Nothing in the literature indicates that the construct "parent involvement" was analyzed conceptually before it was operationalized programmatically (Ziegler & Styfco, 1993). Is it possible there is a basic disagreement "conceptually" about what constitutes parent involvement? The assumption that everyone wants children to succeed was luckily an accurate one. This luck did not extend to consensus in how to promote children's success. The one group whose input was not formally elicited when parent involvement programs were first mandated were the parents. Doubtless there was a parent or two among the professional group who worked on the initial project, but their inclusion was by chance rather than by design. Edward Ziegler (Ziegler & Styfco, 1993), one of the architects and the main chronicler of the Head Start Program's development indicated that parent involvement programs were mandated only after the suggestion to include parents in the federally funded reform movement was met with stiff resistance by many schools.

Parent inclusion at the inception might have impacted the process in several ways. There might have been a recognition of the dramatic contrasts in the meaning of involvement within various traditions. The difference in what constitutes a comfortable or "appropriate" role for a parent to occupy in their child's school might have been recognized. Someone might have looked at family or community customs that promote participation. In other words, there was an assumption of shared beliefs among all parents, school personnel and governing agents when parent involvement programs were developed and implemented. One's culture has a pervasive influence on the way in which ideas are heard, interpreted, and ultimately accepted or rejected. The parent

involvement literature indicates that rejection of outreach programs is the most common response.

We may conclude that neither professional educators nor the architects of the first parent involvement programs recognized the cultural mores in some American communities. They did not anticipate the impact cultural diversity would have on the operation of parent involvement programs. In the late 1950's and early 60's society was focused on other reforms e.g., poverty, unequal opportunities based on gender and race, civil rights, desegregation. Discussion of multiculturalism was still to come. Today educators understand that what is considered appropriate practice may vary greatly from community to community, and from family to family. Although the role culture plays in the relationship between parents and schools was not considered when parent involvement programs were being developed, we would be remiss if we fail to consider the multidimensional impact that culture plays in education today.

In summary, the elements that are the focus of this research project are:

1) The paradox of parental involvement as a successful yet ineffective intervention in enhancing academic gains, 2) the lack of conceptual agreement about parent involvement as a construct and programmatic model, and 3) the role that culture may play in family involvement with schools.

This study examines parents' experience with their children's schools. It directs attention to the personal description of fifteen individuals, crediting each as the expert about her life and establishing her words, her language, as the text or data from which the research is mine. The research methodology was selected because of its focus on

the life world of the participant as the critical perception. My primary goal was to encourage the participant to select the direction the interview took. This was accomplished through scrupulous attention to following the participant's words, and seeking clarification and elaboration of terms. To the degree that it was possible it was my goal to function as a non-influential force in supporting genuine accounts illuminating each participant's lived experience of the world.

What is gained in seeking parents descriptions of their experience? This information contributes to a better understanding of the range and complexity of parents' experience with schools. The details are basic to a resolution of the paradox that has paralyzed educational reformers for years and stifled the development of effective programs. Sensitivity toward others' needs will occur only when we jettison the presumption that one can know about others' needs without input from the others.

In the earlier discussion of the Alpha and Beta schools, the research team observed that the two schools had cultural traditions very different from each other. The Alpha School containing diverse ethnic groups is geographically located in a crowded and accessible urban city. The Beta school is ethnically homogeneous, geographically separated from other communities and follows a clear and distinct set of local traditions.

When the research team brain stormed with Beta school staff, we spoke of the possibility that the cultural traditions of the community might be affecting the way parents were hearing and responding to staff initiatives. This discussion did not evoke a new plan, but did stimulate awareness among the staff members. In the following

weeks the staff reported increased parent involvement and improvement in the community tenor. It is important to note that the increase in parent involvement did not take the form the school staff had earlier stipulated. The parents did not attend social activities in the school building but did attend an outside play in which their children performed. They did not attend PTA meetings but did send food for the children's classroom activities. They did not study with their children in an evening yet were the center of their children's learning. These parents engage their children in oral tradition - storytelling that relates wisdom and counsel from their ancestors. They involve the children in activities such as the preparation of special dishes, and building things together. These activities were not seen by the school as "educational" at one time. The parents' cultural values were being appraised differently, with more consideration of their customs and traditions than previously. Activities were now shaped to fulfill two goals: the school's academic criterion as well as respect for and sensitivity to the community's cultural dictates (see Field Notes, Appendix A).

The next chapter will begin with a review of the history of education. It reveals some important facets of the historical relationship between families and schools and outlines their separation as having taken place in the last fifty years or so. Interestingly, the issue of culture is woven throughout that story as well.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The first section contains an account of the chronology of the relationship between education and the family in the United States. The present state of incongruity in this relationship becomes comprehensible when considered from a historical context. Next follows a description of the structural support for the study that is based in the fields of education and psychology. This description takes the form of congruent theoretical, philosophic and research findings. The related disciplines of anthropology, cultural studies and social theory offer much in the way of additional support. It is within these social sciences that the seminal work on the link between the family, the culture, and educational practice originated. I therefore provide information about their substantive contribution to the present level of understanding about these complex relationships.

Historical Context of the Problem

This paper outlines the history of families and schools from the American colonization to the present time. It locates the origins of the current contradictory goals of education, and shows how economic, political and social forces affected the development of current educational practice. The history of American education is a voluminous affair; I have attempted to focus on those events that influenced the parent to school relationship rather than present a comprehensive analysis of the history of

education. Therefore, events that are germane to the history of education but do not relate to this research topic have purposefully been omitted from this account.

Early Influences on the Development of Education in the Colonies

A scholar whose area of expertise is the development of the American school, Bud Cremin has written prolifically about many aspects of colonial education. He defines *education* as a deliberate, systematic and sustained effort to transmit or evoke knowledge, values, attitudes and sensibilities. According to Cremin (1961), it is a process that is more limited than what the anthropologist calls enculturation or the sociologist terms socialization, although it includes some of the same elements. While the concept of culture permeates this description, it is not directly addressed by name. This omission is significant, since we can place the failure to consider the matter of culture as seated in our educational history.

The colonists held widely divergent views about the purpose of colonization itself. The first groups of colonists financed by the English gentry who owned the land and directed their efforts were committed to plunder and profit. Among this group there was no intent to lay down roots or to reproduce English. Eventually these forces were confounded by a series of transformations in the character of the colonies, where a mixture of gentlemen, artisans and roughnecks somehow blended into an ordered society (Cremin, 1961).

Smit et al. (1993) wrote a thorough treatise on the history of American education, in which they detail a cultural transmission of ideas, opinions and institutions from England to the colonies. This occurred from the interaction of the developing New World culture and the English influence. They claim that the transmission of cultural was a reciprocal process from the earliest days of settlement, the very existence of the New World challenging historical beliefs and time-honored customs. Both formal and informal education played a critical role in cultural transmission. This not only formed the colonial character but was also the basis for American education.

The blurring of religion, schooling and the family is reflected in the earliest reports from the colonies. Strong religious values were in opposition to the early settlers' "carnal rather than religious ends" (Cremin, 1961, p.14). The tenancy in the colonies was to model institutions in the English tradition, and education quickly became the domain of the Church. There was some negotiation with colonial family, but decisions were ultimately felt to be the jurisdiction of the Church. The English educational focus on piety, civility and learning were transmitted to the colonies. Their endorsement of these ideals connected the colonists with a civilized world, and represented triumph over the savagery of the New World. I agree with Eggleston's (1900) analysis that these constructs strongly influenced colonial society however imperfect their clarity and irrelevant their goals (Cremin, 1970). Not all historians agree that religious authority led to the present education system (Welter, 1962), but no one denies the significant role that the Church played in colonial education (Spring, 1994). Therefore the first informal educational structure was directed by the Church,

which based educational policy on the development of moral character.

Origins of the Relationship Between Families and Education

When America was first being colonized, each settlement was given control of education (Shipman, 1987). The regional differences in colonial practice produced different educational policies. The New England colony was known to have an even closer relationship with the Church than did the ruling authority than in England, which promoted religious and authoritarian rule as tenets of educational tradition. The Massachusetts Law of 1642 called for the "neglect of parents and masters" to train children in reading and comprehension of religious principals as well as preparation to be a useful member of society (Spring, 1994, p.7). The practice of apprenticeship and informal schooling for children gave way to the notion of more formal methods of instruction that was to be centered in the home. It was a time of familial responsibility for education. Cremin (1961) makes the point that we can never know with certainty the degree to which the colonists heeded the law. We may infer, however, that the existence of the law is indicative of the expectations of the time.

Colonial education centered on teaching respect for authority, maintaining social order and religious piety. The latter was most pronounced in the Puritan community of New England, which enacted the "Old Deluder Satan Law" in 1647, requiring communities to establish and support schools. This law heralded the beginning of public school in the American education (Spring, 1990). Seventeenth century education is said to have included daily instruction in colonial households, taught by parents, elders or

siblings. Neighbors were recruited when necessary (Cremin, 1970). Increasingly, the family became the principal unit of social organization and the most important educational agent.

In contrast to the Europeans who had tremendous institutional support, the colonists were forced to take on certain roles themselves, affected by England's governance and societal expectations. It is fair to extrapolate that colonial adults were much more involved in the education of their children than were their European counterparts. The household remained the single most fundamental unit of social organization in the eighteenth century and the center of cultural transmission. There were differences in the levels of education, dictated by religious ideology, familial resources and geographic location but the primary goal of education was the development of piety, civility and learning (Spring, 1990).

The first record of a strong proposal among American leaders for tax-supported public education emerged after the Revolutionary War (Pulliam, 1987). The long-term relationship between government and education is reflected in the advocacy for a national elementary education by officials like George Washington and Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson felt passionately that America's citizenry should have basic skills to function in and maintain a democratic society. He feared the unlearned would more readily fall prey to the manipulation of others (Hiatt, 1993).

Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Schools

Horace Mann's vision of the common school resulted in the development of a public school system in most states by the 1860's. Mann saw the common school as promoting economic development in the industrial age (Spring, 1990). Another strong influence on the educational policy and development was John Dewey, an educational philosopher who saw public schooling as central to his progressive community schools. His work was significantly modified by others who expounded the benefits of free public schooling. Edward Thorndike's work, developed at this time, is still strongly felt today. In essence, Thorndike mechanized methods that had been traditional classroom practice. He believed that the ideal social organization is one in which people are scientifically selected for their social roles through testing (Spring, 1990).

In this manner, education was mechanized leading to a decontextualization of the learning experience for children. This stealthy movement separated families and therefore family of origin cultures from the schools. These early conceptualizations were major influences to educational practice through the 1900's.

It is important to put this sequence of events into context. America's separation from England heralded a new equality between the classes, a collective rejection of England's class imposition on all things including education. Educational reformers supported public education that would serve the educational goals of all parents for their children. Thorndike and his followers, by making education the venue of scientific experts, weakened the linkage between parents and schools. In both farming and industrial families, the common practice was to use child labor to supplement the family

income (Rippa, 1988). Because many families needed the income from their children's work to survive, there was little motivation to encourage regular attendance to schools before the appearance of legislation that mandated it. Simultaneously, unionized workers supported public schooling because their bargaining position was improved without the presence of low paid, underage laborers.

Both Barnard and Mann pushed for the bureaucratization of public schools and the professionalism of teachers. Mann believed that parents did not possess the knowledge, time or talent necessary to help children meet the challenges of the industrial world. Furthermore, nepotism and favoritism often influenced the selection of teachers. This practice could be redressed, Mann reasoned, by turning over the task of educating children to professionals hired by the state (Hiatt, 1993).

Barnard, as the Commissioner of Education in both Rhode Island and Connecticut, worked industriously to increase state control and reduce local control of the schools. Hiatt (1993) emphasizes that the purpose of bureaucratizing schools was to ensure equity and systems management, desperately needed due to burgeoning urban areas fostered by industrialization. The impact of this thrust toward professionalism of administrators and teachers was to further distance parents from schools.

Among the citizenry there was strong popular appeal in favor of public schooling for all children, including those from poor and immigrant families. This support for public education was due largely to the efforts of public school administrators, the crafters of the public school system of the twentieth century (Cremin, 1970). These administrators believed public school to be the perfect forum in which to develop a

common culture for America's native and immigrant populations. Therefore, twentieth century school administrators crafted educational policy to promote homogeneity of culture. Professionally managed and graded elementary and secondary schools came into being, and non-school personnel were discouraged from informal involvement in the daily operation of the schools to promote this end.

According to Katz (1975), the development of written regulations was not intended to reduce community involvement but to routinize the operation of the school to better insure equitable and impartial treatment for all. Centralization was promoted to enhance standardization across school districts, while removing partisanship. It also served the goal of increasing professionalism in the schools. States began to require licensing of teachers around the year 1900 (Tyler, 1992). It was postulated that by mid-century a five year degree would be mandated (Hiatt, 1993). Though this projection was premature, it heralded what was to come and influenced perceptions of the day. Increasing pressure to professionalize teachers widened the gap between teachers and parents on both social and cultural levels. Lower class parents became increasingly reluctant to enter their children's schools, given their perception that the schools belonged to the professionals (Shipman, 1987).

Parents and Schools

The role of the community in the learning process reemerged in the late 1950's. Many parents, aware of their lessening role in their children's education, formed groups and organizations that were active in many schools (Butts & Cremin, 1953). By pointing

to serious problems in the schools, researchers aroused the public's awareness about the state of education. (Bloom, 1987; Freire, 1970; Fuchs, 1968; Holt, 1967; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968; Ryan, 1971). Their reports included findings that parent involvement had a positive influence on student achievement. This ignited parents to action. Parents initiated legislation that centered on the equality of educational opportunities, e.g., the issues of desegregation, creation of ethnically diverse schools, and bussing (Wirt & Kirst, 1975). When these efforts sparked controversy and in some communities, violence, alternate and magnet schools were proposed as another means of integrating school districts (Spring, 1990). Parents were making their presence felt through political and social platforms. Simultaneously, parents were invited to take on formal roles in the schools to assist with Project Head Start. Parents are credited with having ensured the program's viability in the confusion of the early months of operation (Spring, 1985; Ziegler and Styfco, 1993).

The 70's brought an alternative educational model to the fore; the home school movement. Groups of parents who were well educated and informed of their legal right to educate their children began instructing them in their homes. Educational reform was an ongoing focus and often took the form of school restructuring in which site-based management included the participation of local parents on planning boards. Today there is a movement toward parental choice in selecting schools. We have come full circle- from the home schools of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, through public schools with standardization of methods, bureaucracy, and professionalism, to the present in which community models of learning that include home schooling, are again

being espoused (Joyce, Weil, & Showers, 1992).

At this point, we have looked at the development of the American school over time, touching on some of the social, political and economic factors that affected its formation. The section that follows describes the theoretical and philosophic contributions that have been made to the American school in education and psychology. The disciplines are visited together because the practitioners often serve both; separating the movement into camps presents an unauthentic depiction of the process as I understand it. The same is true of the literature review of contributions by other social sciences, entitled Anthropology, Social Theory and Cultural Studies. This segment is framed to report on those aspects that inform and/or support this project.

Theoretical and Philosophic Literature

Education and Psychology

This section will present the theoretical and philosophic work that speaks to the pertinence of the research question. This is an important step in validating the pursuit of the precise study to be conducted. This process often illuminates what has been reported by others, clarifies what needs further study, isolates anomalous cases and may point the researcher in unexpected directions. It provides an historical view of the issue through which to learn about the complexities of the problem from perspectives that are usually hidden. In this way the researcher can extend the inquiry. This practice promotes testing previous findings and serves as a springboard from which to leap with some degree of confidence.

It is fitting that the first contributor in this process is John Dewey. Dewey (1859-1952) is known as one of the most influential figures in the development of the American philosophy of education. A philosopher, logician and educator, Dewey's career is said to have mirrored the dramatic changes that characterized the world in his lifetime. He is credited with having dominated philosophic discourse in education in the first half of the twentieth century to the degree that other philosophers are described as contributing to philosophic thought only to the extent that they agreed or disagreed with Dewey (Ozmon & Craver, 1990). Dewey lived through two wars, the Great Depression, and the rise of Fascism and Communism. The philosopher's active involvement in and exposure to these events sensitized him to the impact of context (Dewey, 1943, p iii-x). Dewey rejected the practice that credited knowledge as empirically obtainable and impervious to future influence. Instead he believed that knowledge was a process that was transmutable on the basis of current thoughts or events (Carmichael in Dewey, 1943; Ozmon & Craver, 1990).

Dewey's importance in this study is based on his philosophic belief in Pragmatism, or as Dewey preferred, Instrumentalism. Dewey saw ideas as instruments in solving human problems (Ozmon & Craver, 1990). In How We Think (1933), Dewey describes the five stages of how ideas can be used as instruments in solving real problems. Dewey's Theory of Instrumentalism held that educational philosophy should concern itself with human problems in a dynamic and uncertain world, rather than operating solely with unchanging facts and theoretical abstractions. His criterion was that an idea is acceptable to the degree that it solves a complex problem.

Dewey's theory recommends a position of relativity in educational practice, i.e., that education should be viewed not as preparation for life but rather, as life itself. For Dewey, a child's present life was worthy of consideration. The environment as well as a student's interests and aspirations had to be considered in educating students as "social beings." Learning to be social beings was the most important educational goal because it enabled students to grow throughout a lifetime. His stance projected a futuristic orientation rather than the alternative perspective which concentrated on the past. Much of the education of his day in which "known" facts derived from past circumstances was not considered useful to Dewey. It did not prepare students for changing conditions, nor was it necessarily a valid means of fostering learning in a human being.

This theoretical work reflects Dewey's strong commitment to education based on the individual life-world each student inhabits. His emphasis on individual needs, changing social realities, and creative solutions all suggest that Dewey would value the goal of accessing narratives of the lived experience of one group of parents, as does the present study. Applying his criteria of "Will it work to solve the problem?" can be answered "Probably yes, for this one group...." There is no singular answer that will fit for all parent groups in all schools, because humans are complex. The research design emphasizes the importance of individual difference based on contextual realities. This study attempts to glean some insights that may contribute to understanding the present blockage of parental involvement in one community. Dewey's Theory of Instrumentation supports the research plan and is wholly consistent with its tenets.

Another scholar whose work offers theoretical support for this project is L. S. Vygotsky (1896 - 1934). A brilliant Russian scientist whose career spanned psychology, education and art, Vygotsky lived during the same period in which John Dewey put forth his controversial educational philosophy. Vygotsky's work was banned from dissemination due to government censorship and first became available in the early 60's, shortly after Dewey's death. I found no evidence that either knew of the other's work, which is unfortunate when one considers the ways in which each would have undoubtedly stimulated the other's thinking.

Vygotsky postulated that ecological factors significantly influence the process of human development. His contributions to a cultural-historical perspective of human development are summarized in three broad statements:

1. *Cultural* influences are central to human development.

2. *Language* plays a critical role in learning relationships.

3. The relationship of the child with her *environment* impacts her comfort and performance (Lefrancois, 1993 p. 66).

He is best known for his Theory of the Zone of Proximal Growth, a description of the potential for development. Vygotsky's theory holds that the potential for development derives out of the interaction between one's culture and one's basic biological capacities and maturational timetables (Valsiner, 1987). For Vygotsky, the environment gave the direction within a child's biological and maturational capacities. At the time of his death, Vygotsky was moving toward stronger assertions about the role that culture plays in framing children's' psychological development and learning (Moll,

1990).

The role of language in human development also interested Vygotsky. He believed that what separates humankind from the animals is the ability to use tools and symbols. The process expands thinking skills, he wrote, moving humankind from the use of natural, unlearned functions to more sophisticated, learned behaviors. Language is the vehicle that drives us forward. It is the action of creating and using language that leads to the creation of culture (Moll, 1990; Valsiner, 1987). Cultures are dynamic; they grow and change and take on a power of their own. People create the cultures, and are then increasingly influenced by them.

M. M. Bakhtin expanded Vygotsky's work on the role of language, asserting that language always proceeds from a social milieu and reflects cultural dimensions that are invisible to the outsider to the culture. All speech is socioculturally located, therefore meaning is inextricably linked with historical, cultural and institutional settings. The structure of Vygotsky's work on a cultural-historical perspective of human development supports and validates the idea that one's culture has implications for all learning relationships, as does language (Moll, 1990).

Vygotsky is credited with providing the theoretical and philosophic basis for the powerful role that context plays in human development. He advanced the notion that the development of language enhances thinking skills as well as reflects cultural influence. In his final work, Vygotsky held that children's involvement in cultural activities with more skilled partners would allow children to internalize tools for thinking as well as to develop more mature approaches to problem solving. He further

alleged that individual development is mediated through interactions with people more skilled in the use of the culture's tools (Rogoff, 1989; Valsiner, 1987).

Another theorist whose work follows the cultural-historical structure Vygotsky framed is Reuvan Feuerstein. Feuerstein was born in 1921 in Rumania. He continued the tradition of commitment to humanity that he witnessed among his family. Today, he continues to write and teach in an effort to ensure that the work he has generated over the past fifty years will extend beyond his lifetime. He was imprisoned in Nazi concentration camps during World War II. Later he traveled extensively throughout the world working with "ruined people," (Goldberg ,1991) usually children suffering from poverty, disease, and cultural deprivation. These experiences informed the theoretical contributions Feuerstein made; his belief in cognitive modifiability, the Theory of Mediating Learning Experiences (MLE), and the method of assessment entitled the Learning Potential Assessment Device (LPAD).

Feuerstein holds that anyone working in human service must believe in a person's modifiability on a basic and personal level. This is the essential undergirding in all of his applied and theoretical work. His escape from imprisonment in 1944 provided him with the opportunity to experience cultural disenfranchisement firsthand, and to later extrapolate that experience to a theoretical pose about the impact of culture on learning. Feuerstein worked with students who were newly returned to Israel after having been banished for years. The students' comfort and familiarity with every aspect of learning was problematic. Their abilities would have been assessed far below the standard had traditional assessment been applied. Feuerstein was convinced that the

students seemed to have trouble learning because they were culturally alienated. He had been developing a series of strategies over the years to combat cultural disenfranchisement, and this group was the catalyst for the crystallization of his theory of MLE (Feuerstein & Richele, 1957).

Feuerstein believes there is a cultural component to cognitive modifiability. His Learning Potential Assessment Device (LPAD) is designed to assess the child's thinking in such a way that her potential for learning is unmasked. This is an interactive session-administering this test can last several days in uncovering the habits that are detracting from performance and the intervening techniques that will address a deficiency (Feuerstein, 1991).

Feuerstein's belief in cognitive modifiablity centers around learners' capacity to improve thinking skills when information is mediated by another who is more skilled in the dominant cultural of the schools. Although his theoretical contributions specifically target children's performance, they have implications for all learning relationships, e.g., relationships between parents and school personnel. One of the assumptions that underpins Feuerstein's theory of MLE is the primacy of cultural congruence between the learner and the teacher and this principal surely extends to the family of the student as well.

Several other educators and psychologists have contributed to the educational reform movement and to context as critical to both learning theory and human development. Their contributions are current works in progress. Many are currently extending the precepts that Dewey, Vygotsky, and Feuerstein developed. The following

scholars produced work that is consistent with this discussion.

Urie Bronfenbrenner describes humankind as cultural-producing and simultaneously culture-produced (1989). He developed an Ecological Systems Theory of human development about the time he was appointed to the Planning Committee for Project Head Start in the early 1960's (Ziegler & Styfco, 1993). His archetype, a process-person-context model, depicts development as an interactive function of the person and her environment. The following quote is the cornerstone philosophy to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory:

" The ecology of human development is the scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation, through the life course, between an active, growing human being, and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which the developing person lives, as this process is affected by the relations between these settings, and by the larger contexts in which the settings are embedded." (Lafrancois, 1989, p 67).

In its emphasis on the dynamic and changing world integrating with the developing individual, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory is reminiscent of Dewey's early philosophy of education. Bronfenbrenner went beyond the recognizable aspects of both Dewey and Vygotsky's work in asserting that differences in intellectual performance between different groups occur as the result of their interactions within different cultures or subcultures which may be characterized by different types of cognitive processes. A person's cognitive development is therefore *always* culturally relative. The Ecology of Human Development specifies the interaction of the individual with the environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Lafrancois, 1993).

Educational theorist and researcher, Barbara Rogoff's (1990) approach is firmly seated in sociocultural studies. She proports that human skills and the activities in which humans engage are not separable from their biological and historical origins. She springboards from Vygotsky's description of MLE with which she agrees, and extends Feuerstein's contentions. Rogoff's unique contribution to the summative descriptions outlined thus far is the emphasis on the interrelatedness-the collaborative element in roles between children and their care givers. This notion of reciprocity between student and teacher is relatively new thinking that is gaining support and momentum in current educational philosophy. The latter perspective is reflected in the popularity of community models of learning, in the popular new goal/phrase of lifelong learners, as well in the surge toward cooperative curriculum models, all of whose underlying philosophic structures are consistent with Rogoff's idea of reciprocity.

Rogoff (1990) sees children as active participants in their learning and emphasizes the necessity of cooperation with adults in the cultural community of the child. The present educational movement acknowledges sociocultural background as an integral facet of the learning process. Parents figure prominently, suggesting that different and active roles for parents would be elicited in Rogoff's model.

Anthropology, Social Theory and Cultural Studies

Among these related social sciences, there is an impressive array of theoretical and philosophic support for the primacy of culture and language in human development as well as in the process of learning. The traditions that inform and extend their work have

historically differed from those used in educational psychology. The strong support reflected in the pages that follow speak to the value in collaborating with related disciplines to share ideas and strategies. Let us begin with a description of a broad movement that narrows to incorporate all of the related elements-Critical Theory.

Critical Theory

The principles that define Critical Theory were generated by an extraordinary group of scholars who were known as the Frankfort School. They gathered in Germany under the leadership of Max Horheimer (1895 - 1971) at the Institute for Social Research in the 1920's - 30's (Calhoun, 1995; Wexler, 1987). Horheimer and other prominent philosophers, Theodor Adorno (1903 - 1969), Herbert Marcuse (1898 - 1979), and Jurgen Habermass (1929 -) sought to develop a project for human emancipation. The resulting philosophy, Critical Theory, seeks to understand the oppressive aspects of modern society in order to generate individual and societal transformation (Fay, 1987). When Critical Theorists began to examine the impact of cultural forces on groups, however, sweeping individual differences in group members became obvious.

At this point Critical Theory took on the role it has occupied since; it has been central to what may someday be viewed as one of the most divisive controversies to have raged in the intellectual history of the modern age. Criticalists have tried to answer the questions: "Will the ideal of a universal humanity survive? Should it?" (Lemart in Calhoun, 1995). For some Criticalists the answer was no. They called

themselves Postmodernists to reflect their passage from the modern age of Critical Theory (and universalism) to an emphasis on the study of individual differences.

Postmodernism and Poststructuralism

Postmodernist and Poststructuralist theories developed from the philosophic split described above. Their relevance to the current research lies in their respective support for the project. Postmodernists believe that people are not separate from their contexts, as with the cloistered residents of Haleyville. They have certain beliefs about the very nature of knowledge that undergird this investigation-among them the preeminence of individual differences over the failed notion of universal truths (Tierney, 1993). Poststructuralists emphasize the power of language. They hold that each of us grasps very little "natural" meaning from others' language. Their focus on the written word as text is consistent with both the analytic (hermeneutic) and the philosophic ("Daesin"-to the things themselves) tenets of the existential phenomenological method of inquiry from which to derive some measure of understanding of phenomena. Postmodernism is briefly developed in the next section, after which a summary statement about Critical Theory and Postmodernism is offered. A brief statement of the Poststructural philosophy and its relevance to this research follows directly.

Most Postmodernists will agree with these three claims about the role of science in formal inquiry: 1) Science cannot make claims to ultimate or totalizing truths, since methodological reliance on decontextualizated conditions cannot offer a fully accurate or complete picture of social phenomenon. 2) All knowledge is therefore partial or

perspectival. 3) Knowledge always comes from a person who holds a social location (Lincoln, 1994).

The purpose of highlighting the development of Critical Theory, the Postmodernist and Poststructural movements is for the structural support that each lends to this research project. Tierney (1993), points out that Critical Theory and Postmodernism both share concern about the researcher's position and for the way in which social science data are collected, analyzed and reported. Where they differ is in the nature of how and where the researcher locates herself. A Criticalist perspective might involve positioning oneself to play a broad and active role in a cause, as in reducing oppression in society. This is a universalist orientation. A Postmodern drive, in contrast, would be to question one's involvement in society's oppression from a racial, gender, class and/or sexual orientation. This illustrates an individual difference orientation. Where one is concerned with the political nature of research, the other is concerned with personal identity and how to frame research questions and analyses in the most unbiased ways.

This particular study has goals that are supported by both Critical Theory and Postmodernism in the following ways:

1. This research projects rests on the assumption that there is value in gaining individual perceptions of personal experiences. The Postmodernist position also emphasizes the significance of differences, calling them their organizing concept. They eschew the importance of generalizing findings to other groups because they reject the notion that grouped findings speak to individual differences.

2. This research was conducted in the community, the very context in which the participants live their lives, rather than under controlled conditions that purposefully remove context from consideration in inquiry. An individual's life world is of critical importance to this study, with its emphasis on each participant's lived experience.

3. This study celebrates individual difference, manifested through the use of phenomenological methodology. This method features rigid adherence to practices that illuminate the meaning of each experience on the basis of the text, i.e., the interview data. Phenomenologists consider the participant, rather than the researcher, to be the expert about her own experience. The method involves strict fidelity to the text, which consists of the participant's narrative interview. The process of data analysis directs the researcher to use the participant's language whenever possible. Any interpretation that uses different language must be substantiated in the text.

4. One assumption of the research is that some truths exist outside of those findings that derive from use of the scientific method. The need for this research is based, in part, on the failure of past studies to foment successful interventions. The goal to illuminate possible interventions between parents and schools is supported by the Criticalist position to develop a framework for change that can benefit groups. The research project also assumes the Criticalist stance of rejecting the theory of logical positivism in its assertion that only scientific knowledge is true knowledge (Foster, 1986).

5. The data analysis procedure used in phenomenological inquiry includes a thematization process that clusters findings on the basis of the participants' shared

experiences. It has the effect of blunting the unique experience of each participant in favor of reporting the shared group experiences, a decidedly Criticalist stance. In addition, one of the goals of this research is to better understand parents' experience with their children's schools.

The project title reveals an expectation that this research does indeed elicit some truths about a group (parents) and an institution (the school). This focuses on political and group structures in order to orchestrate humanitarian goals. The broad research goal, to stimulate an enhanced perspective into the complexity of the parent-school relationship, is akin to the same Criticalist tradition. The research question mirrors both the support from and the dissonance between both Critical Theory and Postmodernism.

Poststructural Theory

An outgrowth of Postmodernist and Structural Theory, Poststructural Theory was first recorded in the 1960's. Where Structuralism interposed language to "disrupt the natural tie" between the actual substance and the "glassy essence" of the substance, (Wexler, 1987, p 136), Poststructuralists exposed tensions in reported truths, difficulties with seemingly ordinary understandings, and internal inconsistencies between language and meaning (Calhoun, 1995). Derrida is credited with establishing the Poststructural movement in reaction to a Structuralist attack on the pre-linguistic, transcendental experience of being that precludes language. In addition to Derrida, Foucault, Barthes, Kristeva, and Baudrillard began a public dialogue de-essentializing the linguistic model of Structuralism (Wexler, 1987, p 136).

Like the Postmodernists, both humanism and difference are essential themes in Poststructuralism (Wexler, 1987) and share philosophic congruence with the phenomnological method of inquiry. Poststructural Theory is consistent with this research project in the following ways:

1. They each emphasize the importance of context in understanding and appreciating differences.

2. They recognize that use of the same language does not insure shared meaning.

3. They value the experience itself over use of language to recall the experience.

4. They both believe in strict adherence to the text in acknowledging the speaker as the expert in describing her experience.

The Reproduction Model.

An anthropologist and Critical Theorist, Fredrick Erickson's (1984) interest was with studying the classroom environment. He was a traditional Criticalist whose first aim was to contribute to social reform. Yet he was also committed to examination of the role of context in individual development (1984). Erickson avoided the Criticalist versus Postmodernist controversy, seeing no incongruity in this duel purpose. He writes that school is "an arena of political negotiation" that can represent both individual and group interests and ideologies (Erickson, 1984, p 525). His contributions to the Reproduction Models are historically grounded in the philosophic tenets of the Critical Theory of Resistance.

Theories of Reproduction assert that schools are agencies that perpetuate social class distinctions from one generation to the next (Giroux,1983a). The main function of schools, according to Giroux, "are the reproduction of the dominant ideology, its forms of knowledge and the distribution of skills needed to reproduce the social division of labor" (Giroux, 1983a, p 257-258). The focus on school as having been affected by political, economic, gender and/or cultural forces is reflective of the Critical perspective described throughout this chapter. This stance is in opposition to the dominant position of seeing the victim as indictable for her problematic circumstances (Ryan, 1971). It was also a dramatic departure from the popularly held perspective of education as a means of achieving equality of opportunity (Smit et al., 1993; Spring, 1985).

Instead, reproductionists pointed to the socioeconomic and political institutions of the dominant culture as responsible for creating the conditions that perpetuate the present order. A summary of the three basic Reproduction Models will be followed by a discussion of the Cultural Reproduction Model, which is specifically germane to this study:

1. The Economic Reproductive Model: Schools dispense different classes and social groups with the knowledge and skills they need to occupy their respective places in a labor force that is stratified by class, race and gender.

2. Cultural Reproduction Model: Schools are reproductive in the cultural sense, in part functioning to distribute and legitimate forms of knowledge, values, language and modes of style that constitute the dominant culture and its interests.

3. Hegemonic State Reproduction Model: Schools are part of a state apparatus

that produces and legitimizes the economic and ideological imperatives that underlie the state's political power (Giroux, 1983a, p 258).

The overview of these three models clearly conveys the historical Criticalist reliance on Marxist philosophy, with its emphasis on hierarchical relationships in which the governing class wields power over the labor force. The Economic and Hegemonic Models add theoretical support for this research project, a point advanced in the previous discussion of Critical Theory, Postmodernism and Poststructuralism. The research goals of enhanced understanding of individual parents' perspectives and on the eventual generation of interventions for social groups are each consistent with the models. The Cultural Reproduction Model's specific attention to the element of culture extends beyond Criticalist Theory to support this research study's general goal of gaining insight into the possible role that culture plays in parent/school relationships. Therefore a more detailed discussion about the Cultural Reproduction Model is warranted.

Cultural Reproduction Model

The two principal canons of the cultural reproduction model are that schools perpetuate the dominant culture through the curriculum and rewarding of the students who use the linguistic style of the prevailing class. There are advocates for a reproductive model who believe that the goal of education is to preserve the predominant beliefs and values of white, Anglo - Saxon, Protestant America. The opposing transformation model favors promoting schools that function as sites fostering social and economic equality. Wexler (1987) reports that education is the setting for this social

movement, in which two opposing positions are competing to promote schools as institutions for reproduction versus sites for transformation. The current literature suggests that at present the dominant political and philosophic ideology is what determines the administration of each school; i.e. the debate has not be resolved to date (Carnoy & Levin, 1985). Some theorists suggest that school is a natural site of cultural conflict between the reproductive and the transformative forces in education, since the administration, students and teachers all participate in the conflict over whose values and ideas should predominate (Kempner, 1991).

This discussion has significance for the proposed study of research "Parents' experience with their children's schools." The choice to conduct the study with a culturally homogeneous population was based on the hope that cultural influences might reveal themselves in parents' reports of their experience with schools or school personnel. Also, the underlying philosophy of the school administration invariably affects the conceptual, programmatic and logistical design of parent involvement programs.

Symbolic Interactionism

Educators and Philosophers John Dewey and William James along with Sociologist George Herbert Mead fostered the methodological position of Symbolic Interactionalism. Sociologist Herbert Blumer first coined the term in the late 1930's, relying chiefly on Mead's writing. Despite its description as a methodological construct, it is included in this section for its symmetry with the previous theoretical

contributions. Although there were differences in the practice of these three scholars, they agreed on the way in which each viewed and studied human life. Symbolic Interactionalism is made up of three postulates.

1. People act upon things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them ("things" being physical objects, categories, guiding ideals, etc.).

2. Meanings of such things arise out of the social interaction that one has with one's compatriots.

3. Meanings are handled in and modified through an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things she encounters (Blumer, 1967).

Thus meaning has been described as being personally ascribed, arising out of social relationships and as integral to the learning process.

Research

Education and Psychology

The etiology of this research question began with my introduction to the parent involvement literature and was strengthened in designing and conducting a research project. The results of that project surprised me, sent me back to the literature for an explanation and resulted in my becoming engaged with material that was no longer an academic pursuit, but information that held meaning for me. Most of the research findings on Parent Involvement in Schools that drew my attention then are included in this section. My understanding was greatly enhanced by two meta analyses of parent involvement programs that were conducted recently.

Parent Involvement in Schools

Increasing parental involvement in schools was one strategy that was reported to consistently improve student achievement with poor and minority families (Olmstead, 1991). The task of operationalizing this finding in the form of effective school interventions has not been widely successful. Although studies reflect agreement across cultural and socioeconomic lines that parents want their children to succeed in completing school and in becoming good citizens, these same parents are not engaging in the parent involvement programs that promise to enhance their children's success. According to Joyce Epstein (1986), a leading scholar in parent involvement research, the breakdown is occurring in the process of fostering and in maintaining parent participation in varied programs. This is where the culture of the community is germane to the learning process. We must better understand parents, teachers, and administrators within the context of their communities. Their perceptions of what constitutes parent involvement has not been fully explored, and a series of programs has been largely created and administrated by "experts" rather than community members. To date, the only consensus reached is that everyone has different views on what parent participation should involve (Becher, 1984; Henderson & Berla,1994; Chavkin & Williams,1987).

In general, researchers do agree that parent involvement in early education is beneficial (Berla & Henderson, 1994; Seitz et. al., 1983; Ziegler & Styfco, 1993), especially with low income and minority students, whose smoothest transition from home to school is reported to occur when strong home-school ties are forged (Olmstead, 1991). Substantial evidence indicates that children significantly increased their academic achievement and cognitive development when their parents participated in their schools (Becher, 1984). Revicki's (1981) study indicates that parent participation in schools has been found to directly influence the home environment. Evidence of reciprocity exists in findings that parent participation in schools results in unexpected benefits for the family, home and community.

Positive community change was reported as the indirect result of parent participation in educational programs. Parents developed better self-attitudes, increased their self-esteem and promoted their own personal development beyond their practice after participation in their children's schools (Becher, 1984). These findings have particular significance to communities characterized by high crime rate, poverty and other undesirable circumstances. Consider that this opportunity for favorable community change results from parents' involvement with school programs.

Students, adults and communities are not the only beneficiaries of participation in parent involvement programs; both the family and the school operate more effectively when they work together to identify and achieve common goals (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Epstein, 1987). On the basis of this literature, one can easily assert that homes and schools are clearly not separate from each other, and that it makes

sense to work cooperatively.

There is a "fly in the ointment," however. Some teachers are reluctant to participate with parents in these programs; many feel their participation is critical to any successful outcome to parent involvement programs. Some reasons given for their reluctance include the amount of time it takes away from their teaching responsibilities, feelings of inadequacy about organizing parent involvement activities, and doubts about the benefits of parent involvement in schools (Becher, 1984; Epstein, 1987; Olmsted, 1991). In addition, parents and teachers have different ideas about what role(s) parents should play in school-and that those different ideas change from school to school (Schlessman-Frost, 1993).

Varied cultures characterize our communities. Valuing those differences as strengths must be our direction rather than our defense. The broad variation in ideas and practices with which parents and teachers agree suggests consideration of how the community culture may impact the success of educational programs. Volunteer parents, once seen only as an extra resource, take on additional import considering that student achievement is advanced through their participation with the schools.

Anthropology, Social Theory and Cultural Studies

The study of a culture necessarily involves observation of how a people come to perpetuate customs and traditions over time. This study of cultures has contributed a unique way in which to consider the process of learning. Research efforts in their fields have also shown us how to gain information through observation. This non-invasive

style of inquiry attempts to perceive the traditions of a community without disturbing the natural occurring dynamics that create those customs.

Some studies have been useful in modeling methodological strategies that emphasize a narrow field. The focus of these studies is on coming to a sense of meaning that derives out of one situation or with one person, as with the case study method. A Social Theorist whose professional emphasis is educational reform, Sonia Nieto's (1992) book Affirming Diversity is a wonderful resource that contains a dozen case studies. Each reflects a piece of the "mosaic" of students and families that populate America today. Participants' words are used to support the case that Nieto makes for a new conceptualization of what multicultural education means which would leave behind damaging and inaccurate constructs. For example, constructs based on the idea of genetic inferiority or deficiency. The belief in cultural deprivation figured prominently for years, and was the basis for many of the Great Society Programs. These beliefs contributed to what Nieto sees as the perpetuation of non-achievement among American populations whose cultures are being indirectly undermined through curricular choices, such as the absence of recognition and /or celebration of minority contributions. The case studies she featured contributed in singular ways to challenging the stereotypes to which we unknowing subscribe. One example of this is in Yolanda's metaphor of education as nutrition ("it's good for you...like when you eat"), a description one might not expect from a sixth grade Mexican child whose family is poor and whose school reports high dropout rates among Mexican students (p 186).

The next discussion offers a review of some research conducted by researchers and philosophers, postmodernist and critical theorists. They are featured as support for my contention that one's culture influences educational relationships. Critical Social Theorist, Pierre Bordieu (1977) coined the phrase "symbolic violence" to describe the maintenance of power relations by the dominant society in schools. It is evident, he writes, in the absence or presence of certain topics, perspectives and representation of people working in the school and in what capacity. It is reflected in the curriculum in the materials that are selected and in the ensuing discussions about who the historical leaders were and which heroes are featured prominently. These choices, Bordieu feels, give a message to students about what groups are valued and devalued by the dominant culture.

These findings highlight the productive use of selected methodologies to gain a basic understanding about elusive phenomenon; culture and ethnicity impact educational relationships. Iadicola 's (1983) study with selected middle schools looked at the symbolic violence suffered by Hispanic students by examining the power differential between school populations and the corresponding curricular choices that were made, finding that children's feelings about their own ethnicity were effected by curricular choices in how or whether their ethnic group was ever represented within the context of their learning environment. Maria Matute-Bianchi (1986) used the structure of an ethnographic study to investigate the relationship between ethnic identity and school success or failure. It cannot be a surprise to learn that Matute-Bianchi found that the positive recognition of one's ethnicity in school does affect school success, especially

with respect to completing high school. This insight is very valuable, given what we know about the myriad negative ramifications associated with dropping out of school, especially among minority populations. Kronic & Hargis's book, Dropouts (1990) is among the many works that offers pages of daunting figures that testify to those ramifications.

The next section speaks to the breadth of study that anthropologists, social theorists and cultural studies persons have devoted to cultural orientation and its impact on all aspects of education. The importance of school in acculturation issues was initially an "indirect hit" that has become a primary target. For example, Kempner (1991) makes the point that schools are a natural site for cultural conflict, as people come together, often meeting for the first time, bearing different values and belief systems. People's values and belief systems define how we see ourselves, how we come to form the culture or "webs of significance" that we experience in our lives (Geertz, 1973, p.5). Many schools introduce children to others' webs of significance, meaningful for children whose cultures differ from their own. For some children, this school experience constitutes their only substantive, supervised opportunity for this exposure. It follows that how teachers orchestrate this occasion influences children's experience in ways that impact their adult consideration of many important issues.

Cultural conflict is also addressed in theoretical and applied analysis that can be applied to education because the educational system occupies an institutional role and therefore falls under the rubric of Socialist and Criticalist interest. Bordieu (1987), Foster (1986), Giroux (1983a, 1983b), Nieto (1992), and Ogbu (1986, 1987) are major

contributors to this final discussion of the relationship of culture to education. Ogbu (1987) differentiates between "involuntary" and "voluntary" populations. He defines involuntarily groups as those who were incorporated into the American society against their will. Africans, Puerto Ricans, Mexican-Americans and American-Indians groups fit into this category, due to their histories in having been colonized or conquered (Coleman, 1966; Ogbu, 1987). Voluntary groups are comprised of those immigrant populations whose ancestors elected to become a part of American society. Voluntary immigrants include European, and some Southeast Asian, African and Central American immigrants.

This group distinction is critical to understanding the legacy of subjugation in American schools, according to Pantoja and Blourock (1975), whose work identified the American practice of separating peoples into preferred and unpreferred groups. The former most closely resemble the ideal, consisting of characteristics indigenous to the immigrant groups mentioned earlier. Pantoja and Blourock make the point that is not their *differences* that makes one group "preferable" to another, but rather the cultural value that has been assigned to them by the dominant culture.

Extensive research conducted by researchers including Bordieu, Ogbu, Cummins, and McDermott portray that variable achievement and other performance indicators are greatly influenced by the social and political situations in which the students live. With others, these researchers agree that these students' severe academic disadvantage is due to their dominated relationship with the larger culture. These findings are consistent with those garnered in the international community, where the history of colonization and subsequent domination by the conquerors have resulted in findings that are nearly

identical (Nieto, 1992).

Bordieu (1986) speaks of children from the dominant culture having the advantage of "cultural capital" that sets them apart and ahead of other children. Cultural capital can exist in the disposition of mind and body, in cultural goods like books and art work, and educational qualifications. Giroux (1983a), supports this assertion and extends it saying that subordinate groups are denied access to the power, knowledge and resources (cultural capital) that might advance them in the dominant culture.

Ogbu (1987) describes the phenomenon of cultural inversion, in which there is a rejection of common practices by the dominant culture. This practice among involuntary groups allows them to reject the negative stereotyping that dominated groups experience. Foster (1986), reports that in some homes parent involvement may take the form of denigrating educational pursuits. This serves the dual purpose of rejecting a culture that respects skill that a parent does not possess, and prepares the children for the rejection and failure that parents assume their children will also experience in school. Another representation of cultural inversion involves dominated groups' defining their practices in opposition to those of the mainstream. Ogbu, Foley and Bordieu all describe a position of opposition rather than assimilation within some cultures. This perspective contrasts with the commonly held expectation that all Americans want to assimilate into the dominant culture.

In a study done with Puerto Rican adolescents, Rueda (1993), reports that young men are encouraged to put family and financial considerations ahead of education, and that dropping out of school to care for the family increases a young man's self-esteem.

Foster (1986), reports that in a study conducted with indigent families, parent involvement took the form of discounting education to their children in conversations in the home. Parents were reported to use expressions of disdain and ridicule when references to school issues were mentioned. The researcher's interpretation is that the parents' negative verbalizations were intended to be preemptive on the part of parents who foresaw their children's pain in failing at school. The anticipation of their children's failure stemmed from their personal experiences of school failure (Gandara, 1986).

This literature review is not exhaustive, such is the depth of the work these social scientists have done on the impact that culture plays in educational relationships. I have provided the main studies that point to the degree to which the research specifies a connection to educational issues generally and my research specifically. These studies support the present research project that involves a small group of parents whose culture impacts their school relationships.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The Phenomenological Approach

Many approaches are possible to the examination of parents' experience with their children's schools. Each approach has strengths and weaknesses. In choosing a methodology, it is critical that the researcher focus on her essential interests, or as Giorgi (1970) puts it, there must be a dialogue between the method and the content. My current research project examines parents' involvement with their children's schools as it is experienced in the *lived* world. As such the methodological aim is to encourage the sharing of personal accounts by which we may learn of the participant's lived reality rather than their abstract or hypothetical thoughts.

What circumstances gave rise to the development of the existential phenomenological method? The existential belief that "existence precedes essence" was a critical tenet in which psychologist Edward Husserl strongly believed. In other words, an event must first be experienced before it can be described or recalled. Husserl (1913) initiated the methodological movement called phenomenology because he wanted to study the original conscious grasp of experiences apart from the practice of assigning meaning or interpretation to them. His interest was in the preconceptual level of awareness, his maxim, "Dasein," or "to the things themselves."

Husserl's student, Heidigger (1927) extended existential philosophy as a science of being (Ozmon & Craver, 1990). His belief was that humanity is seated in a personal history that must be negotiated with the centrality of being in the world. He refers to the lived-experience, or what Husserl calls "Lebenswelt" (the life world) as what occurs on an individual level in the world as it is lived in immediate experience. The life-world is the ground of all prereflective experience; its presence is not observable yet it impacts all that the individual encounters. It is an experience first, but one that the individual can come to know and interpret as a part of her world.

In The Social Construction of Reality, Berger & Luckman (1966) extend the description of the life world to the social and cultural patterning of human experience. People occupy a world of shared perceptions with others. The assumption of shared meanings derives from the common culture, where they share collective knowledge, a system of beliefs and values, standards of behavior, traditions and heritage. These conditions propagate a sense of familiarity and consistency that are initially experienced by the individual and later come to structure her life-world.

The current research seeks to learn about the life-world of one group of parents to the degree that this is possible. The methodological focus on the experience of the participant gives the researcher access to a particular perspective that is inaccessible through experimental design. After all, human behavior and experience include choice, awareness, and intentionality (Polkinghorne, 1988), the meanings of which are obscured from others' view because they derive out of the life-world from which each individual proceeds. As is the case with this research project, when the life world (or culture) of a

participant or group is of interest, the phenomenological method of analysis is well suited to the investigation. The next sections will describe procedural dictates.

Description of the Site and Sample

The County and The Town

The residents of the community in which the study was conducted were promised anonymity. Therefore, pseudonyms are used throughout this dissertation. Identifiers have been altered to accurately reflect the content contained in the original identifiers.

The research took place in Brock County in the town of Haleyville, whose population approximates fifteen hundred. The County has one school district that contains three school divisions that are located in Haleyville; an elementary school for grades K - 6, a middle school for grades 7 - 8, and one high school for grades 9 - 12. In all, about three hundred children attend Brock County schools each year. The 1996 census reports that Brock County school district has one of the highest dropout and teenage pregnancy rates for high school students in the nation. Informally, I was advised that the numbers were in actuality much higher than those reported on the census, a manipulation of figures that was hoped to prevent state officials from descending on the town to impose interventions (Appendix A).

The lengthy description of Brock County that follows is in response to the research finding of the meaning that the participants attach to the mountains and to the town where they live. More than one participant offered an historical account of how her people came to settle in Haleyville generations ago. The import that all of the

participants attach to Place will be extended in the Data Analysis Results chapter. The following is a compilation of the stories told by the participants and the co-researcher.

It was mostly Scotch-Irish immigrants who came to this mountainous region in the Southeast beginning in the mid 1600's; some of the town's population can trace their heritage to pre-Mayflower days. A stolid people accustomed to the challenges of harsh weather conditions and hilly terrain, the settlers selected the area because of its similarity to their homeland across the sea. The current descendants report that the arduous living conditions and the geographic isolation of the region were believed to insure safety and privacy in years to come (Appendix A), an insight that proved to be prophetic.

Cherokee Indians had inhabited the region long before the Scotch-Irish settlers, and for years the two groups occupied the expansive mountains, respecting each one's separateness from the other. Today, most of the Indian descendants live on reservations in the mountains, although some live in the Haleyville community.

Most of Brock County is "still of the wild." The terrain is rocky, covered with trees and inhabited by wildlife. Several communities have existed in this area for generations; the largest is the site of this study. Haleyville is located at an altitude of about two thousand feet above sea level. The town intertwines with the mountains rather than being cut from the rock. It is located about a hundred miles from a large industrial city, but the distance seems much greater to any who have made the trip between the two.

There are only two roads into the mountain that lead to Haleyville, and one is not recommended for use by the county road service. The "better" road is a two lane highway that is a tight squeeze for most of the fifty mile ascending journey. The tightly

winding road is reported as having as many curves per mile than any other road in the continental United States; motion sickness is common among those sitting in the passenger side of the vehicle during the two hour trip up.

Two businesses are located in the foothills in the first miles of the ascent. The first is a small wooden building that sits a few feet from the road. It is an eating place called "Sister's." The second, a few miles farther along is a store that is loaded with placards in the windows. There are signs offering nightcrawlers, canned goods, tobacco products and more. Lots of barrels, wagons and unknown dark things are stacked up so that they can be seen in the long rectangular windows as you drive by. The store's sign says "The Family Place." This business is set about fifteen yards off the road, and is usually more active than "Sister's" breakfast place, with cars coming and going in the parking lot. Sometimes I passed "The Family Place" with anxiety, remembering this is the last safe place on the trip up.

This is not an altogether foolish feeling. Some few miles past the "Family Place" the road narrows dramatically more than the road's minimal allotment at the beginning, disallowing any future decision to turn the car around and retreat down the mountain. For the entire trip past this point, the road is bounded by a towering mountain wall on one side and a cavernous chasm on the other. Sometimes there is a length of guard rail, two to three feet long, that is attached to the ground and separates the winding road from chasm. Their battered condition testifies that these guardrails are set up at the most dangerous curves on the road. One must consider the weather before making the trip to Haleyville; a chill in the city below easily translates into snow and ice in the mountains,

when the inability to turn a car around on the mountain road may become a critical matter.

A traffic sign makes one aware that she has entered Haleyville. The physical makeup of the town is expansive, the main road following the wide contours of the mountains in which Haleyville rests. The stoplight on Main Street is the location of the town's one fast food restaurant. There is one large-chain grocery in town, also located at the intersection on Main Street. In the year that I spent doing interviews in Haleyville I heard many residents complain about this grocery store. Because I could not grasp the nature of the complaint, I eventually asked my co-researcher to explain what I had heard. She spoke of the resident's resistance to "outsiders" pushing their way into the town, as the grocery chain had done. The locals fear that large businesses will invade their little town and that small family businesses will be hurt by the larger chains because they cannot compete. The business section of town, located up a hill and parallel to Main Street, is by the Courthouse. It also the location of the middle school, some local trades, the Brock County Tourism office and the police station.

The Participants

A friend to whom I will refer to throughout this report as the "co-researcher" secured this site for the study; her status as a lifelong resident of the community gave her the license to make the necessary arrangements. Her suggestion was to secure interviews with lifelong residents who would best represent the homogenous cultural model. We realized that the interviews will reveal the essential structure of the group that is

interviewed notwithstanding a selection process. My research partner set up the first few interviews. After each of those interviews I asked for referrals of people to interview. I also requested that the participant phone her referral to prepare her for my contact. Several agreed and provided new interviews, but most of the participants were engaged by my co-researcher. The condition of anonymity was critical to engaging the participants in the study.

In all, fifteen adults from the community were interviewed. They were given three choices of meeting places, and were told they could suggest some other place. About half of the participants met me at the Family Resource Center where most families have either used the day care services or taken part in a community activity. The rest were evenly divided between inviting me to interview in their homes or to meet them at their place of work. Demographic information was obtained at the time of the interview (see Appendix B).

The School

The following background sets a context for parents' personal experiences with school. This is important information, as the interview data detail frequent allusions to the history of the schools as having an impact on the participants' present day functioning with their children's schools. There were three schools in or around Haleyville until about 1940 to 1950. The first was the Haleyville School. This school was located in the center of the small community and had the highest student attendance of the three. The Mountain Ridge School was located the farthest away from the town. It was

characterized by its student population living in Brock County but the farthest away from Haleyville. The Mountain Ridge students traveled distances over rough roads to attend school. The Chetooga School had the least number of students every year. This school was located outside of Haleyville in the tiny community of Chetooga and was known to consistently have a small teacher to student ratio. The teachers were described by the participants as extraordinarily committed to each pupil. Several participants indicated that a high number of students who began school in Chetooga went onto additional educational pursuits in comparison to the other two schools.

Around the year 1940, discussion began in the town of Haleyville about consolidating the three schools. Two main concerns were identified. The first was that the children were being endangered by the travel to and from schools that they endured on unkempt and dangerous roads. The second rationale for consolidation involved the small numbers of students attending the three schools cumulatively. The argument of the townspeople who disagreed with consolidation spoke about the importance of community identity. The identity of both the Mountain Ridge and Chetooga communities were intertwined with each respective school; for its reputation for sportsmanship, athletic prowess, attitudes, etc. It was feared that closing down the two schools would result in an eventual disintegration of the two communities.

According to one resident, this is exactly what occurred in Mountain Ridge, whose population has since mostly assimilated into the larger Haleyville town identity. The tiny community of Chetooga is still fighting to retain its identity as separate from Haleyville. Chetooga residents still maintain their physical school structure with the intention of

opening it again someday (Field Notes, see Appendix A). The actual consolidation of schools took place for Mountain Ridge students in 1974. Chetooga was forced to follow suit in 1985. The Haleyville School was enlarged in the 1970's before the first Mountain Ridge students transferred over. The Haleyville school was eventually divided into the three sections outlined earlier (p. 47).

Once again the tradition of adherence to historical tenets is observed to be operating among Haleyville residents. Their descriptions of the events described above illustrate their commitment to the past that exists in the present.

Data Collection Instruments

The Bracketing Interview

Before conducting a phenomenological interview it is customary for the researcher to examine her own feelings about the research question. This is done in a formal way with the Bracketing Interview, through which the researcher is made aware of the presumptions or biases that she needs to contain (or bracket) from influencing the study (Aanstoos, 1983; see Appendix C). Procedurally, this involves a role reversal in which the interviewer becomes for a time, the interviewee. Another phenomenologist addresses the research question to the prospective researcher, using the same format that is intended for use with the participants. The interview is recorded and transcribed. In the hermeneutic tradition the interpretive group does the analysis of the transcribed protocol before the formal study begins.

Through use of this exercise, the essential structure of the researcher's experience of the topic becomes clear. Giorgi (1970) makes the point that this strategy attempts to bring biases in for the purpose of increased awareness and potential usefulness, in contrast to other methodological models whose emphasis is on keeping the biases out of the study. Peshkin (1988) suggests that it is not enough to become aware of one's subjectivity, but one must take a proactive role in identifying how one's subjectivity may shape the direction and/or the outcome of the study. He counsels the researcher to submit a bias statement. The reader can then make an informed judgment, having been apprised where "the self and the subject became joined" (p. 17). My own bias statement follows:

I have become aware of my own experience of negative expectations with schools. When addressed with the research question, " Can you tell me about an experience you have had with a child's school that stands out for you? " I shared several. The descriptors that punctuated my interview reflect my distaste for the uneven power relationships and uncomfortable boundaries that were imposed on me in schools:

"...it feels as though the place isn't mine. I mean...it belongs to someone else, and you are given the option of coming into someone else's space for a time but there are implications of boundaries around that...we all know that there are some expectations, that you're going to go into that place for a time and a purpose. So how does that feel? It feels formal..".

Some words that I used in describing a specific experience of involvement with my niece's school evoked personal recollections about my own school experiences at her age. The language that I used consistently revealed strong feelings of which I became

aware in the group analysis session:

" they were very big on discipline...I had one of those nuns...a really mean nun... she would do these kind of Nazi tactics...she would be just vicious with that pointer if she saw anyone of us... dare to come out of that...body direction that she had given to all of us...it was dog eat dog, survival of the fittest. "

Analysis of these descriptions and others of the same ilk made me aware of the harsh expectations that I carry with me. The analysis of my bracketing interview was conducted with a phenomenological research group. In addition to the bracketing interview increasing my awareness of my presuppositions and expectations, the exercise sensitized the group to issues that they would remember when conducting data analysis with the formal interviews from this study. One outcome of this exercise was that before each interview I reminded myself to be aware of my tendency to focus on negative topics. I was surprised at the degree to which this worked to redirect my bias, to the extent that I recall actively eliciting examples of positive experience with schools, making the decision to err on the side of positive when unsure of which way to go in the interview situation. The increased awareness that I did achieve allowed me to facilitate conversations with participants during which time I was able to encourage deeper description from the participants without interference from my "unknown" biases.

The Phenomenological Interview

Kvale's (1983) explanation of the phenomenological interview reflects my experience with the current research. He describes the main structure of the interview method in this statement of the elements that are usually present:

> The interview is centered on the participant's life-world, and seeks to understand the meaning of phenomena in his life-world. It is qualitative, descriptive and specific. It has no presuppositions. It is focused on certain themes and is open to ambiguity andchange. It is affected by the sensitivity of the interviewer, takes place in an interpersonal interaction and is sometimes a positive experience for the participant (p. 174).

The research question is posed in beginning the interview, after which the researcher proceeds in a circular fashion, bringing the participant back to words or phrases the participant has used that stand out to the researcher. This interview strategy evokes a deep description of the phenomena that is being studied, while it provides layers of opportunities for the participant to clarify meanings for the edification of the researcher. The qualitative interview is based on meaning, which rests on a subjective understanding of phenomena. The methodological rigor of the interview is found in the meticulousness of the descriptions that are evoked and through the stringent interpretation of the text that follows.

Interview on Parents' Experience with their Children's Schools

In the present study each interview began with an explanation my interest in the research and my request that each would do the interview. After getting the participant's signature on the Consent Form (see Appendix D), the session was audiotaped in its entirety. The tape was transcribed word for word and used as the text in data analysis (see Appendices D and E).

It was necessary to promise anonymity both in geographic location and in participant involvement in the research project. Several individuals mentioned that Haleyville had once been described unfavorably by a young man who lived temporarily in the town and later denigrated the community in print. I checked into this story and did indeed find a harsh indictment on the people of Haleyville. The publication date of the story was 1980, yet this experience was still current for some; they would not do the research interviews without my promise. The last procedural element in the interview meeting was to apprise each parent about the opportunity to review the report summary and offer feedback (see Appendix F). The participant's comments about the summary would be represented in the final report despite my agreement or disagreement with any participant's feedback.

Each participant in this study took part in a semi-structured, open-ended interview that lasted between forty-five minutes and two hours in length. No interview guide was used. Instead, much attention was paid to developing the research question used to begin the interview. The study began with the question: Can you tell me about an experience that you have had with your child's school that stands out for you? It was common for the participant to ask for further direction, at which point I resisted the urge to give additional direction, instead rephrasing the same question, i.e., Are you aware of any experience that stands out for you, some experience with your child's school?

All of the participants shared several stories. During the telling, I noted facial expressions and tonal emphases in addition to phrases or descriptions about which I had questions. All of the above insights fueled the questions that were used in generating

deeper descriptions. Some of the open-ended questions posed were:

What were you aware of at the time?

How does it feel to be _____ ? (participant's word or phrase)

Tell me about _____ (participant's word or phrase).

Can you talk a little more about _____ ? (participant's word or phrase).

What does it mean to _____ ? (use participant's word or phrase).

Through these questions I was able to track participant meaning. Many times I was startled at the difference between how the participant answered one of those queries in contrast to the meaning that I had already internally "assigned" to the word or phrase.

Data Analysis Procedures

Giorgi (1970), Keen (1975) and Wertz (1983) have argued that the data analysis procedure match the unique event that is being studied, in the spirit of the phenomenological attitude of meeting the phenomenon that is being studied on its own terms. Given the myriad of analytic proposals that may be used (Collaizzi, 1978; Giorgi, 1975; Kruger, 1981; Wertz, 1983), the researcher must choose the most appropriate procedure. Both my training and the interviews recommended a hermeneutic analysis as described below. The delineation into categories of meaning precedes the process of thematization. Thematization then collectively gives way to crystallizing the essential experience of the phenomenon.

Hermeneutic Analysis

Hermeneutics as the theory and practice of interpretation was forwarded by Schleiermacher (1977). He introduced hermeneutics as a theory of interpretation for use with sacred texts, a tradition that was taken up in the humanities with literature and other archival materials (Kvale, 1983). Hermeneutic phenomenology is a method that reflects both descriptive (phenomenological) and interpretive (hermeneutics) elements. Initially this seems a contradiction, but can be explained by the logic that Van Manen (1993) offers; if the (phenomenological) facts of lived experience are already meaningfully (hermeneutically) experienced, then the facts of human experience need to be captured in language (the text), an interpretive process.

The interpretive process is known as the hermeneutic circle because of its continuous back and forth movement between the parts and the whole of the interview protocol. The meaning of the separate parts form a larger understanding of the whole. One begins the process by developing meanings of specific statements and passages. These are evaluated against one another and against the text as a whole in finding the essential essence of the experience. The goal of the process is to reach a solitary congruence without contradiction in any part of the text. The same process is applied across protocols as data analysis is ongoing. The following is a description of the group analysis procedures used in the current study.

The hermeneutic analysis procedure involved the use of an interpretive group for the bracketing interview and four (4) of the participant interviews that were analyzed at roughly monthly intervals. About a dozen members attend the phenomenological group

regularly. Faculty and students attend the sessions; they are by no means a homogeneous group, belonging to different colleges, each with different skills and interests. Kvale (1983) notes the value in interpretive group membership that includes a broad range of personalities and perspectives; a group consensus can hardly occur within such a group without compelling evidence in the text.

Each group member receives a verbatim transcript of the interview that is being analyzed in that session. The researcher usually speaks the participant's role, and a group member speaks the researcher's role. The interview is recreated, with frequent stops by any group member who wants to discuss the section that has just been read aloud. This practice is followed by a back and forth verbal movement from the small section read to past interpretations found in previously read sections. Any disagreements in interpretation are referred to the text where the claim can be supported or is suspended until the text reveals more. Hermeneutic phenomenology holds that what exists in the text exists throughout; there is no urgency in "proving" one's point because the accuracy or inaccuracy of any contention will inevitably be borne out in the next lines of the text. Stringent attention is paid that all interpretive comments be based in the text; hypothetical, clinical and unsubstantiated claims do not hold up to the questioning of the group members. The only evidence that exists in hermeneutic analysis is that which is located in the text.

The next stage involves the clustering of the small meaning units described above. This gives way to the emergence of themes. They are continually considered from the perspective of the piece to the whole, from the meaning structure of one interview to all

of the interviews. This leads to a global understanding of the essential structure of the experience. Broader references are made to unifying themes in all of the interviews, with group members calling on their ongoing involvement in the project to support their claims with references to past protocols and observations. At this juncture the researcher is continually comparing these insights as they fit a protocol, inform the thematization process or yield the more global meaning that is the final goal of the data analysis. The last stage of the group analysis process involves the sharing of the essential structure of the participant's experience with the interpretive group.

When analyzing the protocols alone, I replayed the audiotape and took additional notes as the interview evoked memories of the session. I then followed the pattern of the interpretive group described above, making notes in the margins of the protocol, categorizing meaning units and engaging in the circular consideration of the part to the whole. The combination of group and individual analysis worked well, allowing me to access a wider range of meaning and thematic interpretations from a dozen skilled phenomenologists than could be achieved alone. I also benefited from the freedom to consider the interviews from my own perspective that included the physical and intuitive exposure to the participants in their life worlds. I was able to gain insights from both the individual analysis and group sessions that enriched my perspective for the other.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

" It's a fine line between our difficulty in communicating

and your difficulty in understanding what we mean. "

(LeeAnn, 3/97)

Interviewing is the most popular methodological tool used by qualitative researchers. It is the most common way in which a researcher attempts to understand another. Yet the meaning of language is ambiguous in both spoken and written form. My research project held a particular challenge with language. The participants and myself share a common language that is infused with different meanings because of our different cultural backgrounds. Andrea Fontana and James Frey (1994) outline interview guidelines for researchers in this circumstance in their comprehensive examination of the interview. They cite seven (7) components in structuring the research relationship when there are cultural difference between researcher and participant(s). The following descriptive narrative offers my experience of initial contact with the community and orients the reader to the discussion of the thematic analysis that ensues. The seven components are highlighted in the narrative.

Setting the Context

I began to consider Haleyville as a research site as the result of an invitation. A friend and fellow graduate student suggested her hometown, and I was immediately interested. My relationship with LeeAnn is one that I value highly. Our differences became clear on the day we each presented an autobiographical sketch to a class we shared. I had never before (knowingly) encountered a person whose life experience was so dramatically different from my own. As our friendship developed, I was struck by the energy it took for each to understand the other. From her first offer of *access to the setting*, therefore, I knew the challenge involved in doing research in Haleyville.

I had visited with LeeAnn's family a year before I began the research, attending "Decoration" weekend. The yearly event involved the adornment of family members' cemetery stones. In addition to kin, many people had a special friend or two whose grave they decorated each year. LeeAnn made a small arrangement for a high school friend who had died just before their high school graduation. Her mother always created some small floral piece for the baby from the adjoining farm who had died at birth years before. The family had moved away and she would not leave the grave unadorned.

The preparation for Decoration Day took weeks. Residents began gathering at the graveyard early in the morning that day. After finishing with their relative's stones they moved onto other grave sites. The participants greeted each other warmly. As I wandered through the hilly grounds I overheard people telling stories about the person whose grave they were attending. Family members were happy when others "visited" their loved one's gravesite and remembered them with stories. Every year LeeAnn spends

time at the gravesite of her high school friend, speaking with his parents. I could tell by their greeting and conversation that they look forward to seeing her there each year.

This tradition illustrates the critical role that both history and family play in Haleyville. The gravesite narratives were compelling, and the close attention paid to each speaker conveyed the importance of the storytelling tradition. At different times in the day I saw people get down on the ground to show others where they would lay when they "passed." They talked about the kind of sun their spot would get. There was good natured rivalry about the scenery one was getting in comparison to another. Talk of death did not evoke discomfort. In Haleyville death was spoken about as a continuation of life that included relatives gathering on Decoration to visit and remember.

The first and most enduring challenge in conducting the research in Haleyville I knew would be in *understanding the language and culture of the participants*. The world that I viewed at Decoration was very different from my own and I felt at a loss. I did not know the rules. I was certain to offend people. My Field Notes (Appendix A) reveal the insecurity I felt in those first weeks of interviewing. I was always aware that I did not share their inner framework. I asked countless questions about the nature of things. LeeAnn's family answered them patiently. Her family had taken me in since LeeAnn's first invitation to meet them. I have learned that in this culture friendships are made for life and that this pact includes all of the family members. There are no exceptions. When I asked her if my perception about this was correct, LeeAnn laughingly reminded me of how long it had taken her to invite me to her home. She was making a lifetime decision not only for herself but also for her family.

It is inappropriate to call LeeAnn an "Informant." She is my *co-researcher*, without whom I would not have gained access to the setting. Her family's support through the data collection process was invaluable. Their answers to my questions and reflections about the community culture were critical for my increasing awareness. In the crucial matter of *deciding how to present myself* in the community, I was aware that my association with them was as strong a recommendation as could be had in Haleyville. I also described myself as a graduate student at University of Tennessee in Knoxville where LeeAnn and I had met. I was doing this research project as the last part of my program which I needed in order to graduate.

I do not believe that I succeeded in *gaining trust*, nor in *establishing rapport*, other than in a temporary and superficial way. Most of the participants spoke succinctly. "We don't chew our fat twice" was the explanation given by LeeAnn's sister when I mentioned my difficulty in getting the interviewees to elaborate (Appendix A). The interview format is not a natural one for the residents. In addition, they are wary of outsiders. My particular life world collides with the community's in some very noticeable ways. This insight was later verified by LeeAnn, who had told several people, "She's really nice, though," with a look that communicated, " She doesn't mean it, she just doesn't know."

One example of this cultural clash was my vehicle. My sports car drew attention to me in Haleyville, violating an unspoken rule. Do not stick out and never set yourself above others. For Haleyville residents conformity within the group was once a criteria for survival, because no one survived in the mountains without everyone's effort.

Generations of residents have understood this. One who puts energy into an individual agenda distances herself from community interests. Her actions are based on individual desires rather than community interests.

I traveled to Haleyville for about a year getting interviews and sampling activities that LeeAnn recommended as representing some facet of the culture. Above all else, the residents are practical. They are cordial and provide what they can in response to a question or request. However, what they offer comes in a plain wrapping, not flowered paper. They value punctuality and keep their word. They give what they can to help a sick neighbor or to alleviate someone's misfortune. They do these things privately and without pomp. Trust and rapport is built through these practical actions, rather than through warm greetings or facile conversations.

All of the interviews that LeeAnn and I arranged were conducted successfully with only one exception: In that case, I had phoned a participant to schedule an interview, following the interview procedures outlined earlier. In doing so I had unknowingly violated several tacit rules. First there is the tabu that a woman does not phone a man. Second, I neglected to invite the man's wife to the meeting to show that my intentions were honorable. Last, I had invited him to interview at the Family Resource Center (where most of the others had interviewed) at 6:00 p.m. after business hours when we would be alone in the Center. I had orchestrated these events knowingly but without understanding of the meaning that others might attach to my actions. When I told her about my research progress that evening, LeeAnn was concerned about the phone call. She explained all of the above, told me that she would accompany me to the interview

and suggested that I phone his wife the next day to invite her. I tried but did not reach her.

This individual did arrive at the scheduled time, with his wife. She entered the room speaking in a loud and angry tone, and directed me to hurry up and do this interview because Friday was their usual "date" night, and she was jealous of how he spent his time. Spontaneously I changed the objective of the meeting from getting an interview to doing damage control. The future of the research would be jeopardized if this couple left angry, and I was acutely aware of what it was costing LeeAnn to support this project in Haleyville. She and I explained the research aims. The husband looked relieved and the wife was mollified after this conversation. I had not gotten the interview but the project had been saved through our damage control efforts.

Most of the participants, happily, were pleasant and cooperative in the interview sessions. The participants were aware of the *instruments used to collect empirical data*; the consent form, and the tape recorder. I was clear and direct in the explanation of the process. My inclusion of participant feedback in the report pleased the participants. These are several of the events that took place in orienting me to Haleyville. This exposure gave me insight into the community culture. It sets a context to orient the reader for consideration of the findings.

The Ground of Time/ Space/ Self/ Others

Space, Time, Self and Others are the themes of the experience of being, which is the foundational experience of humankind (Heidigger, 1949; Koehler, 1947). The fifteen

participants all framed their experience of involvement with their children's schools in a ground that is *spatially* (world) and *temporally* situated. The interviews revealed that these two dimensions structure the participant's experience. The grounds of *self* (mind/body) and *others* present a figural representation rather than the foundational structure that frames the participant's experience in spacial and temporal grounds. In other words, the interviews reveal that issues related to the self and others come forward or recede as the participants share different examples of their experience. Participants' experience with their children's schools are considered from the perspective of their world (the mountain town) set in history (time) as a bounded structure through which they experience the world. The strength of this representation in the interviews suggests that this grounding in time and space operates in every aspect of their world.

The Experiential Themes

Descriptions of participant experiences cluster around three major themes. The first is *relational.* Parents experience schools as extensions of the familial relationships that characterize the community. The world that they occupy is set in a context of historical traditions developed over generations. The second theme centers on the *kinds of education* that parents want for their children. Participants spoke alternately of teachers bringing all children up to the "right level," encouraging them to reach their potential, and teaching children how to live in the world. The emphasis is on the meaning of learning. The third theme revels the *centrality of the community culture* to the residents of Haleyville. Traditions, common knowledge, tacit understanding and a shared

heritage join the residents in commitment to each other and to the town. The following themes are outlined with portions of parent narratives from which the summary analysis emerged.

Some of the participants' citations are abbreviated from the original conversation without changing the context of their words. The reader will note the interconnections between the themes and subthemes. Most parent's words can support any of several themes. This speaks to the internal cohesion of the data. It illustrates the hermeneutic circle in its completed form in which no passage, taken in context, is inconsistent with any other.

Theme 1:

Parents and schools have a familial connection that is smooth and seamless when it is operating correctly.

S. R.: Um...my daughter was seven when her dad died. Um....and she was in a lady's room...second grade...you know when you're in kindergarten you're all the time doin' family things, or, I mean, the early years of school you're all the time doin' family things which includes a mom and dad...an, uh they were all the time tellin' the kids to "draw your family or uh..kids were all the time doin' somethin' daddy did, or whatever. Course she didn't have a daddy. Um...and my daughter being really close to her daddy uh...that instant's happened several times uh..through uh...course through the years...but a, this one particular time maybe the first time it happened uh...it'd really upset her... because, she didn't have a, she didn't have a daddy to talk on, and uh...that teacher had

took her out, and uh...took her to the lounge and she bought her a coke. And uh...told her that uh...well, she talked about, a little bit about 'er dad and stuff about her dad, but she made her realize that even though her dad was gone she was still special. And what you did, you know, with the rest of the family, or was just as fine, you know as ones that would have a Dad, that had whole family...and uh...my daughter, I know she remembers that to this day, how that teacher treated her that day...[T]hat period of time was really hard on me, but it was nice to know how when my child wasn't home with me and was at school that she had somebody that had sincere feelin's for her loss.

H.S.: It's a parenting thing. Because that first years of their life in school, well all their life in school, that kind of determines what kind of person they're [going] to be. The kind of person they were [going] to be was more important to me and their Daddy than anything. That's all wrapped up in one thing. Their school, their home life and everything. To most people it would sound like kind of a blah, uneventful thing, but it was our life.

A.D.: [speaking of her deaf daughter in school in Brock county schools] If I was a teacher and I had any idea that a student was hard of hearing I'd occasionally address that student. " M, what can I do? Are you understanding me? Just to keep her in touch with what she's sayin' and what she's doin'." I think they [teachers] could have handled it a little bit better. When we send our children to school, I don't have 'em for that time, and I'm expecting that teacher to do their very best. What I would do for my children...'cause I'm sending them there in hopes that they're getting everything that they need while they're there. I know it would require a little extra step to turn around and include her.

But it could've been done.

B.P.: I grew up in this school where I, my teachers were people that I could look up to. Parents to look up to. They were the better educated than, and more intelligent than the people in the community. They had uh...excellent moral values. Uh...a lot of sensitivity, um...and um...course I thrive in that environment.

S.R.: Well, I think for parents like now days, there is so many parents that bombard the school believing every word the child has said. I think if I, if my feelin' was, if I go down there and I undermine the teacher. That gives the kid a way to blame everything on the teacher. And I think you got to give the teacher authority if there gonna raise your child, uh, I think you have to give them so much authority...and then I think you have to uh..see that authority is uh morals you want brought out in your child.

Subthemes:

a) Direct parent involvement follows a breach of community norms by the school.

D.S.: I don't have a lot of contact with his teachers or the school itself. I keep myself updated with him on what's going on with him in school. And when I see or become aware of problems, then I do whatever I have to do to deal with that. He does what he's supposed to do. I never have discipline problems with him. Basically it's not broken, I don't see a need to fix it.

P.K.: So, then, the next year they got another band director. And this band director... molest[ed] one of my daughters. Not only my daughter but eight other children ranging from sixth grade through eighth grade (voice trembling). So... the bad experience

[is] not only because of my daughter but because they were negligent...they started getting reports and they're in his record, and they chose to ignore [them]. And it wasn't until almost a year later that my daughter admitted that she was one of the victims and then all these other girls followed her leadership in reporting him...they knew that A was a victim and never contacted me until after she had finally...it was wearing on her to the point that, you know, she had to tell someone.

B.D. Um...that particular teacher does not want any parents involved in her room, in her school, in her life. That she wants to do it her way or no way and she won't accept any other opinions...like I said before some of the teachers, I don't feel like they respect the children. I think that it comes back to that if the teacher respects the children then the children respect the teacher, I think that's got a lot to do with teachin' the children and um...the teacher's down there that my child enjoys the most are the one's that you know, that seem like they care for her...

b) Communication between family members is a natural action: parents and schools should make contact the way one might expect of a sibling or cousin.

C.N.: I was real upset over that, that they hadn't contacted the parents. The school ask the parents to be more involved. Well how can they be involved if they're not notified? And I told her, I said right here and right now, I said you may sugar coat it with them, but I said you're not with me. And I said you do whatever you have to do to resolve this problem. But I said my child will not go through this again this year because you won't do your jobs.

D.R : And [the teacher] calls us and gives us updates. And asks us questions, and she communicates real well with us. Mostly it's about schoolwork and about how he's doing. She wants to be sure that she's not stressing him by pushing him too hard with stuff that's much more than what some of the other kids are doing. She communicates real well with us. And it's real nice.

B.P.: I just happened to go um...by the classroom one day and D um...I dropped a...I think I went by to drop off somethin' for the teacher. But there sat D turned away from the board and all the other students in the chair. And um...I was just stunned, course D hadn't told me that uh..she had been turned around like that for several days, and I asked her teacher, I said why is uh..why is D turned away from the board and the other students? And D is a very affectionate child, and she is not outward, outwardly disobedient...but her teacher said, "well, she's been talkin'" and uh, and, but I, what really stunned me was the fact that she had turned her away from the board where uh she was uh...doin' uh..problems on the board and write, doin' some writing things...It actually, my skin, (pause) it made me so angry that my skin even, it just sent a wave of anger through me. And the fact that she had been done that way without me being notified. I should have been notified, 'B., D. has been talkin' at school, how can we work this out?' Rather than turning her away.

Theme 2 :

The school should bring every child "up to the right level."

J.S.: Well it made me mad, 'cause I figure my child's as good as anybody's child.

And the one she said [J's daughter] was prejudiced again', I figured she was as good as my child. You know, it just made me mad 'cause she was not brought up like that. I wasn't brought up like that. And we are not prejudiced. [A]fter I went down there and gave [the teacher] a good talkin' to, that took care of the whole thing. We never had another problem... It was just like I made her understand, you know, that you don't take one child and do all this stuff to 'em. All child, all children to me, are the same. Somebody could be a little smarter in one thing, and some will be smarter in somethin' else. You know, they've all got talents somewhere.

B.P.: I was so comfortable uh...with D bein' in there. I felt I could rest more comfortably, the teacher was an excellent teacher...she did so many hands-on projects and things that uh...I had not seen other...science teachers do because it's difficult to prepare uh um...experiments in the classroom.

S.R.: But I've never pushed 'em to have uh...excellence, if you have to say a hundred, I've never done that. I think you have to be an exceptional, gifted person to be able to do that. But I think, most kids if you are average, that you can push and get 90 to a hundred.

M.Y.: It seemed that all the kids in her class were up on the level when they moved in the next grade. She had to give him extra work...he was back to the level he was supposed to be to be able to stay with everybody else in math.

H.S.: He finished high school and never did learn to read. But the other kids were so kind and good and they would put lots of things on tape for him and he would learn it from tape. And he graduated with pretty good grades...I just remember that the

children did help him. His classmates helped him by you know when it come time to do a test or something and let him learn it and study it.

Subthemes:

a) Some parents want the school to help their children to reach their potential.

B.P.: I was born and raised here and I've been fortunate enough to live other places. And several of our outsiders that have taught here comment that our children are generally very behaved, [but they] are living here without the skills.

D.R.: Well you know, it's kind of a, it's a tight-rope walk. I see a lot of emphasis put on kids that are not doing well, kids that are failing. And I totally support that. [But] if you look at the U.S. compared to other industrialized nations that it's the top third where we get killed. As it turns out, H is very bright. And so it was a real concern for us that a lot of attention was going to be paid to the bottom part, but would he get the emphasis that he needed to get to his potential whatever that was or is.

D.R.: These tests where they compare...third graders across the state, nation, etc. And I just, I don't know that's really in the best interest of my child...that's more designed to measure teacher's performance. I don't care about H making his teacher look good or bad. But I'm interested in him learning the most he can every day he's at school.

b) School teaches children about how to be in the world.

B.P.: They spend nine to ten months there a year. They spend the biggest portion of their day there...[O]f course, my teachers played a big part in my life. I think

they had a lot to do with how I perceived myself and uh...how, the type of person I wanted to become.

C.N.: [speaking about her daughter...prior to that, during that school, year he had hit and kicked her probably five other times off and on and he was doing it to the other kids too. When it was going on I felt like more that it was just rough-housin' kids, and I felt like, you know, that my daughter needed to learn...to um accept that everybody's not perfect. And that she needed to learn to take up for herself and I didn't intervene even though I talked to her, you know, and I said, well, you need to take up for yourself or you need to talk to the teacher, and she came home a lot and told me...but I still wanted her to take responsibility herself... I still feel like, um...if I had that part to do over again, that I would still use that to try to teach her that life is hard.

D.R: Well, that's just part of living in this world. You know, we want our kids to respect authority. We think that's real important in terms of developing a sense of right and wrong. And there's also something to be said for learning to do things that aren't fun, to do things that you can't see any redeeming value in at the time...we saw that as a two-way deal there. We felt like despite the fact that we disagreed, it was something that H needed to learn to do work that wasn't fun, because all life isn't fun. number one, and number two we want to give a unified stand with H's authority figure at school. That's his teacher. Now all the while we're going to be watching for certainly transgressions, but I'm not talking about those kinds of transgressions. So yeah, we didn't agree but we pushed because of those two things - respect for authority and learning to do things that aren't fun. Because it's a part of it. All of my jobs not fun. And kids have to be exposed

to that, and they have to learn to cope with that if they're going to get along.

Theme #3 :

Our world, our ways.

S.R.: Well, if, I can't make every teacher go to church. I can't make every teacher uh...live up to my morals, but I think any teacher has to have a certain amount of respect and honesty and fairness if they're gonna be there teachin' our kids. Would we want a teacher in the school system teachin' kids how to go to a store and steal? Would we? We wouldn't, would we? So, if, if stealin' is wrong, we want a teacher that's gonna stand by those and not only stand by those codes but live by those codes.

B.P.: And uh..so, I think that's part of the problem that we had here, uh...our school board tends to hire first on the basis of the area you were born and reared in, rather than qualifications.

K.P.:.. and he said, "if you have a problem with what I say in this class, you come to me." Well, that's not the way it works here.

D.R.: Around here you be quiet about multi-diversity type issues. It's just, anything that would be said about cultural diversity or understanding or respecting other people's beliefs would be seen as heresy basically. And one would suffer for that. And I think that, I don't think our kids realize it. I don't think that they realize it. It's no big deal to them. And it's not a big deal to us. But we still notice it. And we feel fortunate that we're in the mainstream.

J.S.:...we don't hang people because they write us a bad check, but we do expect our school teachers who are trying to educate our kids to come and set a good example. Now what kind of example is it for a teacher never to come acknowledge this, and expect him to have...confidence in this man as a teacher. No. If you don't handle your worldly affairs in a example that is visible to my eyes, I am not gonna allow him to influence my child.

Subthemes:

a) All of the adults care about all of the children in the community.

B.P.: I think that's a big problem in our schools today. [In the past teachers were] devoted to that profession. It wasn't a way to earn a paycheck. Uh..in our school system here, I believe uh...our school system employs the largest number of people...uh...in Brock County. You can't tell me in a community where we've only produced a couple of attorneys, a physician too, maybe uh..an engineer that we have produced a school full of excellent teachers...I feel like it [is] an injustice to the students. Our children need to see people...and to be exposed to people from other places.

B.D.: Um...I feel like that if she has to have a job somewhere in the public school system that maybe she should, they should put her in some other job such as an office or somewhere else besides teachin' those kids...because I feel like that she thinks she's a whole lot better than those kids...

C.N.: (in talking about a young man who had tried to choke her daughter) He still was a child... he just needed to be corrected and guided to do what was right, and how can

you guide your child if you're not aware of the problems that they're doing, you know, the things that they're doing? So...he really in a lot of ways was a victim too. Maybe not in the same way, but he still was because he was a child.

b) Locals are from here. Outsiders are not from here.

B.P.: This teacher definitely was not from here. And she had not been educated at the university that most of our teachers are from. And I have seen that as a strength, that I wish we had teachers from more diverse backgrounds, because I have seen definitely some weakness in local teachers' understanding of child psychology...And several of our outsiders that have taught here uh..comment that our children are generally very behaved, but that our children are living here without the skills to compete in the larger world.

F. S.: I feel bad saying that, but I feel like it's because I'm not from here. A lot of my friends that won't say things. They won't argue who the teacher is or they won't argue whatever because that's so and so's cousin or so and so's neighbor or whoever it is and it's almost like I was -I didn't know any better, that I didn't know the quote-unquote unwritten laws of the community because I wasn't from here. Believe it or not, [I've lived here for] fourteen years. But I'm still an outsider.

J.S.: But the younger teacher, she coulda went that extra mile I guess, couldn't she? But I got her straightened out so I'm not, no problem with her. She didn' last much longer. She left anyway. She couldn't take this culture. I'm serious. [S]he left. I mean, that's what they said. They didn't like it here, so they left.

K.P.: And I went down and also commented on that issue, at which time I informed him that if he continued saying or writing these words upon his blackboard, that we would see to it that he did not teach our children anymore.

c) Don't put yourself above others.

D.R.: So for us, it was hard, especially with our status in the community. We don't want to be perceived as being pushy. Or expecting to be treated in a special way as opposed to someone who logs for a living. So it was a tight-rope walk for us to communicate with teachers and try to make it obvious that we would try to encourage H in every way we could if they would provide the opportunity.

B.P.:...there's somethin' in the attitude of a lot of the local people. I think it may have to do with their self-esteem. If they feel like that someone comes from somewhere else, they talk a little faster and their, their mind may be a little bit more quick, and they're a little more quicker to speak and I think uh...our local people are intimidated by that. But uh...you know, fear can sometimes cause negative reactions.

C. N.: And I said that's why I came to you, and I said I wanted to let you know for some reason it was just in the back of my mind because of who their parents were that they may not be aware of the whole thing and I said I wanted to let you know that I am going to the school in the morning and you may want to be down there as well.

d) Keep your word

S.R.: Well...yes I think that our word, when we give our word that we should live up to that word...and when you don't do that with a child, its...it effects a child. Uh, it effects them and the fact of trust, um, belief, uh, you know, it's a moral ethic, I guess, as much as anything. [It] was the principle of the thing that I disapproved of...you've got to be to your word. I think that when we give our word that we should live up to that word.

C.N.:...[W]hen me and the other boy's parents were sittin' there, that mother told me that this lady told her that my daughter was teasing him...and I told her I said do you realize that she told me just the opposite. And it made me mad because they were not being honest with either one of us as parents...so when she came in I told her I said Ms. so-n-so, I said you told her that my daughter was teasing him and that he was respondin' to that teasin' by hittin' her...you told me that he had a crush on her and that when she turned him down that he was hittin' her because she didn't respond to that. I says and now that we're here together, I said which one of those is the truth? And I said do you realize what you were doin' to these parents? I said this kid has been in the principal's office at least ten times last year and I said they knew of one until I called it to their attentions. I said how do you think that they can help their child until you tell her the truth? I said he's a brat and he's a bully, but he's her son and she loves 'im. And I said they can't help him unless they know the truth. And she didn't say anything. And I told her, I said right here and right now, I said you may sugar coat it with them, but I said you're not with me. And I said you do whatever you have to do to resolve this problem. But I said my child will not go through this again this year because you won't do your

jobs.

S. R.: So from that it started snowballing. Because he lost respect for the teacher, because of what she had said [versus] what she had done. And I seen a potential problem. So I called and I went down there. The four of us was in the meeting. We just basically uh... talked about the situation and I told him you know, that I didn't like goin' down there, which I, you know, at that time was the first time I had ever took those [school] steps.

K.P.:...we don't hang people because they write us a bad check, but we do expect our school teachers who are trying to educate our kids to come and set a good example. Now what kind of example is it for a teacher never to come acknowledge this, and ... I am expected to have confidence in this man as a teacher. No. If you don't handle your worldly affairs in a example that is visible to my eyes, I am not gonna allow him to influence my child. So that was my argument-the influence part, and I just won't have it.

Participant Feedback

All fifteen participants were hand delivered (or were left) a two page Participant Feedback Form (PFF; see Appendix F). The first page introduced the summary and gave options for getting the feedback back to me. The options that I outlined were a) I could visit them personally, b) they could phone me collect and we could talk, and c) they could write their comments out and mail/fax them to me. Twelve out of fifteen participants responded to the PPF's. One participant faxed a written statement to me, I visited five(5) at their work or home and six (6) spoke with me on the phone. There were

repeated attempts to contact the last three participants without success.

The initial "categories of meaning " were isolated from participant interviews, turned into the Main Items and Secondary Items and used to validate and improve the first system of classification. This was made possible through the participants' feedback form on the (PFF), which also served to check the accuracy of interpretations. I understood that the participants wanted this opportunity as well. To avoid confusion with the formal themes discussed earlier, I refer to "main" and "secondary" items.

The delineation into main and secondary items is an arbitrary estimation. A main item was reflected in seven or more protocols (7 +) and a secondary item was present in four to six protocols (4-6). Four (4) main items and fifteen (15) secondary items were outlined in the feedback form. Secondary items fell naturally in groups of three or four under the main items. In all, there are nineteen statements with which the participants could agree or disagree (4 main items and 15 secondary items). Whether in written or oral form, I asked participants to elaborated on any item(s) that they felt strongly about, agree or disagree. I stressed this final point due to LeeAnn's insistence that they would be unwilling to "hurt my feelings" by disagreeing with any item without strong urging. The example given below is the first item on the PFF:

Main Item:	*1. <u>There are rules for how to behave in the community</u>.
Secondary Items:	A. Don't put yourself above anybody else.
	B. Keep your word.
	C. Behave honorably.

*D. Don't complain.

Most of the participants had strong reactions to the same three items. The first, (1D) evoked questions from participants about what the question meant. Did I mean that they felt it was never appropriate to complain? Did I mean complaining just to hear myself talk? Was I suggesting that to complain in this community was to break the "rules" to which I referred in Item 1? I saw immediately that this item was ambiguously worded on the Participant Feedback Form and would not yield the intended information. It had been my intention to hear about their practice of conserving words, of using language judiciously, their avoidance of "chew[ing] the fat twice" (Appendix A). I was able to gain some insight, however, through conversations about how confusing the item was.

The second item to elicit a common response was one in which most of the participants strongly objected to the item being inaccurate:

Main Item: *3. We expect for the school to extend family practices and values.

Secondary Items: A. The home and the school each have a distinct role in the child's life.

*B. The teacher is in charge of teaching the child and the parent is in charge of raising the child.

C. The school personnel will behave in ways that reflect community beliefs about healthy adult behavior.

Most parents disagreed heartily with secondary item B. They agreed with the items other than B, but were clear and direct in saying that this item was wrong. In conversation with one participant, she said she felt "that parents are as responsible for teaching and for educating the child. Most education comes from the parents, and it's 50-50 that the teacher has to raise them" (B.D.). The senior participant in the study had always spoken in very gentle tones in our previous conversations. I noted that she spoke more quickly, her voice apologetic when she gave this opinion about the item: "Oh, I don't know about that one... (when I asked about item 3B) Parents educate too, education really begins at home, they are learning all the time at home, all children, don't you think?" (H.S.).

As it was worded, item B was inconsistent with several other things other things that I had begun to understand with some confidence. The interviews did reveal that the parents went to the school on rare occasions to redress a perceived injustice. This language was located in the transcriptions and had been reproduced as secondary item B. The parent's behavior, described in their language, did not convey the meaning of their non-visitation to the school. They saw the inaccuracy when they read the item. Their rejection of it stopped me from drawing an erroneous conclusion about how to interpret their words. This feedback strengthened my understanding of the parents' essential experience of involvement with their children's schools. This process strengthened my belief in the importance of checking data summaries with participants, who are indeed the experts about their lives. My confidence in the accuracy of my "findings"was strengthened as the participants reviewed each item sharply.

The last item that drew attention is noteworthy because of the powerful reactions to it-most agreed but several disagreed vehemently. The participants conveyed their strongest feelings about Item 4D. Parents representing each position used body language, facial expression and voice level to communicate the strength of their feelings and perspectives. Some facet of this item resonates strongly with the participants. This matter may need to be held in abeyance until further insights emerge.

Main Item:

*4. <u>All of the adults are responsible for all of the children in the community.</u>

Secondary Items:

A. Everyone in the community is kin to everyone else in one way or another.

B. Parents talked about the other children in the community as much as they spoke about their own child/children.

C. Most parents voiced concern for bringing all of the children "up to the right level." The emphasis on meeting a common standard for all of the children in the community was often described.

*D: Few parents spoke about having a goal for the school to meet their child's potential or to help him/her to develop exceptional skills. The importance of humility as a cultural tradition in this community prevents some parents from publicly encouraging superior academic performance in their child. There is concern that the child and /or the family may be seen as bragging, or thinking themselves above others.

R.S: (nodded her head forcibly in agreement) When T was in elementary school they gave out award for who was number 1 in the class. T got an award a couple of years in a row but [I didn't want it look] like I was any better [than the other parents]. I got embarrassed. Each child has its own abilities, no one's better. [I was] feeling like it was making the other children feel bad. I would hate it if any one of the children was hurt because I was bragging on one. [The school] should focus on the aspect that each [child] excels in. And that discouraged T the same way. [There was] so much publicity about [the award] that T said, "People shouldn't do that." And you know, after a while he just stopped doing art altogether. He just got discouraged with people paying him so much attention that he will not do a bit of drawing anymore, and he was good, he was born with a gift. But it's not like he worked for it or anything, he was born with it (Appendix A).

M.Y.: I disagree with all of these statements [Item 4, A, C, D] except the fact that the parents are concerned with the welfare of all children, nor just their own [B].

There is perspectival evidence that some residents are strongly aware of "how things look" to the outside community; this item could rouse a defensive posture from those who project unflattering implications that might be drawn. Item 4D is difficult to interpret with confidence on the basis of the data collected in this study. This summary statement was added to the Form from M.Y.:

> "After reading your summary, I find it sad to think that we have left you with the impression that we are passive and inactive in the educational development of our children. The summary makes it sound as though most of us are uneducated, and

unconcerned with our child's academic performance; encouragement is not given to develop their abilities and skills independently to their fullest potential...the basis of this opinion being that we are afraid of appearing 'pretentious'."

I reviewed the paperwork she had received as a participant (the Consent Form, the Description of the Project, the Participant Feedback Form) and was relieved that the phrases that she had quoted were her words and were not reflected in any paperwork. This situation sensitized me to the challenge of using language to gain understanding. M.Y. perceived that she had read or heard those phrases she quoted, just as my first reaction to her feedback was that of being attacked. A second review of her summary statement clarified that she had not attacked me personally. My experience of the reading, however, was that I was being criticized. We both projected our personal meanings onto the language. Neither's experience was based on the written word but in the meaning that certain words evoked.

I was not surprised to hear that my co-researcher registered strong disagreement to item 4.D:

"First, remember that we are not that verbal as a people, as a community, so it's not surprising that we would say just a little about anything. We don't use descriptive words because that is seen as pretentious to talk down to someone. We don't ever want to hurt anyone's feelings. And anything that you say lasts forever. Maybe we believe that successful (word used in item D) is something different than you do.

(LeeAnn, 2/97)

The Relationship Between Themes

Parent and school practice flow seamlessly in Haleyville, reflecting their interconnectedness. When any section of a unit is broken it needs repair. Hence the direct contact from parents when they perceive that something has broken down in the school. First there is surprise; how could parents be unaware of something happening so close to them, in a part of them? Historically the educational system in Haleyville has focused on the collective needs of the children in the community, working to ensure their functioning. This probably fostered the commitment to all children that many adults share. Yet this part of the system is being stretched; some parents want different things for their children, which will require the system to operate differently than it was designed to work. Things are changing, and some residents are resisting through an emphasis on the traditional ways to prevent the slippage of their common knowledge, their heritage, their community. The thematic structure of parents experience of their children's schools is one of unity in the process of separation.

Limitations of the Study

This research design has limitations. One was the decision to use interviews with a reticent group. However, I assert that the potential benefits outweigh the problems. The interview method encourages the inspection of a life-world that is usually closed to inspection. All designs have limitations (McGraff et al., 1982; Lincoln, 1994). This one is mitigated by the appropriateness of the method for acquiring basic conceptual information. A researcher must design the best study that is possible given the

conditions. In my opinion any design developed for this population would present a challenge. I contend that other methodological approaches are more ill-suited for use with this group. An additional limitation involves the question of accuracy in interpretation of the meaning of the participant's language. There are several checks and balances in place:

1. A co-researcher from the community discussed the language, including the nuances and ideographic phrases that were rooted in history. Her family also offered insights in many informal conversations.
2. An existential phenomenology research group provided indepth analysis of selected transcriptions.
3. A validity check was built into the design through distribution of the Participant Feedback Form. Its usefulness was immediately seen in the parents' highlighting of two items that were problematic in design and accuracy.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Let us review the focus of this research. Three aims were identified: To examine 1)the paradox of parent involvement as a successful yet ineffective intervention in enhancing academic gains, 2) the lack of conceptual agreement about parent involvement as a construct and programmatic model, and 3) the role that culture may play in family involvement with schools. I conducted fifteen phenomenological interviews. With its dual emphasis on prereflective thought and the centrality of *be*ing in the world, the method is designed to access the essential structure of a human experience. My admittance to a cloistered and homogeneous group in the mountains of the southeast advanced the study of cultural mores as they relate to education. I asked parents to share their experience with their children's schools, and their descriptions revealed the meaning they attached to those experiences.

In the next section I will review the research findings of three primary themes shared by the participants. We will examine each theme individually for the purpose of assessing what has been learned from conducting this research.

The Thematic Structure of Parents Experience with their Children's Schools.

Three themes emerged in the interview data. Their selection as primal indicators of the essential experience is based in the tradition of hermeneutic analysis. All of the categories of meaning found in the interview data are congruent with these conclusions:

a) Parents' experience with schools are relational-this group sees schools as extensions of the family.

b) Parents want different things for their children's education. Foremost is the traditional emphasis on bringing all children "up the right level," which is not above or below any other, but equal. There is less representation among parents for schools to reach a child's potential, and to use education to prepare the children for the world.

c) The community culture plays a central role in the lives of the Haleyville residents. It exists as an existential ground to their experience of being in the world, and is simultaneously figural in their everyday lives.

Theme #1: Parents anticipate a relational partnership with the schools.

Parent interviews were liberally dotted with familial references. Consider K.P.'s anguish when she said, in reference to a former teacher, "I trusted him! He was kin to me!" Parents from Haleyville expect that school personnel will behave as family members to the children in their care.

B.D.: "she was only a substitute, but she watched out for my daughter, and I appreciated that a lot."

They anticipate that school policy will not detract from the cultural practice that characterizes their family/community. The data reveal that parents in this small community consider themselves involved with their children's education- at a distance. They go to the school when a breech has occurred. In the case of A.D., she had difficulty getting the kind of help she felt her handicapped daughter deserved.

A.D.: "When we send our children to school, I don't have 'em for that time, and I'm expecting that teacher to do their very best. What I would do for my children...'cause I'm sending them there in hopes that they're getting everything that they need while they're there."

Like a dutiful family member, parents feel called upon to go down to the school and set it right for the good of the children, who have witnessed some anomalous situation and need the security of knowing the matter will be "put right." In their interviews the parents made it explicitly clear that they went to the school only after steps were taken to insure the child's truthfulness. Parents were careful not to undermine the teachers' authority, and several spoke to the importance of children learning things through difficult experiences. Only when the school situation collided with a strong cultural value did the parent act.

Field Notes (Appendix A) convey some of the physical beauty and isolation of the mountains, as well as the unity among community members. This communal history is alive today. It lives in the expectation that in Haleyville, when you send a child to school, that child will be cared for as though by a family member. This expectations hearkens to a different time in the town, when the collective community was the most

important resource for surviving the mountain winters. So we see the grounds of space and time bounding the participants' perceptions.

How were the research goals addressed through the above? The participants' reluctance to participate in the school is based on the notion of communal duties; why is one needed at the school if one's sibling or cousin is there? If the relative misses something, then there is a reason for the parent to go there and straighten it out. The parents' behavior means one thing to the parents (that both teacher and parent are doing their job) and another thing to the school (we cannot get these parents involved in their child's education).

The interview data indicate that the mountain culture does impact every aspect of the individual's world in Haleyville. Like most other schools in the nation, Brock County is not using parent involvement effectively to foster improvement in children's gains. The absence of a relational tie between parents and schools reduces the appeal of involvement for many parents, one may infer. There is not conceptual conversation, let alone agreement, on what constitutes parent involvement.

Theme #2: Parents have different educational focuses for their children.

The expectations about education are changing in Haleyville. In part this may be due to several changes that have begun in Brock County in the past months. New traditions are being introduced into the culture along with tourism; travel, educational opportunities and men "working away" to support the family. These influences are having an impact on the community in some unexpected ways. The homogenous group that has

populated this town for over three hundred years is slowly beginning to thin. One impact is that community members are considering things in different ways, one of them the role of education in their children's lives.

As B.P. indicated in her interview,

> "I have been fortunate to have traveled and met people from all over the world and I see that people all over have ways of doing things that they think are just right, too. I know that mixing with people...from the outside can be a good thing...something that some of the folks who have never left here do not know."

The data showed three distinct directions that the interviewees took in the kind of education residents want for their children. One preference is to prepare children to take care of themselves in the world. These parents feel that preparation for life is the most important skill a child can learn. The second educational preference mirrors the traditional preference, represented most often in the parents' protocols. In this model, the parents are concerned about all of the children in the classroom/community coming "up to the right level." The emphasis is on bringing the collective up. The focus is to bring all of the children to a level plane with the others in the group. Interestingly, this view was not reflected as strongly in the Participant Feedback Forms as in the protocol data. This difference may be explainable in several ways: by the wording of the item or another factor related to the medium of the written survey.

The third educational style mentioned by several parents was one that focuses on bringing out the child's potential. The parents who mentioned this idea did so aware of the potential consequences in terms of going against the cultural norm of the community.

Those who want "alternative" forms of education for their children have plans to access it without "coming out" to the community. In the interview session with D.R., he warned that the consequence of going public with different ideas is, "You will suffer."

This theme reveals little direct evidence about if and how parent involvement is conceptualized. One can extrapolate that the three focuses carry very different perspectives about the methods and purposes of education, which would indicate corresponding beliefs about the role of parent involvement in education as well. All programmatic considerations are affected by the philosophic jumps that question the purpose of education. The research focus on parent participation in schools as successful yet ineffective is unfortunately true of Brock County schools. Parents and schools who disagree on what constitutes education and learning are unlikely to develop a conceptually cohesive plan to work together.

Theme #3: <u>The community culture figures prominently in the parents' consideration of education.</u>

This theme speaks to the research focus more strongly than the others. Reaching conceptual agreement about what constitutes parent involvement is preliminary to reworking the identity roles that community members have historically held. Haleyville has a culture of longevity; the residents have done things in certain ways for generations. Beyond this "research finding" the community culture serves both as a figure and a ground to Haleyville residents. Earlier I spoke of the participants' experience of involvement with schools as being grounded in time and place. The community culture is

an aspect of which the participants is always aware, yet on a nonreflective level it simultaneously structures the ways in which they experience the world. That is why it so appropriate that the importance of the community "culture" was revealed to be a primary theme in the interview data as well as highlighted in the Participant Feedback Form.

Parents' conceptualizations are seated in the historical roles they have assumed in membership with the community. This is the frame of reference from which a school administrator will need to proceed in order to address the matter of changing those roles to incorporate a new way of being in Haleyville.

Implications

What has the research revealed about the three items I elected to examine through the study? There are different levels of understanding that can be derived from this research. I can state that with respect to Haleyville, parents will require a strong human connection to those in the school system before engaging in any school "involvement" activity. Community residents have identified their need for trusting relationships; they are negotiating ideas of different educational practices for the first time in many years. Every interview was generously laced with the parents' experience of their world as grounded in the existential themes of time and space, and less pervasively, self (mind/body) and others. This suggests that the residents are not separate from a strong temporal and spacial sense of being. Their collective identity is that of one of a community of mountain residents whose family can be traced to this unique place for generations. This reality structures their experience of the world at all times.

The rationale for a new parent-role in the educational system in Haleyville must be based in a conceptual framework that is consistent with the grounds described, so that parent involvement in schools is not inconsistent with time-honored practices. It is the challenge of school administrators to translate these common values to the community's changing needs. The Haleyville School may gain participation from parents (as other practices may also change) when administrative efforts reflect community traditions from a new leadership perspective. This study suggests that these participants are not separate from their life worlds and that policy that hopes to engage the residents must be consistent with those underpinnings.

Beyond the implications for how the results affect Haleyville, this study (and the research that has informed it) has implications for other school systems. Parent involvement programs cannot be effectively conceptualized, administered and orchestrated by educational "experts" alone. Parents from within each community must take part in creating the participation programs that characterized the customs, practices and beliefs of the residents. A certain content level or product can be mandated at the state or national level, but the process by which each community arrives at that destination may vary. This is respectful practice. It adheres to the effectiveness of experiential learning; students learn on a long term basis when they are introduced to material that is meaningful to them and their life worlds (Kagan, 1992). It recognizes the existence of multiple intelligences- a child's culture affects her learning style (Feuerstein, 1991 ; Gardner, 1993).

Pervasive Implications

Applied, philosophic and theoretical work is coalescing around a consistent theme. Whether we speak of Kagan's (1992) cooperative grouping in the classroom, or of Gardner's (1993) recognition of intelligences that lie outside of culturally selected constructs, of Rogoff's (1990) directive to consider a community of learners as constituting "education" or of Mezirow's (1990) collaborative model, we are speaking to a common core. We are enriched by each other, by different others. The individualistic and competitive practices that characterized American workers during the Industrial Revolution are not useful for the current educational and societal challenges. Many agree that we are a multicultural nation rather than the monocultural one that was idealized during America's inception. We must access our untapped resources, some of which reside with persons and in community practices that have previously been ignored and/or depreciated.

This study has implications that go beyond the discipline of education to our personal development as human beings. As the result of this research experience I understand in a new way that I have never and shall never fully understand another person. Our life worlds are each so very complex and different, even among those of us who share a broad culture. People would be well served to approach others with this understanding. Perhaps we may learn to listen more closely, somehow intuiting the mystery that is the other. I envision the day when cultural practice has evolved to the point where we are each sensitized to this reality.

Follow up Studies

Haleyville is a beautiful and unique setting. There is much to be learned in association with this community. An action research design in which residents conduct the research might improve on the current design. The research facilitator should be from the area, or someone whose exposure to cultural differences prepares her for the challenges that are sure to occur. The researcher would be used as a resource only; not the team leader but the design and methodology specialist.

I plan to continue this research agenda using a similar design to the current project, expanding the scope to conduct a phenomenological case study. Increasing the emphasis on additional dimensions of the phenomenon can only deepen an understanding of the aspects. I discovered this in the process of writing up this study, becoming aware that my perceptions around certain issues had derived from exposure to additional circumstances outside of the interviews that I had conducted and scrupulously analyzed. I plan to work with other homogeneous groups to continue learning about how cultural traditions affect educational relationships between the community and the schools. The groups that interest me at the present are Moslem and Quaker groups.

Closing Comments

Fostering productive relations between parents and schools is a challenging prospect in most schools in the nation (Henderson & Berla, 1994). This small study is the kind of effort that may suggests a direction for further investigation. The Haleyville community members agreed with most parts of the summary drawn from the interview

data. That is among the most validating commentary that an outsider - researcher could hope to achieve.

I believe that it is necessary for school personnel and policy makers on all levels of educational management to develop some framework that builds in consideration of variations in cultural perspectives that characterize American families and communities. They exist unseen but are clearly experienced by the individuals whom administrators are hoping to engage. Community members are due an integral role in designing educational programs in their neighborhoods- this is the action that is consistent with the underlying philosophies that show respect for diversity in learning. Conceptual agreement of terms is the first place to begin any programmatic discussion, and I do not suggest that consensus comes easily.

Collaboration with unknown others is the *product* aim-the *process* of collaboration is, however, arduous. It is unfamiliar territory for most, and a commitment to the ideal is necessary to see us through the unknown and sometimes uncomfortable process. I hope that the information and perspectives contained in these pages have made a case for taking this road for the benefit of our children, communities and societal culture.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

To the Reader:

My personal field notes are included in the appendix for the benefit of the beginning researcher. As McGraff et al. have stated, research rarely "looks" like the polished process that we imagine before we conduct a study. Data collection is messy business. Despite planning and forethought we are sometimes caught with only a scrap of paper to record an important anecdote, or an antique tape recorder to use for an unexpected interview. The thoughts in which I engaged while doing the interviews were far from the lofty, scholarly ruminations that I imagined researchers had while doing their research. The field notes were an important resource in self learning, despite the clear imperfections in thought process and obvious flaws in character that were illuminated. Reading my notes enriched my understanding of the community customs, my own personal process of involvement with the community, and most importantly the degree to which the community culture permeates every aspect of Haleyville locals' thoughts and actions.

Field Notes

In the interview that I had with Hilda, I was very surprised that LeeAnn hadn't mentioned to me that Hilda had a Down's Syndrome child. Actually Rex is 45 years old, but he presented as though he was a teenage boy. When I first was alone with Hilda and we sat down and I started talking about the interview she asked me if LeeAnn had told me about Rex, and I said no, and Hilda said that she had a child with Down's Syndrome and that he was bathing right now but that he would be wanting to come out and sit with us and she said (with a smile) that she was very proud of her son, that he had helped her in many ways especially recently as her health has declined and she even made some kind of a summative comment you know like she didn't know what she would've done if it hadn't been for Rex these last couple of years since her husband's death.

She also told me then that he would probably want to hug me, that he did like to hug people, that he's very affectionate and I think I did a pretty good job of looking like this was absolutely cool and there was no problem and you know, this was an everyday kind of an occurrence for me so Rex came out and I was really struck by you know how he might've been perceived by other people, even you know, by people from the city, people that didn't know him. Because he had on big overalls and a tee-shirt and he looked like the epitome of those kind of jokes that people make about Appalachians and yet he was the kindest, sweetest little soul. He did hug me, and I hugged him right back and he was just precious. I phoned Hilda just recently. Actually when I got home I phoned my father and asked him to send me a little stuffed horse that I loved as a child, because Rex insisted on showing me his room and Hilda, you know, Hilda encouraged that. She said, "Rex why don't you show Nancy your room?" It was right on the same floor and Hilda came along with us and Rex showed me his room and he just had dozens

and dozens of horses that people have given to him as gifts and anyway, after I got home I thought that would be a good thing, that would be a good thing to do.

I feel like such an alien there. I'm so afraid of making a misstep and offending someone. I asked LeeAnn if she thought that Hilda would be offended by me giving Rex this stuffed animal because it was kind of a childlike toy and I got the impression that Hilda was more, you know, presenting Rex as an adult - a young adult - and LeeAnn usually is kind of my go-between. She's, she interprets the culture for me and sometimes she'll let me know when there's something that I need to do or something that I need to offend -I need to not do in order not to offend people. Like she's told me not to tell people that I'm from the north. But anyway, we'll get to that later. So, LeeAnn said, this was for the first time, she said, "Nancy, I just don't know what Hilda would say. Why don't you call her and ask?" So, today I called her, and I've just done that interview probably within the last two weeks. And Hilda said to me that, she said, "Well when were you planning on coming by?" And I told her and she said that she was real regretful but that she wasn't gonna be home then and she went to pains to explain to me that she had a 25% off coupon to J. C. Penney's and that she was gonna go and get a wedding gift for someone and she already made plans with someone to do that with them. And, I mean, she actually, what she did is she outlined that whole day for me just to substantiate that she really did have other plans, which I thought was just too sweet. And, but then she said, "But you just stop by any time - any time." And you know, and I said, "Well I'll give you a call. I'm in town almost every week so we'll just do it another time." And she seemed real inviting and seemed to like the idea of the horse. She didn't - I even said to her, "I was just, you know, wanting to know if you would think that was too childish." And she said, "No, no, he's got all kinds of horses. People think of him."

You know, I tell LeeAnn everything that happens in my interviews. Not everything. She and I actually don't get that much time to talk. She has a full time job and she's taking care of her father and she's helping her mother, and she's terribly, terribly busy. And she really trusts me as a researcher and she wants, and as a friend. And she wants me to do this study. And so she's willing to put energy into it. But she's surprised by how much energy of hers it is taking for her to get these interviews. I mean, she and I have been working pretty hard on this for a couple of weeks and I have only had, I mean, as of Friday, I will be done with six interviews and I've been there probably four times. But anyway, um, that's the story that I want to tell about Hilda. So this is another kind of, O.K., so now on to another paragraph.

Now I'm going to talk about LeeAnn a little bit, because she, LeeAnn is what researchers call their informant in the community. I would not be able to do this research were it not for LeeAnn. She made the first phone calls to get me the first two interviews and I have to say that they were dynamite interviews with real, with women that I now see as heroic. And I can't do justice just in describing in a sentence or two as to why, but the data will bear me out. LeeAnn's family, both her mother and her father, I believe are

one of the first families of Tennessee. And history's really respected in the mountains. She has some prestige and some weight there. Her mother's people are from Tuleelah, which isn't too far from Haleyville and they own a lot of acreage there, well what I would call a lot of acreage - forty or fifty acres and LeeAnn's mom has already kind of split that into five acre plots for LeeAnn and for not only her brother and her sister but for the other cousins.

The mother feels, LeeAnn's told me the mother feels really strongly that the family stay together even though it's not the tendency of the younger people to do that. LeeAnn's mother's gonna try to encourage that by giving them all land close to each other. They've kept up her family homestead in Tuleelah which is hard for LeeAnn. LeeAnn's family also owns like kind of an apartment building right in Haleyville and when they thought that LeeAnn might go blind, they set that up for her to be a business that would make money for her in case she was handicapped. And now her sight is improving and she might not go blind. The chances are better that she won't. But I don't know, somehow, the family goods have already been divided between her, her brother and sister, way in advance, so they already know who's getting the father's home and who's getting the apartment building and who's getting the land and so forth. I gather that's tradition. That the kids know in plenty of time before the parent's death what they're getting.

LeeAnn's parents, LeeAnn's mother treats me like gold, and I have the feeling that's just how they treat guests. I mean, here the woman has had a couple of heart attacks, and I know that LeeAnn's always worried about her mother's health, but she's the woman who like invented the word stoic. I mean you've just, you've just never seen a woman like this. I mean she works from sunup to sundown. She's a woman of few words. She shows her love not through hugging or through smiles necessarily but she cooks and she cleans and she puts more effort into everything than anybody I've ever seen before. The whole house around where they live is covered with flowers. Really, really beautiful, lots and lots of flowers. And LeeAnn tells me that her mother did this, and not by buying flowers, because that's not considered the way to, you know, wasting money is really, really looked down on there. Her mother got these through clippings, through other people or windflowers that she's replanted or seeds that she's come across.

And LeeAnn told me that when she was growing up that it was kind of an ongoing struggle between her mother and father because her father would just mow everything down. Not because he was a mean man, but just because he had acres and acres and acres to mow, and he just didn't see that little seedling, so he'd mow it right down. But that just kind of, it just shows LeeAnn's mom's tenacity because it didn't stop her. I mean she'd try a lot of different things. You know she started planting flowers in different places, maybe where her husband couldn't get to them or where the mower couldn't reach. And that's kind of a something that they chuckle about in the family. It's like, it's all accepted. It's accepted that she is gonna put these flowers in and it's accepted that if she doesn't put them in a safe enough place that they're just gonna be mowed down.

You know what I mean. There's no talking about it, there's no asking for a favor.

It's, you know, things are really pragmatic there. Things are real common sense there. Every time I was coming to LeeAnn's house her mother would put fresh linens on the bed and there would be fresh fruit in my room and flowers that she'd pick herself and they swear that this is the cold room that I have. It's also the biggest room with the biggest bed, you know, it's a big room. So, in my mind they're giving me the nicest room. But they don't think it's warm enough. So every time I've stayed there I come into the room and they've got a space heater and she has that plugged in and turned on at full heat. And she has an electric blanket on the bed that's plugged on. And meanwhile, what I know about these people is that they are frugal, they are so frugal. And it's not just LeeAnn's family. It's like a part of the values and the customs. You don't waste money. You don't buy flowers, you know, at a grocery store when you're depressed. First of all you don't go to a grocery store. You go to a Ma and Pa store because you want to support small businesses. That's what you do when you're a mountain person. You want to support the people who are running the small businesses near you. They all really resist this Ingle's that has moved into town. And they all try to shop there as seldom as they can. LeeAnn's told me that.

LeeAnn's sister Wanda has told me they despise Wal-Mart, because they think Wal-Mart stores are pushing people out of business. I mean, they have really strong feelings about a lot of things. So anyway, getting back to the way that they heat my room. I know how much it runs your electricity up when you put on a space heater. And yet what I see from her treatment of me is that the hospitality with which you greet a guest is even a stronger value than frugality. Now I walk right behind her and I'm always turning down the heater and turning off the electricity. I know LeeAnn, you know, is real reluctant to use a long-distance call. She's really aware of when she calls how long she stays on the phone. I mean so I know that this is a value that's shared, not just by the older but also the younger folks as well.

LeeAnn's father has Alzheimer's. He's had a series of strokes and he's not, he's increasingly hard, I think, for them to manage. This is why LeeAnn commuted back and forth to get her Ph.D. for the last probably two years that she was in school. Because increasingly she was needed at home to help with her father. This is a tragedy for not only their family but the community, because I gather that G (that's his name) was a wonderful and well-loved man.

Large, humorous, loving, very competent at everything, and all those values are very much prized according to what LeeAnn said. She once told me that the only way she thought she could let her father go would be watching him waste away in this way. Because he talks sometimes all day. He just talks and talks and talks. He can't, what he's saying is not, is intelligible. It cannot be distinguished. Her mother's alone with him all day. He's a real big man. Her mother's a little, skinny lady. But they would never think of sending him away. They would never, unless they could somebody that they loved or trusted, they'd never had anybody in. So, she just manages. I mean, she bathes him herself and she manages him herself. And I think it's very hard and wearing.

Sometimes when I call up LeeAnn I can tell from the strain in her voice that it's been a hard day. And sure enough, last time I mentioned it, she told me that her father for

been a hard day. And sure enough, last time I mentioned it, she told me that her father for some reason had been on a talking tear and had been talking and talking and talking, you know, no one in the house had been able to sleep. She said she hadn't got much sleep at all in the last three or four nights, and that her mother had gotten even less. And yet her mother will never complain.

Her mother will never complain. She won't say a word. I mean when I'm there and LeeAnn's father is just talking and talking and nobody knows what he's saying, you know, her mother finds some way to redirect him. She gets him to sit down. You know, she manages him, just through sheer loving tenacity and you never see any resentment, you never see a lost temper. The thing you might see, you might see her looking worn, like really worn down, like kind of wisps of hair out of place. That's the only thing that you would ever see that you could interpret as kind of negative or you know, any indication that this is not easy. She's such a stalwart woman. O.K., um, now this is the next field note paragraph.

Axalee was the second interview that I had. And she's a really attractive woman, lives in a beautiful, beautiful home. And unlike Hilda, she has not been a lifelong resident of Haleyville. She moved there when she was about 18 years old to marry her husband who was a lifetime resident. And he has since died. So even though she's probably, I would say she's fiftyish. Very attractive, really dresses up, keeps herself well, has a beautiful home. What do I want to report about that interview? I want to say that after that interview, as we were leaving, Lee actually encouraged me to get into a conversation with her about school and parents and I see Lee as not really representative of the true, rural Appalachian. I see her as not representative of the true, rural Appalachian resident. To that degree, she was a little more talkative and more willing to be negative than is my perception of the other participants, all whom were lifetime residents (one of the first things they each told me).

As we were leaving, she asked me if it would be possible for me to interview her daughter, because she said that she thought her daughter had some very deep feelings about school that she had never been able to communicate with anyone. And so, she asked me if I'd be able to arrange that. And I told her that I would look into it, and I'm very happy to say that just today I phoned her and told her that U.T. was going to let me bring an interpreter with me to Haleyville so that if her daughter wants to interview with me that I'll bring somebody with me that can sign.

She hasn't gotten back in touch with me but I think that I'm responding to a value that LeeAnn has made clear to me and that is you keep your word. You keep your word to people. It, you know, a lot of times, in other parts of the country you say things globally, or you know, you say them and you mean them at the time but nobody is shocked or surprised if you don't follow through on them. But I don't think that is the way it is with these people. I think you need to follow through on what you say. And so I was glad that I did follow through. I sometimes drop the ball and don't follow through on things that I say I'm gonna do, so I was glad that this time I didn't. O.K. now we're at another field note paragraph.

I want to talk about a conversation that I had with Wanda, LeeAnn's sister. Wanda had told me once, right after I did the first couple of interviews, she asked me how I was liking it. And I said to her that it was a real challenge. And when she asked me why I told her it's just because, it's that mountain people do not complain. I said, "Things are the way they are. And we just live with them. We just deal with them. And it's just really against, you know, it's against their normal practice to get them to talk about what's gone wrong." And she laughed and she said, "You know what we call that?" She said, "We don't chew our fat twice." And I said, "What?" "We don't chew our fat twice." And that just means we don't go over and over again with something. We don't beat something like a dead horse. It is what it is. You deal with it. You get on with it. You don't keep bringing it up again and again. I thought that was an interesting kind of footnote. O.K. so here's another field note paragraph.

I want to talk about the interview that I had with Claudine, because something happened that was really I thought interesting. Before the interview started - now remember, from here on in, both Hilda and Axalee are people that were in some way connected to LeeAnn. So, I had kind of an in there that is different from these next two interviews that I did - the one with Claudine and the one with Kim - I had an acquaintance give me their names and numbers and they were willing to talk, but I didn't have the benefit of being connected to them by a person that we both love, as with LeeAnn. So, with Claudine, before we started the interview, I was just kind of doing some preliminary stuff and explaining what the method is like and you know talking about the fact that it needed to be audio taped, that whole thing. And before we put the tape on and began, somebody knocked at the door. And this also reminded me of what happened in Hilda's home and in Axalee's home too. When I was interviewing them and the tape was on, somebody phoned. They each had probably a five to ten minute conversation and neither mention that I was there or that she was engaged in something else.

And FINALLY I noticed that there was a kind of, there was a kind of an unseen dictate there. At first I thought, this is her friend on the other side of the receiver and she's not gonna hurt her friend for somebody that she doesn't know, somebody that comes in from the outside to do this interview. I remember that I noted it, that it was different. It's such a challenge that you never know what is going to turn out to be meaningful in taking field notes! You know, that in my world, if somebody phones, you say, "There's someone else here. I'll phone you later." Or whatever. But that's not what either one did.

There was a difference in Hilda and Lee's reactions, too. Lee got a phone call, but within the first couple of minutes of the phone conversation when the person clearly asked her what she was doing, she said, "I have someone here and she's interviewing me. She's talking with me about such and thus." They still went on and talked a couple of other minutes, and Lee also again, let the other person initiate a departure. But I remember thinking that's showed the different between Hilda being a life-time resident and Lee not being a lifetime resident.

That something so slight as that, I mean Hilda wouldn't even mention that there was any reason why she wouldn't talk, where I think that Lee was more inclined to do

that. O.K., so now in Claudine's case, a similar thing happened. There was a knock on the door before we started. Two women came in and actually stood in the door and they started talking. They had probably, I'm not exaggerating, probably a ten or a fifteen minute conversation as they stood there at the door. And I gather that Claudine is a basketball coach for middle school age children. Her daughter, who is twelve, is on the team. And so the three women were talking about what had recently happened at a basketball game.

And during the course of our conversation (now this is all guess-work) - during the course of our conversation, one of the women made several remarks that were not like other remarks that I've heard the people there make. She made one reference to the fact that she had gas. She said another time that she really wanted to burp. And it was clear to me that both Claudine and the woman standing next to this person who was making those remarks, they both looked embarrassed to me. And the woman who was standing with her actually said, "I've had to put up with this all morning." But to me it even looked like she blushed. Claudine, I didn't notice, I only thought that she might've been embarrassed by virtue of how she redirected the conversation to take it away from there. Again I was struck by how Claudine is a lifetime resident and that she did not hurry them along. I mean, she had another appointment, she had something else to do. But she was not going to influence these people to leave one minute sooner than they wanted to go. I thought that was, I mean, I think that it's significant. So anyway, the two went to leave and almost as soon as they left, Claudine said to me, "I want to apologize for Ann." She said, "Sometimes she can be outrageous." And I was very surprised by that apology. And I you know, really just minimized it, and said, "Oh! Don't give it a thought." I thought it was, I was flattered that she would be as open in front of a stranger as she would be in front of you all.

And I don't remember much more that Claudine said about that, but it was clear from what she said that Ann had transgressed, she had done some social error, had committed some social error. So, anyway, probably ten minutes passed. We were a little into the interview and the phone rang. I put the tape machine on pause. And it was Ann. I could see, Claudine picked up the phone and said, "Do you know her?" And then she just kind of shook her head and she gave me the phone. She said, "It's for you." And I was very surprised. And here it was Ann, and she said, "You don't know me. You just met me briefly in the office a few minutes ago, and I just wanted to apologize because you're a stranger and I should never have just gone on and on and on the way that I did, and I just really apologize."

And I was just so flabbergasted I just didn't even know what to do. I mean, I'm sure I did an inadequate job of putting her at ease. I you know, stammered and said, "Oh, you know, don't give it another thought. It absolutely didn't offend me at all. Please don't concern yourself with it." But she went on and she probably spent another two or three minutes apologizing profusely, and I don't remember a time when I was more speechless. But I extricated myself as best I could and then gave the phone back to Claudine who said a few parting words to Ann, thanked her for calling and then hung up. And Claudine kind of shook her head again and said, "I do apologize." And I said, and I

gave Claudine feedback. I said, "I think it's so neat that when your friends came to the door," I said, "I could tell from your affect that you were a little embarrassed about what she was saying." I said, "But I like so much that you didn't kick her out or you didn't embarrass her. You didn't do anything to make her feel bad." I said, you know, "I'm a stranger here. I don't belong here." I said, "the commitment that you have to the people in your community-the commitment to stick with them when they're saying something embarrassing, you know, under all circumstances," I said, "I just, I really admire that, and I think that it's a wonderful thing. And so please don't give it any more of a thought."

And I think that she appreciated that. That's the impression that I got. You know, that she appreciated that comment. And she nodded at what I was saying, as though to indicate that I had got it right - that was the right interpretation - that her loyalty to her friends and those members of the community that stay there, that loyalty is everything. It's certainly greater than loyalty to a sophisticated moment or a controlled situation, and I couldn't help but contrast in my own mind how very differently we might manage that situation in the northeast. You know, that, the presentation is so important that sometimes people get their feelings hurt or they, you know, we forget what's really important in interaction - somebody's feelings. Instead we think about how things look or, I don't know, sometimes just the wrong thing. Well, in the last, O.K. so here's another field note paragraph.

This involves my interview with Kim. Kim was, I can't think of anything significant to say about my interview with Kim. Toward the end of our interview what I thought was interesting was that her friend came in and saw that we were taping and Kim just said, "Oh, come on in, come on in, sit here." So she sat there for the last probably five minutes of the interview, which I thought might've affected her candor, but we were at the very end of the interview, and so I didn't think that it was really harmful, and I certainly wasn't gonna say so. I can't think of anything else noteworthy about that interview.

It's March 22. This is a new field note paragraph. I have been thwarted in getting to Brock County over the past few days because of the snow. I was saying that I have been prevented from getting here because of the snow. It's Friday, the 22nd, and I was originally supposed to come here Wednesday, and have had to cancel a couple of interviews. I have been able to reschedule most of them, just like last time, the snow interfered. This time, I got here, oh probably an hour and a half before my appointment and walked into the family resource center and there was a whole lot of carpentry going on in the main body of the place where I've been given open access to. In other words, K just kind of has offered me the large outer office for any of my interviews. It's really better than her private inner office because in the latter, the phone rings all the time and it's really quite interrupting when that happens during an interview. But it just so happens that they also have some carpenters in here doing work over the last couple of weeks and so every time I've come, the noise in the outer office is so loud that I really have to come into the inner office and suffer through the phone just to have any chance of having

anything show up on the tape.

Also today, there's a woman who runs the day care center that adjoins this room and even though I've seen her several times and I recognize her, she doesn't recognize me or doesn't afford me a kind of I don't know, carte blanche, that I might expect or that I would hope to have. She came in while I was on the phone. As soon as I got here I needed to make a phone call to confirm a couple of appointments, and I did that. While I was on the phone she came in and asked pointedly if she could help me. But she stood there kind of insistently and so really interrupted my phone call and I had to keep someone on hold for about five minutes while I reminded her of my name and told her that I had K's permission to use the office and then went over a couple of other times that I wanted to use the office, you know, one appointment tonight at six and tomorrow morning at 8:30.

And in both cases, she grudgingly accepted it even though we had to work something out for this evening, because they close at five and my appointment's at six, and I had to use LeeAnn's name in order to get her to agree to just arrange the door lock so that when I pulled it shut it would lock. So, that was kind of slightly unfriendly, but I don't think it's anything personal, maybe. Actually, I don't have a clue. So that's today, March 22.

Field notes for March 22 later in the evening. Well I'm kind of disappointed. I'm trying not to be upset. After all, I am able to use the family resource center. However, it's just a shame. A woman that I hadn't met before kind of came up to me about quarter to five, just as she was closing everything up and she asked me if I was the woman that was going to stay after. And she started to close the office door. Now, the office, I guess I haven't said a couple of important things. In this outer office, there's just no heat. I mean it's colder inside than it is outside. And in the inside office, even though it's really cold, they have a little space heater. And in addition, there are a few desks, so that when this fellow comes tonight at six, I could've actually had a desk to put the tape recorder on and some kind of a seating arrangement that would look somewhat formal.

I don't know, maybe because of the time I spent as a shrink, sometimes I think those kinds of logistical considerations, they make a difference. They make a difference in terms of people's comfort. I mean, I don't know this fellow who's coming. I've introduced myself to him over the phone and I don't want this to look like a bogus operation. Well, now, the only choice I have is to, because of the plug situation, I can put this tape recorder on a chair kind of in the center of the room and put a couple of chairs there, but it just makes for awkwardness when it doesn't make a whole lot of sense.

I mean, I have this office here. I have, there are these resources that the director told me that I could use, but she's gone this week just like she was gone two weeks ago. She told me that two weeks out of the four in March she was gonna be gone. So it's not that I don't know that, and it's not that I don't appreciate having a place to be, but I don't really feel welcome, I guess. It feels not good to not be welcome. So just now as the woman was leaving, I kind of stopped her and said, "Is there some reason why I can't use that office?" I mean, I said to myself, "Nance, maybe we're being too wimpy and maybe

fray, I guess had tried to break it up. And K then talked about how he had a very bad reputation as not being a very good educator and having a lot of people that really disliked him. If I recall, she talked about his job performance being pretty popularly known as poor. But anyway. Well, that's enough for now.

Here's another field note. When I saw LeeAnn this morning, she said to me kind of, she kind of talked like she was wanting to be sensitive to my feelings. But she said, "You know what I was thinking Nance," she said, "Tonight when you do the interview with that parent, I was thinking if you wouldn't mind it would be good thing for me to be her too." And I was clueless about what she was implying, and I said, "That's fine. Of course you could be here." And then she said, "I was thinking, maybe you could even invite his wife." And I said, "Oh, have I violated some cultural more`?" And she said, "Yeah." You know, and then she and K went into a kind of an extended conversation about how the community is really known to gossip quite freely and it's still really not considered proper. It's just not considered proper, for example, to do all kinds of things.

Like K who is happily married to a minister says that if any of his male friends come to the home, and even if this is a good friend of hers, she would never invite him in the house if her husband wasn't there. And she also told a story about how one day she and her husband were doing some yard work in the front yard and he kissed her on the cheek. And she said in the weeks that followed there was this huge, evil rumor going around that she had been kissing some strange man on her property. And LeeAnn backed this up and talked about how the other day she was out with her boss. They do a lot of traveling and they were at a long meeting and stopped for dinner on the back and someone in Haleyville saw them and she was immediately aware that she was no longer in a university town so she was gonna have to really change her behavior. Because she knows that she's evaluated differently here, a lot more stringently in Haleyville than she would be at the University where she says it's normal to go out to lunch with someone or dinner with someone and nothing is thought about it. So she and K went on and on with a lot of these kinds of examples of what's acceptable here in Haleyville and what's not. So then LeeAnn said that maybe that had been the reason that D canceled with me last week. You know, just that I might have unwittingly kind of transgressed and so I'm gonna try to make it up tonight. But anyway. Oh, oh, and she also said, "and don't go in the office in there where nobody can see it. Be right out in the open, in the larger office." So anyway, that's that.

Here's another footnote paragraph. K talked about someone that she thought would be really good to interview and the woman doesn't have a phone, and so she suggested to me that I write a note to her. And she said she could get the note to this woman's son and maybe set something up with her. So, I wrote out a note and K just happened to go out and here, you know, this building's attached to a gym and she saw the

woman's son and gave him the note, and said, "I did that Nance," and so I just wanted to record that this had been, this was a friendly and helpful thing that she did. I wanted to say that in contrast to, you know, the other experiences I've been having here lately.

Field note paragraph. It's still March the, I believe it's March the 29th. I had an evening appointment, and the fellow canceled last week, and this week, LeeAnn reminded me of a conversation we had last week- just today when I got here she said, "You know Nance, we really need to think about how things are between men and women in this area." And said, "I was thinkin' that I should be with you in the interview tonight and that you should probably phone him and ask him to bring his wife." And so I did phone when I got here. It was a little after five, and his daughter answered the phone, and she said that daddy was in the shower and to take a message. And so I didn't want to leave that message over the phone, so I just thought, well, he's coming. I guess it's not really a problem.

Well, when he, he came in, his wife was with him. And I could tell probably within the first five seconds that the interview wasn't gonna happen. The wife kind of breezed in first and she made believe that she was joking but she said kind of real, like kind of freely and loudly, you know, just came in and announced, "Well, you know, we have seven kids and we don't get out much, and Friday night is our only night to get out, so I'm jealous of the time that he spends doing anything else. So, you know, hurry up and let's just do the interview and I want to take him outta here." And he looked uncomfortable, and this was awkward because we were planning to have the interview out in the open and (tape cuts off). [I tried a little damage control and talked a bit] about the research, and I could see that his affect was cool, kind of stiff and it was clear to me that he was aware of his wife's displeasure. And when I told him about the research he said something that nobody else has said, and that was that he, that no experience has stood out for him. And he said, "No experience has stood out for me. Everything worked out fine." And this parent has been the head of the board of education in Brock County, has had thirteen (!!!) adopted Indian children in the community schools, and has been majorly involved throughout his life, which is why he was referred to me! And so I tried again and I said, "Well, you know, with my other parents, I mean, situations always work out, but there's still some situation that you know that stood out for them, that did work out." It didn't have to be a bad experience for it to stand out, I said.

But he said the same thing two or three times, and I just thought that the best strategy was to let him go. Like it was clear that his wife was upset, he was upset about her being upset, and this just, this wasn't gonna happen. So, I said to him, "Well, then that's O.K. I appreciate you coming out, and it didn't work out, but you know, thanks anyway." And I tried to be really cheerful about it. So I get up and the woman says, "Oh, I thought it was gonna take thirty minutes." Here, LeeAnn, my dear friend, had skillfully gotten the woman to walk away from where she was (which was like one foot away from us) and had her in another part of the very large room. And what we did was the four of us got into this kind of conversation about what the interview was about. And during that conversation, that conversation I think went well. I did want to try to make up for

whatever I had done to sour the interview.

After I decided that this interview was not gonna happen with this participant, I started talking about the research and he, and I could see that his anxiety dissipated and I could see that he really wanted to do the interview. And he gave me that impression, but he was not gonna do this with his wife's disapproval. So, when the four of us were standing there, he said to her several times, "You're the one that should do this interview. You're the one that should do this interview." And she said, "No, I don't want to be negative and everything that I'd say would be negative." And LeeAnn said to her, "Well, you know, really, like as a member of the community, don't you think that it's important that we address that in some way." And when LeeAnn said that, her husband agreed with LeeAnn vehemently. He said, "Yeah!" And he was kind of trying to encourage his wife.

So we talked at some length, the four of us, about it. And she told me about a situation that she had where, they've had over forty foster children through the years. And fourteen of them they've actually adopted. And she told me this story about these two children that she had gotten that had stayed with them. And she talked about how all she did was attend to their hygiene. And her perception was that the teacher's treatment of them changed dramatically - that they went from being students who were ignored to students whose work was praised. And you know, she said, she felt bad, that it was wrong that a child's learning and therefore his future should be affected by his hygiene. You know, especially when these children, the children that they adopt, always come from poverty and they come from a group that's really put down and she just really felt that was wrong. And so what I did is I got a consent form and I gave it to her and I said, "Please read it."

And I thought I did a pretty skillful job of making up, of saying, "this is really research to increase parent involvement." And they both agreed with that, and as they were leaving she said, "Well now I really feel bad that we didn't stay." And I said, "Well, no. You're busy and this is, you know, you're night off to be with your husband, but you know if you read this and you think about it and you want to do it, let me know and I'll come and interview with you any time." [I gave her the informed consent form and my number.] And I don't think that she will. But it's a real shame because I think that she has very, very, very important things to say. But her husband is the head of the school board and so it's possible that she might not have, even if I had done the right thin-like according to the cultural "rules" here, it is clear to me that I should have phoned her.

O.K., in the earlier footnotes that I put in here today, I talked about the appropriate relationship between men and women. And now I can see clearly that I violated that. I went right straight ahead and just talked to the G, and she came in furious. And the interview was off from the beginning because I was not culturally sensitive and so that's a shame. I feel badly about that. I think that either of them would have given some really important insights and I guess that's just the cost of moving insensitively within a culture. So that's kind of sad. Maybe I'll do better.

This is another footnote paragraph. When LeeAnn drove with me she showed me what one social event in the area is, and it's really amazing. It's like, it's this man-made

kind of loop. It's not even an actual loop. You know what it is, it's that on this stretch of road - there are two stoplights in this town and on this stretch of road the teenagers who can drive just, how can I put this into words. They just drive up and down in this kind of like one mile circumference and just kind of turning around in like four different - no actually just two different, one of one side of the road one on the other. Two different kind of strip shopping centers that are loopy, that, they give like easy-access. And so what cars do is they just, she said they flash each other if they want you to pull over and talk to them. And sometimes you see people that you know and so you pull over and talk. And she said, we did it just as the sun was going down, and she said it wouldn't be good really until later. But later, they'll actually like, she said there'll be dozens of cars, dozens - at least a lot of cars you know, just talking and blinking and driving all in the same kind of one mile loop. And so that's a little bit of Friday night high time that she was telling me about.

Here's another footnote. I went to the library this afternoon - Brock County Library - and looked up some books about G County History. And the librarian was not cooperative. I asked her if I could get a library card and she said, "No." You could only have a library card if you were from Brock County. And I asked her if I could use my friend's card and she said, "with her permission." And there were a couple of books that are reference books that I couldn't find and she didn't check for them and she just shrugged and said, "Well, I don't understand it. They must be gone." But she didn't look it up in the card catalog or on the computer even though I asked her to. But then on the other hand, she made a few other like quasi-friendly remarks, so I don't know how to interpret what went down. There are not a lot of materials there, and the materials that I really needed were missing. So, we'll see what happens with that.

APPENDIX B

Name	Respondent	Gender	Age Range	Residence	Education	Occupation
DR	1	Male	41-50	Not Lifelong	College Degree	Physician
DS	2	Male	41-50	Lifelong	High School Diploma	County Manager
AD	3	Female	51-60	Lifelong	<12 yrs. of school	Tourist Guide
HS	4	Female	61-up	Lifelong	<12 yrs. of school	Retired
BP	5	Female	41-50	Lifelong	Associates Degree	Business Owner
JS	6	Female	41-50	Lifelong	GED	Secretary
MY	7	Female	41-50	Lifelong	High School Diploma	County Worker
KP	8	Female	31-40	Lifelong	High School Diploma	Secretary-Courthouse
SR	9	Female	51-60	Lifelong	<12 yrs. of school	Housewife
LE	10	Female	31-40	Lifelong	High School Diploma	Clerical
PE	11	Female	41-50	Lifelong	High School Diploma	County Worker
RS	12	Female	31-40	Lifelong	College Degree	Child Care Worker with Developmentally Disabled
BD	13	Female	31-40	Lifelong	Some College	Pre-School Teacher
CN	14	Female	31-40	Lifelong	GED	Business Owner
FS	15	Female	41-50	Not Lifelong	High School Diploma	House Cleaner, Volunteer

APPENDIX C

Bracketing Interview

I: Nancy, can you tell me about your experiences with schools and children who have been important to you?

P: Uhmm, well the first thing that came to my mind when I started thinking about doing this interview with you was ...you know, I don't have children. So I am calling on experiences I have had with schools that involve children that I love, my nieces and nephews. And I'm remembering ummm, that several months ago, probably the last time I was home, I became, I was invited to my niece's school to take part in an activity that the teacher had orchestrated. And it involved, you know, bringing a book to the school and reading to Victoria and just spending some time with her in the classroom. And other parents and aunts and grandparents were invited also, so almost every child had some combination of relatives there with him or her and we all kind of went off with our child and worked essentially in about twenty different spaces and read our books and talked to our child about the book and ...there was a lot of affection, the children were really excited to see us in school, I guess people that they usually didn't associate with being in school, so... (interruption).

I: There were a couple of words I heard you say that Id like to have you go on with. One was the work "invited" and I heard you use that a couple of times. Can you tell me what it feels like to be invited to school?

P: Well, umm, it feels as though the place isn't mine. I mean, you're invited to a place that is not yours, it belongs to someone else, and you are given the option of coming into someone else's space for a time and there are implications of boundaries around that. You are invited into a space but we all know that there are some expectations that you're going to go into that place for a time and a purpose. So how does that feel? It feels formal, I guess.

I: Formal is a pretty good word, probably. Yet even in this situation the kids responded quite affectionately, pleased to have you there.

P: Yea. Well, I mean, I have a close relationship with Vicky. And I anticipate that the other children had similar pleasant relationships with the people that came in, but the formality I perceived did not come from the children, it came from the teacher and the place that the teacher invited me into; her classroom, her school. You know that is where my feeling of formality lies.

I: With the kids, it's their school.

P: Yea. Vicky's six, and I don't know. I don't remember feeling like it was my school

much beyond six, you know. But she may feel it's still her school, and she was really happy that I was there.

I: I am intrigued by that feeling that you didn't have that school was your after an early age. Can you tell me more about that experience?
P: Umm, no. I don't remember when school was ever my place. I have a faint, a dim memory of it maybe being my place, maybe when I was six, possibly when I was seven. But not beyond that. I remember beyond that it was a really austere, structured ummm, what kind of place?

I: Can you remember any specific experience when school had that kind of alienated feeling for you?

P: (laugh) Oh sure. Sure. I went to a Catholic school and they were very big on discipline. And I remember that I started...I think that I started feeling differently about school in the third grade. I had one of those nuns that, you know, people tell stories about. You know, a really mean nun. She would make us sit, it seems now, for hours, with our hands clenched in from of us, our feet together and staring straight ahead. And she would do these kinds of Nazi tactics. You know, she would pace, she would walk in back of you, she would walk from the back of the room to the front very slowly, just looking for a child who did not have enough impulse control to contain himself or herself, and boy, she would be just vicious with that pointer if she saw anyone just dare to come out of that kind of physical body direction that she had given to all of us. And I remember being afraid all of the time when I was in the third grade. From then on in, the nuns got strict. I mean, it was pretty well known that you coasted until the third grade. Until then, you had very loving nuns, you know, first and second grades, but after that it was dog eat dog, survival of the fittest. I hope that's not, I don't want that to be my niece's experience of school. But they're not going to Catholic school. So...

I: How does your experience of your nieces in the school, how does that experience for you seem different?

P: Well, I'm not as involved as I would like to be. Part of it is just the distance. I mean, for most of their lives I have lived all around the country and every time I come home I always spend some time in somebody's classroom in some form. I go on class trips, you know I'll take advantage of this or that activity, but it's hit or miss, it's what's happening during the time period that I'm home. I guess that so far I haven't...I don't feel I've had enough involvement with their schools. I don't think, I don't know that this is everybody's experience, it's just circumstantial with me. But I intend to be more involved with their schools in the future.

I: So you're really a visiter in several ways when you go to the schools with your nieces and nephews. You're a visitor to the community, you're a visitor with your family.

P: Yes, that's a good point.

I: Well, what are your experiences with the schools when you do go?

P: Well, there is that time that I told you about. I have thought about that time I spent with Vicky in the classroom because I had an unsettled feeling about it, and I've tried to figure out what I didn't like about it. I mean, on the face of things it was a good thing. The teacher invited relatives periodically into the classroom to, you know, be in the classroom, however the activity that she offered us was, I think, a kind of a fragmented one. I mean, she offered...we all came in at 12:30, we had to be there by 12:30, we had to leave by 1:30. I mean, there was a strict amount of time that we had and we didn't really get to see our child in the context of the classroom operation, but rather we got to have time with our child, which I don't consider to have a lot to do with school. I mean, every time I come home I spend time with Vicky. She's on my lap, we're reading books, we're having involvement, so I would like to have some exposure to some of Vicky's leaning in the context of that classroom. I would have liked if the parents and relatives were invited into the actual classroom working.

I: You would have liked to be a part of the normal routine in the classroom.

P: Yea. I would have like to have seen what that is, instead of going in and having a piece of what I always have with Vicky, but in a school.

I: This isn't a word that you use but my sense is that it was like a show.

P: It had a kind of a perfunctory feel to me. I think that this teacher was trying to do a good thing. I do. This teacher was trying to get relatives involved in the classroom. However I think that involvement in the classroom should mean something else. It should mean in the classroom as children learn, all together. I would love to see, just see, Vicky as she answers a question, how she interacts with the other children in the classroom, does she share, are they working together in groups...that's what I would really like to see. And I don't necessarily fault the teacher but I think that this kind of activity is reflective of good intention without a lot of forethought about what it implies or what the possible outcomes are.

I: I sense that even though this is her space, and her territory, there is almost an awkwardness on the part of the teacher knowing how to do what she wants to do.

P: That's my anticipation. That may not be so, but that's my...you know how ...I don't know if you do this but I sometimes I observe something and then I just apply my opinions to it. In my thinking she was trying to do a good thing, you know, family involvement, but this is the closest that she can get to it.

I: This is just an odd response on my part but have you been in lots of classrooms like as a school psychologist? I never felt that awkwardness, but I never went back as a parent and I'm wondering how much what we anticipate, what I would have anticipated as a parent. Do you know what I am trying to ask?

P: I don't know, I have occupied a couple of roles in classrooms myself. I remember that when I was a student and we were going to have any visitors in the classroom that my teacher's behaviors were much changed. You know, that they were, I mean I am talking collectively and I can get more specific if you'd like but I remember them warning us before people would come into the classroom and it was clear to me that when other people came into the classroom that we were supposed to be on our best behavior. Teachers were anxious about other people being there.

I: Tell me another experience with school involving a child who is important to you.

P: I'm remembering an activity that involved helping my one niece so that she and her band could go to Florida. I have a niece who is in a competitive marching band. They don't go to Catholic schools, but they still need money. They raise a lot of money for the entire band to go away for competitions. This invitation to become involved came from my niece Vanessa. She came to me and said that she personally needed to make $200.00. The band leader has said to them that if they each sold $200.00 worth of candy then they would each be contributing to at least bringing their own body down to Florida. And so she asked me if I would help her, and I asked her what that would involve and she showed me the forms and ummm, we sat together and made a plan. That was a really good experience. Vanessa is sixteen. She is really bright and funny and in essence, Vanessa mediated the experience from the school to me in such a way that it was a positive experience. She came to me and said Aunt Nance this is the challenge, and so she and I sat together and said how are we going to do this, what should we do. And I remember (laugh) even bringing up the issue of ethics. Well, Vaness, this is candy, like, who do we want, you know, let's talk about even the morality of this. Is there anybody in our family that needs candy? You know, so we did a lot of fun brainstorming and (laugh) she came up with the suggestion that we should sell this to people that we don't like (laugh). We were able to talk about a lot of important things in the context of this little goal that she had. And we worked out a plan and followed through, and it was an affirming and connecting activity.

I: So this experience was external to the school.

P: Yes. It was completely external. I had no exposure to the school itself. Vanessa came to me, she had the forms, and everything that I did was with her outside of the school.

I: What made the experience with the school rather than being tied to Vanessa?

P: Ummm, just because it came from the school. This was a respectful... there was the expectation of autonomy from the school. The band leader said, in order for our band to go, each member needs to take responsibility for a couple of hundred dollars. I don't know how you're gonna do that. Why don't you see if there's somebody in your family that can help you with it? That's exactly how the band leader had thrown it out, according to Vanessa. Now, I would like to think that for the students who did not have a traveling relative come along that there was some additional help for them. I don't know about that. I just know that in my experience, I felt the activity was respectful. It gave the children an opportunity to think and use their brains to apply creative thinking to a problem and just proceed.

I: So often this fund raising is seen as kind of onerous, you gotta do this or else. So what was significant in this experience for you was that the school, even though they needed this money, managed to build some kind of a systemic response from the children that made them look at what they could do in a larger context.

P: Uh huh. Yea.

I: And that felt good to you.

P: Yea. And I'm really aware that I don't give the school credit, I gave the teacher credit. You know, I'm thinking that I did the same thing with Victoria. I don't think in terms of the school, I think in terms of the teacher. In Vanessa's case the way that she talked about the band leader, how he had framed this task, made me feel good about him. How he had managed this challenge. In contrast, Victoria's teacher...her challenge was how to get relatives in the classroom. I felt her strategy was kind of lacking.

I: So your experience with the school really boiled down to experiences with the teacher.

P: That's right. And then I extrapolate from teacher to school.

I: As a parent, if you were a parent, do you think that is a common experience?

P: I...I worry because I can't imagine what it must be like to be a parent. I know what it is like to be an aunt and I love these children and have feelings and strong opinions about what they can do and how their learning should be facilitated. And I anticipate that I would have even stronger opinions about it all if I was a parent. What is the teacher doing and what is my recourse? Can I talk to the principal, is the principal someone who will talk with me? Who is a resource in the school? As a parent I might have a more dimensional sense of this whole thing.

I: Can you tell me more about the school as a whole?

P: Oh, that's a good question. The school is always, you know...a cold...(laugh) I'm so embarrassed about these words, because I can imagine how they are going to look on paper, but I always see, I always experience... like with Vicky. Schools are always the same. You know, there are lockers and kind of uniformly cheerful bulletin boards, and schools have a smell that is as identifiable as the hospital smell. I mean, it's an institution, that's what it is. Schools are institutions. That's how I experience school. I walk into them, and they're institutions. Let me be specific with Vicky's school. It's how I've experienced every school in my life. You know, I walk in and there are wood floors and lockers, and there's that school smell, and you have to report to the office. There are rules and customs and traditions that operate in every school, that are accepted kinds of mores for every school so everybody has to come to the main office and be given a tag or given permission to go into the classroom that you want to go into, so you know...schools are never really warm places as far as that way that I experience them.

I: So you experience school primarily by the physical structure of the school, rules of the school, there's no personality there it's something abstract.

P: No...no. So that was my experience with Vicky's school. So I walk in and my first opportunity for this to be a warm experience is in my interaction with the teacher. And I remember this teacher barely wasted a glance on me, or any other parent or aunt or grandparent that was coming in. As soon as I came into the room she immediately said, find your child, get a corner of the room, you have until this time to read them the story and so I immediately was looking at my watch and worried that I wasn't doing it right. Vicky knew exactly what we needed to do, little Vicky had already had the rules dictated to her and she knew what we needed to do in this time space...Aunt Nance, we need to sit here, we need to read the book now...

I: So even in this opportunity where you could anticipate some interpersonal stuff the structure took right over.

P: Oh, yea, yea. There was no...it was a stretch to ascribe good motives to this teacher in that moment. I mean, I walked into the room with several other relatives and I am not exaggerating when I say that she wasted barely a glance on the lot of us, just dispatched us to the children who were waiting for us. It was clear from her affect that she was focused on time. And in fairness she was running on a strict schedule. She had this period for family involvement scheduled. It was supposed to be storytelling followed by lunch together and after that we're out, so she can get on with her day.

I: So you're sense of coldness wasn't just the building and the rules, it was the way you were treated.

P: In this situation, yes. And yet intellectually, well, that doesn't matter.

I: But that was part of your experience, intellectually. You were kind of understanding where the teacher was coming from and you were trying to put yourself in her place.

P: Yea. Trying not to be too hard on her. I can be too hard on people sometimes.

I: So there was a sense of restraint of your own judgements of what was happening.

P: Oh, yea. Believe it or not in spite of what I've said thus far I try (laugh) to ascribe the benefit of the doubt to teachers and schools.

I: Can you tell me more about this ambivalence that you feel on one part about the structure of schools and this other part that is you, as an educator.

P: Well, it's a troublesome... balancing feeling that I have. I mean I have known... many teachers and many schools that have behaved like institutions where there was a dearth of warmth and of caring facilitation of learning. On the other hand, I have known many teachers who have been loving and have operated in a caring and honorable fashion under the constraints of the rules. So I guess I realize that I see schools as institutional cold structures notwithstanding. I mean teachers can be wonderful or they can be like the schools, you know, cold and unyielding. But the school is always cold and unyielding. And sometimes you have a teacher who mediates your experience of learning and of the school in such a way that the coldness is dissipated... and I have felt warmth, and excitement. Mostly it is the other experience that I have had with schools.

I: Can your remember any other experiences that you have had as a parent or visiter when you felt that kind of warmth that you alluded to there?

P: I haven't had any good and warm experiences as an adult watching a child that I love in the classroom. I have had wonderful experiences in the classroom where I'm functioning as a teacher and I've had wonderful experiences in the classroom where I'm functioning as the student, but I have not had the experience of being in the classroom with a child that I love who is with a teacher who is doing it good (laugh). Who is doing it right. Being loving with the children, or who is welcoming me.

I: Yes, so even though you have been invited you weren't necessarily feeling welcomed.

P: That's correct.

I: Can you tell me more about that sense?

P: Umm, that reminds me of what I said earlier, it's kind of perfunctory. I experience

this as a perfunctory invitation. I guess that feels...ambivalent. It feels as though on one hand I am glad that the teacher is reaching out, but on the other hand, I don't think that she really means it.

I: This is a strange question. What is the experience of something that is perfunctory?

P: It's an awkward kind of, you know, unbalanced feeling, I guess. It's like a tightrope kind of feeling because there's a waxing and a waning. On one hand it's an invitation and that's a good thing, and on the other hand you know because my history is such that none of these experiences have ever been warm, I don't really anticipate that it is going to be warm. So it's like being invited someplace where they really don't want you. You know.

I: Perfunctory is a relatively neutral word. It's not that they don't want you, it's just perfunctory.

P: Well, it's not that they don't want you, it's that they don't want **you.** (laugh) The emphasis isn't on don't, it is on you.

I: Maybe it's because they don't know what to do with you.

P: Well, yea. I can ascribe all kinds of intellectual reasons for why it is this way, but in describing my experience of what it is, it is awkward, it's like a bag of mixed conflictual feelings, like this is good for the kids, this will communicate to the teacher that the child has people who love her, maybe this will be a good time, different from the other times. But it's also walking into a living room that is covered with plastic slip covers. (laughter) I mean, yea, you can sit, but you know, it's not comfortable and if they are that all fired protective of their furniture you know they really don't want you to stay. Just don't get anything dirty. Stay for a while and leave and don't leave anything of yours here. That's really what I am getting to. My experience of involvement with children in schools has been that of noninvolvement. You know, they want my body there for these activities that are called family involvement activities, but they don't want anything **of** me. They don't want my attention, they don't want my ideas, they don't want any kind of human connection. They only want my silent, obedient presence. Just like when I was in third grade. (laughter)

I: They're going to count attendance but they don't want you to do anything when you get there.

P: Yea. So I guess that it's been important for me to realize that I bring this baggage to those unsuspecting family involvement activities. Because I hadn't been aware that ...I hadn't really unpacked all of this stuff before this time.

I: You've used a number of words that I've as a parent and as a professional kind of relate to. One of the words is balance. I think back to my coming to the schools and the ways in which I felt I had to balance my roles as a parent, a professional and a visiter to the school. Have you ever felt that pull of advocating for your child in the school?

P: Yea.

I: Can you tell me about one of those experiences?

P: One of my nieces, Danielle...I always ask them about school. She and I got to talking about what was happening for her in the school. And she told me that she wasn't having a good time. And usually...I fault myself for sounding like a lame Aunt and saying things like, how's school, honey? I mean, what is she gonna say? But this time, to my surprise she said that things weren't going well. And Danielle is fourteen and has got school down pat, we've had a lot of years of Danielle saying things are good, Aunt Nance, so this time I was really surprised. What was happening, according to her, was that she had gotten into this habit of not going to gym class. She doesn't like the gym teacher and she's...I kind of read between the lines and what I was hearing was that she's a little overweight and she is embarrassed to be in her gym outfit and, remember this is Dani speaking, the gym teacher makes fun of people who are overweight, making them do special activities apart form the rest of the class. It embarrasses her, it makes her feel singled out, and so what she's taken to doing is skipping gym class. But not illegally. There are ways that you can get out of gym legally, but you have to make up the classes. She's gone to the nurse a couple of times, that kind of thing. Well, it got to the point where she was in danger of failing if she didn't make up the missed time. Remember, this is Dani talking, but according to her when she approached the gym teacher to make up a schedule for the missed time the only deal he gave her was not one that she could not manage. The one period that he was offering her makeup time would have resulted in her getting kicked out of the band. All the children play musical instruments. And she said, I really don't want to have to give up the band, but I have to pass gym, and I've tried to talk with him but he already doesn't like me and I've asked Mom if she'll help me but so far she hasn't gotten to it. And I didn't like a lot of how that sounded. I mean, I know that kids exaggerate but this had the ring of truth to it, though it is something I would have checked out before acting.

So I went to my sister and she pretty much confirmed what Dani had told me. She had been having problems with this teacher all year, Dani had been telling her about it, and my sister had made attempts to contact the teacher without success. My sister is in a graduate program that requires a lot of travel, a lot of time away from home, and I was really concerned that Dani was going to fall through the cracks. My sister doesn't have a lot of time to do this but in the meantime we were getting to the end of the semester when Dani really needed some intervention. So I talked to my sister about some of the avenues she could take, maybe some language she could use with the secretary in making an appointment right away, and brought up a couple of points that

needed to be made. And I remember feeling that I would like to go into the school and take care of that. But the parent is really is the only one who has power in the school. And according to my sister, that power is a muted thing. So that was a time when I felt strongly how the structure of the school is not set up in such a way that this would be an OK thing to do.

I: So you were feeling ambivalent about your role in not being the parent.

P: My role as nothing. You know, if you're not the parent, you have no power.

I: And your sister was feeling that lack of power.

P: Yea, even in her role as parent. She had tried to contact the teacher and had felt rebuked by the teacher's action in not contacting her back. And the last I heard this was not resolved, and I used even stronger language with my sister in urging her to go to the school.

I: It sounds as though you were kind of frustrated with your sister.

P: Well, yea, you know, parents need to be advocates for their children. I know that implies an adversarial system, but that is how I experience it, as an adversarial system. And it has been my experience that students whose parents are active are treated more fairly, more often than the children whose parents that are not involved.

I: Not necessarily adversarial, but what you were talking about was being as advocate. But your sister felt uncomfortable even being a powerful advocate for her child, the way I hear you say it.

P: Well, I did not communicate well there if that is the impression that you got because her problem in going there as an advocate was more a function of the time constraint that she was under. She had made a couple of attempts and had been put off and so she was kind of letting it go, but that was a function of her being busy with other things. Right now she commutes four hours a day to complete this graduate program, and frankly there are a lot of important things that she is letting go. And what is figural for me is what the children need now. She is thinking about how she will have time for everything next year when she has her RD. I'm thinking that in the meantime this is happening for Dani in this gym class. This is the only time she can intercede, right here.

I: So her attempts to be an advocate had not worked out, so you were pushing her to be more...

P: Yea, just bring it to the fore as something that deserves her attention, Sis, this is important. Just begin a dialogue about it.

I: Well, there can be truths on both sides but people need to talk about it.

P: Oh, yea. And I think people have truths, and they can be different truths. In other words, I'll be surprised if Dani was exaggerating her feeling of being isolated and humiliated. But I likewise will be surprised if this gym teacher has set the class up in such a way that is clearly punitive. I mean, it's probably insensitivity rather than hatefulness. I don't think this man is somebody that is saying, let me hurt those slackers. More than likely he is thinking these people are heavy and they can't do such and thus so how about if I give them this different activity to do not recognizing... that for them...

I: he's separating them out.

P: Yea, yea. I mean I think that both of their truths can be different truths but truths notwithstanding.

I: What if her experience, you know, in the way that you describe it and what you got tell about your sister makes sense, but what if her difficulty being an advocate...can you back out of the specifics and see what her experience...what was your experience of her that was typical...for a parent?

P: What's the question?

I: I was asking you about your thinking about your sister's thinking but I have decided against that. Nancy, is there anything that you want to add about any of the examples that we have discussed today?

P: No... I appreciate the chance to name these feelings. I can already see how this exercise will help me in interviewing others. Thanks.

APPENDIX D

Form B

CRP # _____

Date Received in ORC _____

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, KNOXVILLE

Application for Review of Research Involving Human Subjects
(in accordance with institutional assurance of compliance to DHHS)

I. IDENTIFICATION OF PROJECT Date 10/16/95

Principal Investigator, Co-PI:

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Title of Project: Parents' Experience of Their Children's Schools

Department: Psychoeducational Studies Unit

Starting Date: Upon CRP Approval

Estimated Completion Date: June, 1997

II. OBJECTIVES OF PROJECT

Parental involvement in schools has been linked to a host of positive outcomes, among them increased student achievement, improving parents' self-esteem, enhancing relations between community and schools and clarifying school practice for parents. Recruiting for involvement in schools is problematic, however. Unsuccessful recruiting has been traced to teacher attitudes of resistance to parent involvement, lack of administrative support, and uneven willingness on the part of the parents, despite a range of strategies evoked to increase parent involvement e.g., transportation, child care, financial stipend, etc. No single solution has been successfully applied to the paradox, suggesting there are various contributors to the problem. In view of the positive outcomes associated with increased parental involvement in their children's schools, understanding of the complexity of the barriers is mandated.

This study hopes to increase understanding of the dynamics of parent involvement from the parent's perspective, contributing to the information base from which more successful interventions can be generated.

III. DESCRIPTION OF SUBJECTS

I plan to interview between 10 and 15 parents, depending upon the number of volunteers that offer to speak with me, and the richness of the interviews. In the latter case, if it seems that the parent's experiences are very similar and nothing new is to be derived from further interviews, I will discontinue the practice. The only criteria to being interviewed is that the parent must have a child and be willing to discuss their experience with any school in which they have been affiliated. The researcher will schedule interviews at the parent's convenience.

IV. METHODS OF PROCEDURES

Permission to conduct research in Knox County Schools is reflected in the attached letter from the Knox County Superintendent of Schools, Sam Bratton. After getting CRP's permission to proceed, I will contact one of the several schools with which I am affiliated and arrange to speak with a Principal about the project. In a personal meeting, I will describe the study as aimed at enhancing the understanding of parents' experiences in their children's schools, given the promising relationship between student achievement and parent involvement in schools. I will assure the Principal of the anonymity of individual participants' discussions as well as the identity/location of any school/individuals of whom the parent's speak. I will describe the scope of the study as involving 10-15 parents that are interviewed over a six month period, and clearly outline the Principal's role as consisting of three parts:

1. The Principal will arrange for the researcher to speak to parent's about the study in a group setting, in which names and phone numbers of volunteer interviewee's are elicited.
2. The Principal will provide a private space in the school where the interviews may take place (the researcher will provide the tape recorder and tape(s)). The parent may choose to select another setting for the interview; the home or a public setting. The researcher will choose the school setting if the parent does not suggest otherwise.
3. The Principal will generate a letter of support for the research that has accompanied this report.

I will remind the Principal that the voluntary nature of participation in this study assures that should the Principal withdraw support for the project, none of the data collected from the parent's will be used.

After getting the Principal's consent to proceed, I will attend a group meeting of parent's which the Principal has arranged, in which I will describe the project briefly and ask parent's to grant me an interview at their convenience. The interview will last between 30 minutes and an hour. In describing the project, I will speak about how several years of research on parent's and schools has led to my interest in the nature of the relationship. I will mention that this project is a part of my dissertation requirement for completion of my PhD program. I will relate the Principal's support for the study and state that the interviews may take place here in the school or in another setting should the parent prefer e.g., their home. The interviews will be audiotaped, I will say, to ensure accuracy when my memory fails. Though some of the information will be shared in a research group for data analysis purposes, I will assure parent's that all identifying features of the information that is shared will be removed before research group members see the data. In closing I will speak to my overall commitment to enhancing the school experience for their children. In the interviews themselves, I will begin by obtaining Informed Consent from each participant, first reading aloud the contents of the consent form and ultimately getting a signature that reflects the participants's willingness to take part in the interview. I will further explain the importance and objective of audiotaping the interview, saying that the findings will be more thorough and accurate with the researcher able to depend upon something beyond human memory in reporting the results of the interviews. I will share the safeguards that exist to protect their anonymity e.g., the reporting will in no way identify the speaker, the voluntary nature of their participation, the tapes to be locked up in an appropriate space for a period of years, and that the use of the information is specific to this project. The researcher will also offer to include parent feedback of the findings in the final report, as a reflection of the researcher's commitment to participant voice being featured as well as another validity check.

The phenomenological method of analysis will be used in this study, beginning with one primary research question and then following the participant's direction. My research question is: Tell me about an experience you have had with your children's school. The method is designed to elicit detailed description in ultimately arriving at a

common structure of the experience for the parents interviewed. Several broad questions will be used in ferreting out full descriptions of the experience before going on to repeat the process with an inquiry into another experience. In ending the interview, I will thank the parents for their participation and ask permission to contact them in the future so that they can offer feedback on the project findings. A sample copy of the interview guide for parents is attached to this report.

V. SPECIFIC RISKS AND PROTECTION MEASURES

There is the potential for minimal risk to the participants in this study, borrowing the definition that minimal risks means the risks of harm anticipated in the proposed research are not greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests (45CFR 46.102). This researcher will evaluate the participants general health when a parent offers to interview with the researcher, and will discourage elderly or visibly unhealthy parent's from volunteering, first inquiring into their health. I do not see this eventuality as likely, however. There is the possibility that in conversation, the participant will describe something that is painful, which leads to emotional discomfort on the part of the parent. Again, this is not likely. The range of parent experiences with their children's schools are more likely to generate stories that are not based in trauma. The researcher is a skilled counselor, however, and is capable of identifying the signs of stress. She will terminate any interview in which it appears that the parent is manifesting symptoms of trauma.

The interviews will be conducted either in a private room at the school, or in another setting of the parent's choice. The parent may elect to bring someone with him/her for the interview. After the interviews are audiotaped, the tapes will be transcribed by the researcher, who will review the transcripts repeatedly to locate any shared themes among participants. When not being transcribed, the tapes will be stored temporarily in a locked file cabinet that is located in the researcher's home to ensure that only the researcher will have access to the audiotaped interviews. After the audiotapes are transcribed, the tapes will be erased. The transcriptions will remain locked up for three years, after which time they will be destroyed.

Several interview transcripts may be shared with a group of researchers for data analysis. All identifying words (i.e., names, institutions, programs, etc.) will be removed from the transcriptions that the group members receive. A group of phenomenological researchers are more capable of arriving at value-free thematic units than any one researcher operating alone. All of the members of the data analysis group will be asked to sign confidentiality forms to protect the anonymity of the participants, schools, etc. as well as the content of the interviews. A copy of this confidentiality form is attached to the report.

VI. BENEFITS VERSUS RISKS

As stated above, this researcher believes the risks are minimal. Operating with adults who volunteer to speak with me about their experiences with their children's schools should not reasonably elicit any traumatic or volatile information. The benefits involve contribution to theory with respect to understanding some parent's experience of the school culture. Adding to the knowledge base upon which decisions about program development/ funding are made is another incentive to do the study. Since the results of the study will be made known to participants and the Principal, those with whom the study has been conducted will benefit from all of the information garnered during the course of the project.

VII. METHOD OF OBTAINING INFORMED CONSENT FROM SUBJECTS

The researcher will read the consent form aloud while the parent follows on their copy. The researcher will explain that this procedure is to ensure that they fully understand the project and the possible implications of the study. The participants will be told that at any time that they wish to withdraw from the project, that their information will not be used. A copy of the consent form will be given to the parent's which includes the phone numbers of the researcher and the research advisor. The participants will be encouraged to phone either person with questions or concerns. The parent consent forms will be held for a period of three years in the College of Education, the Counselor Psychology/Counselor Education unit, since the Research Advisor is affiliated with that unit. Sample consent forms are included with this document.

VIII. QUALIFICATIONS OF THE INVESTIGATOR

The researcher is a fourth year doctoral student in the College of Education, whose specialization area is research methodology. In addition the researcher is a certified Educational Specialist who has skills in identifying barriers to learning in adults. Coupled with extensive training in the counseling interview, this researcher is capable of facilitating discussions and identifying participant comfort with the interview process. The faculty who is supervising the research is skilled in a variety of methodological and intrapersonal skills to assist and advise the researcher.

IX. ADEQUACY OF FACILITIES TO SUPPORT RESEARCH

There are two different areas in which the data can be safely stored to ensure both confidentiality and accessibility. The first is in a locked file cabinet in Claxton Education building, Suite 216. When working on the material at home, a locked file cabinet in the researchers's home where data can be temporarily stored ensures continued safety. The University provides ample access to technological equipment for transcriptions and data analysis, both in the researcher's private office and in the

computer lab on the third floor, Claxton Education building. In addition, the researcher possesses both a laptop computer and a personal home computer system with printer, for continued work outside of the university setting.

All of the consent forms will be stored in the Counseling Psychology/Counseling Education in the College of Education for a period of three years, since the Research Advisor, Sky Huck, is attached to this unit.

X. RESPONSIBILITY OF PROJECT DIRECTOR

By the Compliance with the policies established by The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Committee on Research Participation, the principal investigator subscribes to the principles stated in The Belmont Report and standards of professional ethics in all research, development, and related activities involving human subjects under the auspices of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

a. Approval will be obtained from the University Committee prior to instituting any change in the research project.

b. Development of any unexpected risks will be reported to the University Committee

c. A status report (form D) will be submitted at 12-month intervals or as requested attesting to the current status of the project.

d. Signed consent statements will be kept for the duration of the project and for at least three years thereafter.

Principal Investigator

_____
name

_____ _____
signature date

Advisor

_____
name

_____ _____
signature date

XI. DEPARTMENTAL REVIEW

Department Head

_____
name

_____ _____
signature date

The application described above has been reviewed by the departmental committee and has been approved. An expedited review is requested.

Chair, Departmental Review Committee

_____
name

_____ _____
signature date

Approved: Steve Pulik
Coordinator of Compliance
Research Administration

_____ _____
signature date

Consent Form - Parent Participants

This project entitled, "Parents' experience of their children's schools" is intended to increase understanding of parent to school relationships. I understand that my participation is completely voluntary, and that I may choose to withdraw from the project at any time. My participation will take the form of one audiotaped interview with the researcher. Though the information that I share will be used, anonymity is assured such that none of the information I give can be identified as coming from me. Only the researcher has my permission to listen to the audiotaped interviews, though transcribed excerpts may be shared with a research team for data analysis purposes. In this case, however, all names and identifying features will have been removed before anyone else reviews the data. Unless I choose to invite someone into the interview session, the interview will be private, involving the researcher and myself. The interview will take place either in a private setting in my child's school or in another setting that I suggest.

I understand that this study fulfills part of the requirement for a dissertation for a Ph.D. student from the University of Tennessee. While no financial stipend will be offered, the interview will be scheduled at the parents' convenience and in the parents' choice of settings. If I have any questions about the project or in the event that I decide to withdraw my consent, I understand that I can contact either the researcher or the research advisor listed below, and the project will discontinue immediately with none of the data used. The researcher has indicated that she will offer me the opportunity to read a draft of the paper when it nears completion, and that my comments/feedback will be included in the final version of the paper that is written. I will receive a copy of this agreement for my records.

_____	_____
Parent Name Printed	Parent Signature
Researcher: Nancy L. Tarsi	Professor: Schuyler Huck
974-3309	974-5131

Sample Interview Guide for Parents

* Tell me about your experience with your children's school; choose whatever example you wish.

* Choose one time/memory that is clear to you. (To encourage the participant to select which experience to recount and where to begin.)

* Can you talk some more about that? (To elicit in depth description.)

* What were you aware of at that time?

* What were you feeling then?

* Can you think of another experience you have had with your children's school? (The interviewer will follow words or phrases that the participant uses, asking for elaboration and clarification. The researcher will use the similar questions for the next experience that is shared.)

Confidentiality Agreement - Research Group Members

As a member of this project's research team, I understand that I will be reading transcriptions of confidential interviews. While all identifying features within the interviews have been erased, the information in these transcriptions has been revealed by research participants who took part in this project in good faith that the interview content would remain strictly confidential. I understand my responsibility to honor this confidentiality agreement. I hereby agree not to share any information on these transcriptions with anyone except the primary researcher (Nancy L. Tarsi) or her doctoral committee chair (Schuyler Huck, Ph.D). Any violation of this agreement would constitute a serious breach of ethical standards, and I pledge not to do so.

_____ _____

Research Group Member Date

_____

Researcher

Research Group Members

Dr. Howard Pollio - Psychology
Dr. Lee Humphries - Religious Studies
Dr. Mary Kay Kramp - Education
Dr. Mark Hector - Education
Gary Maas - Education
Donal Crosse - Education
Donna Morrison - Education
Gail Romer - Education
Katie Rae - Education
Nancy Tarsi - Education
Dr. Sandra Thomas - Nursing

These group members are the primary attendees to the research group although membership changes weekly. Those who are present when data analysis of these transcriptions are introduced will sign confidentiality agreements, which will be stored for a period of three years along with the parent consent forms in the Counseling Psychology/Counselor Education unit, with Sky Huck (Research Advisor) in the College of Education.

Confidentially Agreement - Transcriber

I understand that the content of the tapes I am transcribing are to be kept completely confidential. That is to say that I will not refer to the information or the anecdotes contained in the interviews in any way whatsoever. I am considered a member of the research team to the degree that my exposure to this information mandates that I respect the confidentiality agreement that the researcher and the University of Tennessee guaranteed to each participant prior to her agreement to participate in the study. As such, I am both legally and ethically bound to honor this promise.

_____ _____

Transcriber Date

_____

Researcher

APPENDIX E

Sample Interview #1 - Don

I I appreciate your time, Don. Would you talk with me about your experience with your child's school?

P Let's see. H's in the second grade and M's in pre-school. So I guess we better talk about H then.

I Well, it doesn't have to be an experience in the school. It can be any experience you've had with them. What stands out for you with your child's school?

P I guess one of the neat things is that, H is in second grade this year. His teacher has the same last name as he does, has been real into having separate work for him. And she's gone to the trouble and the time and the energy and the effort to allow him to progress at his pace, which is different than most of the rest of the class. And that's been a real positive for us.

I Tell me about that.

P When school started this year, I went by to just chat with her a little bit because I had never actually met her, which was surprising. I hadn't actually met her.

I Surprising?

P Because I meet just about everybody, one way or another, in my work. So anyway, I had not met her. I talked to her and told her sort of what our expectations were for H and what she probably would experience with him. And then she took about six weeks to I think kind of get an idea of where everybody was in terms of what they knew already and what their potential was. And when she realized what his, where he was and where he could go, she started looking for things to challenge him and to make it interesting for him. First grade was a real problem for him. It was like, it was just really hard for us to keep pushing him to do things that he already knew how to do and was strictly busy work for him. So this year's been great. While he's kind of getting pushed, he hasn't perceived it that way. He perceives it as new, fun stuff. I'm getting to do multiplication now Daddy. I might get to do division. For a kid, at least for this kid, it's not work. It's fun to get exposed to new stuff, a chance to learn new stuff. So that's been a real positive for us.

I What's that like for you as a parent, considering your son's needs and trying to have an impact on what happens in school?

P Well you know, it's kind of a, it's a tight-rope walk. It's a real issue because I see

a lot of emphasis put on kids that are not doing well, kids that are failing. And I totally support that. I also know that, at least from what I read in the newspapers which may or may not be true, that if you look at the U.S. compared to other industrialized nations that the middle third and the bottom third do about the same as Japan or Germany. It's the top third where we get killed. So our two kids aren't guaranteed to be very bright, but as it turns out, H is very bright. And so it was a real concern for us that a lot of attention was going to be paid to the bottom part, but would he get the emphasis that he needed to get to his potential whatever that was or is. In his case probably is. So for us, it was hard, especially with our status in the community. We don't want to be perceived as being pushy. Or having, or expecting to be treated in a special way as opposed to someone who logs for a living. So it was a tight-rope walk for us to communicate with teachers and try to make it obvious that we would try to encourage H in every way we could if they would provide the opportunity.

I I see. So you're really sensitive to the possibility that they may perceive you as being pushy or somehow going beyond yourself ...

P yeah, that is, in a small area like this I'm very well known. And in an urban area where there's a lot more professionals then you won't stick out so much or your child doesn't stick out so much. And that may be more of a perception on my part than reality. But I'm still sensitive to that. But really, as best I can tell, it hasn't been an issue this year. H's teacher, she took the bull by the horns. She did it herself. Really it was her idea. She's the one that went out and found extra material, different material. She's the one that's gone to the extra energy really not at our request. She is motivated from within from what I can see. And that's a real plus. We have some friends who are intimately involved with the school system and being a non-private institution, AT&T gets a lot of bad press for cutting jobs and it is a bad thing for people to lose their jobs, but they have to answer to a bottom line, financial bottom line, performance bottom line. Being a non-private institution, the schools do not. So they tend to carry dead-weight. They have a lot of dead-weight.

And there's lots of reasons for that, not just because they're non-private. But that's one of the reasons. They don't have stockholders to answer to. And if you're AT&T and you carry a few billion dollars of dead-weight you going to probably suffer and go under eventually. So our intimately involved friends tell us about a lot of the dead-weight in the school system. So it's been a, it's a concern for us. And so it's really refreshing to have (the teacher) right in there giving H lots of new stuff, allowing him to prog

I Through the interview, you've talked about things on two levels. On one level, there's the intellectual level, and on the other level I hear kind of permeating through your words that there's an ongoing kind of attention paid to your child, and his individual needs. That there's a kind of a juggling between you understanding the logical bottom-line but still having really strong feelings about what needs to happen for your child. Am I perceiving that correctly?

P Right. I realize that H's teacher answers to the principal who answers to the superintendent who answers to the state. And I realize that they have to have ways of trying to quantify what they're doing, and the way you do that is by some kind of standardized testing to compare this school to that school or this teacher to that teacher. And I understand that need because people demand it. People want to know how does their school system stack up to S Valley or C M or whatever, or the nation or the world. But I also see that there's a lot of - I haven't seen this with H so much. This is really more coming from my friends who are involved in the school system, who work for the school system. It sounds like there's a lot of energy put into preparing to do well on that test, which I see as maybe not in the best interest of the kids. These tests where they compare the writing and the math and they compare third graders across the state, nation, etc. And I just, I don't know that that's really in the best interest of my child. And I see that more designed to measure teacher's performance. I mean the teachers lose sleep over these things. You know, that's not, I don't care about H making his teacher look good or bad. I mean, I'm not interested in making anybody look bad. But I'm interested in H learning the most he can every day he's at school. I don't want dead time, and I don't want time spent to fulfill a test or so he can do better on a particular test that may or may not be important for him in the long run.

I Have you had any experiences of this?

P Well, not so much at this point. I can't, I guess not. I mean more of what I know's hearsay, and hearsay's hearsay.

I Yeah. Yeah. I just want to hear about your experiences.

P No I can't really say so. I'm involved with the school in other ways on other levels. I do a lot of the sports medicine for the school. I do sex ed for the middle school which is an idiotic thing to do.

I What do you mean?

P Asking to be crucified thing to do. (laughs) So I'm involved in other aspects, but we're talking about my aspects with my kids today.

I Yes, and with your child's school. I'm making the jump that any experiences that

you have with your child's school in all your capacities begin to resonate for you. Am I wrong in assuming that in every interaction you have...

P no, it's all part of the package. I agree with you. One thing that just is in my mind because it was such a big deal for me coming on - I guess the proper term for it is hazing or, I actually call it abuse or assault. That's what I call it. It's a real concern. I was very small. I still am, but I was very small coming through. And it's not such a big deal if you're a female, but if you're a male it's a big deal. And I had a really difficult time from about the sixth grade on and I saw my teachers and administrators as either not being interested in dealing with that problem or unable to deal with that problem. And I'm very sensitive to that issue for my children. I can remember sleepless nights for me when I was in seventh and eighth grade. And that was wrong. So, H is going to be a lot bigger than I am, but is a very passive, un-aggressive child, and that partly reflects the family's attitude about how we get along in this world. We don't fight our way through. We talk and compromise our way through and deal with problems in a non-aggressive way. Well, he in fact is a very non-aggressive child. And I can say that that issue came up this year. And I've been very careful about watching for that. He's in second grade. And riding the bus, he doesn't, H as opposed to his Dad who is very extroverted, is introverted - doesn't tell us a lot of things. But in talking, just talking, it became clear that he was having problems with a couple of older kids on the bus. Probably not physically painful things but nonetheless causing him distress. And apparently he did bring this to his teacher's attention and it was taken care of and I was very pleased to see that.

I And that was this year, too.

P That was this year. Apparently the bus drive - we want H to solve his own problems. We don't want to solve his problems for him because as life goes on he'll have to solve more and more of them himself anyway. So we wanted him to talk to the bus driver and for him to talk to his teacher. Apparently, we didn't get anywhere with the bus driver. Which, I was disappointed because I know him very well. We didn't get anywhere with him but we did again with this teacher. She took care of that.

I Did you approached the bus driver?

P We let H approach him.

I And?

P Nothing changed. And I Won't know if H told his teacher or if she simply found him crying one day about this situation and when questioned he offered information and she took care of that for him. We asked H and I think she reported to us about it. And she calls us and gives us updates. And asks us questions, and she communicates real

well with us. Mostly it's about schoolwork and about how he's doing. She wants to be sure that she's not stressing him by pushing him too hard with stuff that's much more than what some of the other kids are doing. She communicates real well with us. And it's real nice. I guess it's like getting a little letter from the doctor about your labwork. It takes extra time and effort and it's appreciated.

I Yeah. I'm getting the impression that you see it as above and beyond. I think you might have even used that expression.

P Oh it is. Oh, I think she's above and beyond. And trying to do that in my own line of work, I really appreciate and respect that. She's not going to get paid a penny more for working harder or doing more and I really appreciate that she has gone the extra mile with H this year. And it's paid off. Not only has he learned a lot. He's having a great time. It's fun. It's real nice.

I When you started talking about how much you like the second grade teacher, you mentioned that this was very different from the experience that you had when H was in the first grade. Can you think about one experience that illustrates that?

P I sure can. Each week he had to write his numbers from one to 430. He had to write those, 1, 2, 3, 4... After two weeks of that, he could do that. But he did it week after week after week. And the kid would start daydreaming and it was like whipping him, "H, get this Tome so you can go on and do something else." It was like being stuck in the mud. You know, it'd take all week for the kid to get this done because he was bored out of his mind. And then he didn't get to do anything else. And this was busywork. I don't know what she was doing during that time but she wasn't teaching.

I So this was a homework assignment?

P They did this in the classroom. And that was just a waste of time.

I Talk about that some more.

P Well, we hear about it from H telling us about it and telling us he didn't get to go out to recess or he didn't get to go to centers because he didn't have his numbers done. Which part of that was H's fault. H's a very bright child. He doesn't have the stick to it - it is that his Mom and Dad have. And so whereas I would look at that as how quickly can I get this done so I can get on to something else. He'd say, I'm just not going to deal with this. I'm going to think about something else. And what could've taken him 45 minutes to do, even though it was boring for him and there was no value in it that I could see, would take him two or three days to do.

I So you were in the position where week after week you were trying to encourage

him to still follow her lead. And you didn't want to put her down or just say openly that you disagreed,

P that's right.

I Will you talk about that a little bit? What's that like pushing your child to do something that you Won't agree with?

P Well, that's just part of living in this world. You know, we want our kids to respect authority. We think that's real important in terms of developing a sense of right and wrong. And there's also something to be said for learning to do things that aren't fun, to do things that you can't see any redeeming value in at the time. It's like memorizing the Krebs Cycle in biochemistry. I could not see any redeeming value in that, but yet I was required to do that. And I didn't appreciate it, but I had to. And so, we saw that as a two-way deal there. We felt like despite the fact that we disagreed, it was something that H needed to learn to do work that wasn't fun, because all life isn't fun. Number one, and number two we want to give a unified stand with H's authority figure at school. That's his teacher. Now all the while we're going to be watching for certainly transgressions, but I'm not talking about those kinds of transgressions.

I I understand.

P So yeah, we didn't agree but we pushed because of those two things - respect for authority and learning to do things that aren't fun. Because it's a part of it. All of my jobs not fun. And kids have to be exposed to that, and they have to learn to cope with that if they're going to get along.

I Can you think of any other experience that you want to share about any other experience that you've had with your child's school.

P Yeah. One other thing just because, well I guess it's controversial. I would think that it's fairly unique to this area. There's a lot of religion mixed in with the school. And I don't agree with that. Now fortunately for this little area, it's very homogeneous and we don't have kids here that - I don't know that we even have any Jewish kids, but if we did, it would be a problem. If we had any Muslim kids it would be a problem. I Won't even know if we have any Catholic kids. That even might be a problem. If you're not, because there's a lot of Protestantism woven into the schools - bible stories and prayers and things that I Won't think belong in school. I think that that's for home. And I believe in diversity. And I was raised in a Protestant home so that's what I am. I'd have problem been a Muslim if I'd been raised in a Muslim home. And I respect that. So, I see that. I don't say a lot because you can't, you just can't. That's, you just can't, that's just a no-touch issue.

I What is it like having no-touch issues in your child's school?

P It's just (pause) anything said negatively along those lines is perceived as, you know, anything that would be said about cultural diversity or understanding or respecting other people's beliefs would be seen as heresy basically. And one would suffer for that. And I think that, I Won't think our kids realize it. I don't think that they realize it. It's no big deal to them. And it's not a big deal to us. But we still notice it. And we feel fortunate that we're in the mainstream.

I What do you mean when you say mainstream?

P That we're Protestants. And for example... we're trying to attract a couple of physicians here. You know, what if they're not in the mainstream? I'd feel obliged to tell them. You know, if they were Jewish. The chances of a Jewish physician coming here is very unlikely because they just wouldn't be appreciated. It's sort of a do it this way or else kind of mentality. And anything else is just bad. And I guess that's just part of being in a small protected rural area. There's some very positive things about this. And I don't let that be a major detractor. But we notice. We notice. Our kids come home and tell us something and my wife and I just look at each other and smile and think well, you know. I would just feel sorry for someone who wasn't in the mainstream. It would be hard on them.

Hey it's no big deal. I mean I was in a North Carolina Academy of Physicians meeting in November - 400 physicians there, their spouses, and we had a - you know that's certainly not a religious organization. And we had a prayer before a meal which is no problem. We pray, we have to, we have the children's little prayer before we have meals at our house. But this prayer was by a minister of a Baptist church, it involved Jesus, and I was sitting there thinking, "Gosh. Wait. Wait, wait, wait. This is just not appropriate. This is not appropriate for this group. This is appropriate in church. It's not appropriate for a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural group. Nothing to do with religion. And again that's a reflection of N.C., which I was hatched, matched, and will be dispatched in the state of N.C. I love the place but I see that in school and I think that it's inappropriate. But for us, it's not a big problem.

I I see.

P That's a challenge for us to expose our kids to other ways of thinking and we try to talk about that at home. And we see that as our job. As it turns out, they're not going to get exposed to much at school. And you know, I wasn't exposed when I grew up. I grew up forty miles from here, same exact deal, and it was a real eye-opener for me when I got to college and took a world religion course and found out that there were eight different religions for example, that millions of people believed in just as fervently as I was taught about mine. And lo and behold, gosh, they think they're right, too. Well now! Either we're all right in some strange, unique way or somebody's wrong. And I

had to start dealing with that. It didn't hurt me. But it broadened my vision in a big way. And the thing I have to remember is I was raised in an area just like this. If I had not gone to college and been exposed to that, then I might feel very differently about this very issue and I have to remember that the majority of people who have their kids in the school system, and they haven't been exposed to world religions that there are millions of people who have believe for thousands, much older religions than Christianity, that they're right too. And, you know, so they don't understand that. And I have to respect the fact that they just haven't been exposed. So they wouldn't understand multi-ethnic, multi-cultural ideas.

And so you keep those under your hat, you talk to your kid about them in a way that's non-threatening, in a way that's not going to cause a problem at school, and let them sort of be exposed to other things through travel (in H's case), and hopefully in A's case books. I've been amazed at some of the books that H checks out of the library. I thought the religious folks that go through here would wipe those out. But there's some neat stuff. I mean, there's stuff about other religions and other thoughts. So he gets exposed in those kinds of ways. I just notice it. It's not a problem.

I It sounds like you have a strategy to expose them to some different things in the home. But not to the degree that it makes for some problems for them in the community.

P Right. Because they have to, you know, whether you're living - from what I can see, every religious group, not every group, but every religious group tends to feel the same way about their business. And so if you're living in a particular section in New York City, you better not go around spouting out about something they Won't agree with. You kind of have to learn when to talk and when to be quiet. And around here you be quiet about multi-diversity type issues. And somewhere else you be quiet about something else. That doesn't mean you have to not think what you want to think. So our kids will have to kind of learn that.

I Can you think of an experience that kind of illustrates that concern, any experience that you have had that kind of brought that to the fore for you?

P Well, the thing I have to be, for me personally but it does involve a school system, not specifically my kids at this point. I do the sex ed. for the middle school. And I have to be honest with you. Not only the protestant, but in particular the Baptist doctrine and more in particular the fundamentalist Baptist doctrine which is what we're talking about 80% plus here is no sex before marriage period. The fact that we've got the second highest teen pregnancy rate in the state in this county. Notwithstanding this fine, idealistic and would be very nice idea. So I'm very well aware of the lines to try not to cross over. And what I do is I try to work both sides of the street. I say, or I will lead in with without question you Gs shouldn't be sexually active. Without questions it's in your best interest as fourteen year old's to not be sexually active. There's not question

about that. And then I go on to tell them what to do if they are.

I But it's really important that you put those disclaimers in there.

P Real important. Or suffer potentially serious consequences.

I What do you mean by serious consequences?

P Well, you know I may be overplaying it in my own mind. But for example I can remember where I used to live, a physician in a neighboring county went to the school and talked about sex ed., high school I assume. And she showed how to put a condom on a banana to show proper technique. Major uproar.

I And this was when you were a student?

P No this was five years ago when I was working in another place. But similar area. Major uproar. So I took that under my cap. That's one thing you don't do. Don't show any kind of birth control. Even though you may talk about it, how to use it. Because all the female's questions are about that. How do we use this? How do we get this? How do we do this? But you can talk about it but you can't show it to them. That's not O.K. I learned that right there. Fortunately not personal experience. Major uproar. So learned that way. Here, incredibly, me personally I've gotten really no negative feedback. Again one of my best friends is the middle school principal. So of course that's how I do the sex ed. Because he knows me and he wants me there. And we send the kids something home for the parents to sign if they don't want the kid to participate.

I So the parents have to be proactive in order to...

P Right, to withhold their kid. And when I get in there and do my thing, I don't pay any attention. I don't even ask, usually I don't even ask how many didn't get to do this. But my friend will tell me about six, about six or seven out of sixty. And sometimes he'll get little notes on their proactive forms. Like we don't want Dr. A talking to our children about masturbation. You know, you'll go blind doing that. That's why everybody wears glasses. I'm teasing.

I I was going to say, I didn't think that was scientific.

P That's why everybody wears glasses. Anyway, there's about six kids that get withheld from that. And I respect that. If people want to take care of that at home, I say that's exactly right, and that's exactly what they ought to be doing. Unfortunately, either they're trying and it's not working, and the vast majority of the kids I see that are having problems as in pregnant or sexually active without birth control, they don't have

the family structure to take care of it. So I have not had any personal negative responses. But there are a few in indirect ways. Like we don't Dr. C telling our boy about masturbation. And I don't know how I developed this. It's just the way I did. We have them write down anonymous questions on a three by five card. And we have the boys write down theirs, the girls write down theirs. Then I take these questions and I answer them. Now, I skip a few questions if I want to. I still put the spin on that I want them to hear, I feel like that they need to hear. But I answer their question. If they ask me a question about masturbation, I answer it. And the way I always, talking about this religious thing, I always use a disclaimer.

I always say, I am not in here representing anything about religion. If you've got religious concerns about anything here you need to talk to your Mom and Dad and your pastor about this. I'm talking as a doctor person about this. Masturbation will not hurt you. There's nothing dangerous about masturbation. I don't know if it's making a different or not, but that's what I use. And I have at least one or two pastors who have been very supportive. Of course when they look out and they see their ninth graders in their congregation pregnant it tends to get their attention. But we have a couple that are very, actually quite progressive, who really want to try to deal with this problem and understand that we've got to work both sides of the street. We've got to work the abstinence side. We've got to work the sexually active side. We've got to tend to both groups if we're going to make a dent. So that's sort of one of the things I have to watch about with the sex ed. And it will involve my kids sooner or later. Sooner probably than later. It's really quite fun. It's really neat to be able to do it. To be able to corner off a hundred teens in the morning and they have to listen to you. But the truth is other than insecurity that leads to some giggling because of the embarrassing nature of the topics, they are all ears.

I It looks like that makes you feel good.

P Yeah it does. It does. It's a real, there's lots of reasons to feel good about it. It's a volunteer thing. You do it for nothing, no pay, no money, and that's kind of a plus side thing. And it's kids so you have a chance to make a difference down the road. That's a plus side thing. It certainly, I mean, I'm a hero for the school system. They love me. And I like to be loved a lot. I love to be loved. And it's just a chance to, while I see all the failures I don't' know about any of the successes. The successes that don't get pregnant, they might not've anyway. I see all the failures. Which makes you wonder if it makes any difference. You don't know. It's still an effort, and effort's sometimes all you've got. You make the effort and hope for the best. So it's a neat thing. And it's neat that they were willing to let me do it. Let's face it, they're taking a chance too. Their hind ends are on the line too when I come in there and talk. And I respect that. I think that's neat. That shows a lot of desire on some of the folks part in the school to be willing to take the chance with a very volatile issue. This county has the second highest pregnancy rate, teen pregnancy rate in the state.

I It kind of reminds me of the tight rope metaphor that you used earlier, that the religious constraints are real and comprehensive. But the gains are just too important to not try it.

P That's right. It's too important to let it go by. It was advertised in the paper two weeks in a row. And we had this public, well not a public meeting, a school meeting, middle school. All parents invited to talk about the sex ed. curriculum. And golly, man, he wanted me to come, and I thought golly I don't want to go. I can talk with these kids you know. I'm here and they're here. I know everything and they know nothing relatively speaking about this particular topic. And six people came. So, it's hard to mobilize the masses.

I Well, what was that like?

P Well they showed a film that they were going to show in the sex ed. curriculum. And, which was a good film. It was abstinence based. And I think that's the right thing to show to seventh and eighth graders. I agree with that. It's right through high school. They won't be. I think they ought to be. They just won't be. They just aren't. Statistics say sixty percent by the time they're seniors in high school. Seventy percent probably boys, fifty percent girls, something like that. And so no, I have no problem at all. So when that film was based on that I thought that was great. And I'm there to talk about the other side of the issue that's just unfortunately a reality. When my great grandmother, who grew up in this county a hundred years ago, girls started having periods when they were about thirteen or fourteen a hundred years ago. Now it's eleven. And she got married - so she probably started having her period around thirteen and she got married at fourteen. No problem. Abstinence was not an issue. She got married, she got pregnant, started having babies. No problem. Now girls start having periods when they're eleven and they get married when they're twenty-five. We've got a problem. Obviously it's the same issue for the males. They just don't have the periods. That's all. And most of the kids I see getting pregnant are the kids that don't have the adequate family structure that can deal with it. Maybe we've gotten off track, I don't know.

I No not at all. I want to hear about the things that stand out for you.

P Our pastor uses a good term for what we've been talking about. He talks about tension. There's a tension. He uses that metaphor with the religious belief. There's a tension between the lives we live and this faith issue and believing something you can't see, feel, touch. And there's a tension between reality and idealism. Well, we're talking about this sex ed. business and all, we're talking about a tension between what we would all like or whether we're talking about the school system and dead weight or hazing. There's a tension between what you want and want you get. And life's that way. I mean, you can pick any social issue you want to, any one you want. And there's a

between what it would be nice if it were like and what it's really like. And dealing with both of those issues. And that's the way it is with schools, too.

I Yeah. I see that. I can't tell you how much I appreciate your time. I have a few quick demographic questions.

P All right.

APPENDIX F

Participant Feedback Form

Feedback From our Conversations About
Parents Experience With Their Children's School

TO: _____

FROM: Nancy L. Tarsi, Research Student, The University of Tennessee

On the next page I have summarized the major points that most of the participants made when we spoke individually. As I promised, you each have this chance to reply to any / all of the conclusions that I drew, listed on the back.

Do the points below accurately represent what you communicate to me?

Since several of you disagreed with the majority on some questions, it is natural that some of you would report some disagreement. The content of all of your comments will be included in the final paper. This will enable everyone who reads the study to see the opinions of each participant in addition to those of the researcher.

PLEASE, DO NOT BE AFRAID THAT YOU WILL HURT ME IF YOU DO NOT AGREE WITH THE SUMMARY. It has been challenging for me to try to understand what another person means when they speak, and I do not want to draw the wrong conclusions because I don't understand what you meant.

Share your comments with me.
Chose one of these ways:

1. Telephone me collect at: (423) 539-4551

2. Write your reactions to each item on the paper, agree or disagree.

3. Speak with me personally when I come to Hayleville next on March 8, 9, and 10, Saturday through Monday. I will be happy to meet you at the Family Resource Center, at your work or in your home, at your convenience.

Thanks again,

SUMMARY OF THE INTERVIEWS

The most common responses participants gave when asked to talk about their experience with their children's schools:

1. There are rules for how to behave in the community:

    A. Don't put yourself above anybody else.
    B. Keep your word.
    C. Behave honorably.
    D. Don't complain.

2. Participants frequently used opposite terms:

    A. From here / Not from here
    B. Right / Wrong
    C. Good / Bad

3. We expect for the school to extend family practices and values.

    A. The home and the school each have their own distinct role in the child's life.
    B. The teacher is in charge of educating the child and the parent is in charge of raising the child.
    C. The school personnel will behave in ways that reflect community beliefs about healthy adult behavior.

4. All adults are responsible for the welfare of all of the children in the community.

    A. Everyone in the community is kin to everyone else, in one way or another.
    B. Parents talked about the children in the community as much as they spoke about their own child / children.
    C. Most parents voiced concern for bringing all of the children "up to the right level". The emphasis on meeting a common standard for all of the children in the community was often described.
    D. Few parents spoke about having a goal for the school to meet their child's potential or to him/her to develop exceptional skills. The importance of humility as a cultural tradition in this community prevents some parents from publicly encouraging superior academic performance in their child. There is concern that the child and /or the family may be seen as bragging, or thinking themselves above others.

Participant Feedback Results

	Agree	**Disagree**
ITEM 1: There are rules for how to behave in the community:	ALL AGREE	
A . Don't put yourself above anybody else.	ALL AGREE	
B. Keep your word.	ALL AGREE	
C. Behave honorably.	ALL AGREE	
D. Don't complain.	AD SR BD HS RS CN	JS MY LE KP PE FS
ITEM 2: Participants frequently use opposite terms:	ALL AGREE	
A. From here / Not from here	ALL AGREE	
B. Right / Wrong	ALL AGREE	
C. Good / Bad	ALL AGREE	
D. Then / Now	ALL AGREE	
ITEM 3: We expect for the school to extend family practices and values:	ALL AGREE	
A. The home and the school each have their own distinct role in the child's life.	ALL AGREE	
B. The teacher is in charge of educating the child and the parent is in charge of raising the child.	AD RS JS SR CN	MY LE HS BD KP FS PE
C. The school personnel will behave in ways that reflect community beliefs about healthy adult behavior.	ALL AGREE	

ITEM 4: All adults are responsible for the welfare of all of the children in the community.	ALL AGREE	
A. Everyone in the community is kin to everyone else, in one way or another.	AD JS SR PE BD FS HS KP LE RS CN	MY
B. Parents talked about the children in the community as much as they spoke about their own child / children.	AD JS RS HS SR PE BD	CN FS KP LE MY
C. Most parents voiced concern for bringing all of the children "up to the right level." The emphasis on meeting a common standard for all of the children in the community was often described.	AD JS SR PE BD HS KP LE RS CN FS	MY
D. Few parents spoke about having a goal for the school to meet their child's potential or help him / her to develop exceptional skills. The importance of humility as a cultural tradition in this community prevents some parents from publicly encouraging superior academic performance in their child. There is concern that the child and / or the family may be seen a bragging, or thinking of themselves as above others.	CN BD RS SR JS HS AD	KD MY FS PE LE

Total participants: 12
Missing: 3 (DS, DR, BP)

Curricular Vita

Nancy L. Tarsi

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Major: Educational and Counseling Psychology
Emphasis: Research Methodology
August, 1997

M. Ed.

Lehigh University, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania 18015
Major: Social Restoration
Educational Specialist Certification, K - 12
October, 1979

B. S.

Trenton State College, Trenton, New Jersey 08625
Major: Criminal Justice / Psychology
May, 1973

Doctoral Work: September, 1992 - Present

I spent two years working as a Graduate Research Assistant (GRA) with the **Cog**nitive Enrichment **Net**work (COGNET), a federally funded curriculum model being used in five (5) Chapter 1 schools. The field placements were located in urban and rural Tennessee as well as on one American Indian reservation in Montana. I conducted interviews with parents active in three (3) COGNET schools in Tennessee and designed and implemented a year long ethnographic study in one COGNET classroom. The funding by its sponsoring agency, Project Follow Through was cut during this period.

Since the Fall of 1992, I have taught two sections (each semester) of the **Education 100** class in the Teacher-Education Program. The class is generally taken as a precursor to the students' formal application to the highly competitive formal program. My teaching responsibility includes field and classroom involvement. The fieldwork consists of the coordination of volunteer placements in area schools and the

supervision of the "student volunteers" in elementary and middle school settings. Networking with area teachers and administrators is ongoing. The classroom content primarily involves training in R*eflective Practice.* This instruction addresses the critical task of helping young adults to locate themselves philosophically.

I have taught several graduate courses as well. I developed and co- facilitated the **Trans-University Graduate Seminar**, the focus being to find threads of congruence in broad issues that affect doctoral students from different colleges within the University. I co-taught a **Conceptual Statistics** course, the first of a two class series that is a graduate school requirement covering the basic statistical concepts students must master. I co-taught a class that I developed with an faculty Instructor; the **Writing for Publication** course was our answer to the skill deficiency we observed among graduate students. We took this challenge on after observing the fear around the task of professional writing, coupled with students' seeming unpreparedness to function comfortably within that arena. Last, we developed this course in view of the absence of available resources to address this need.

I designed and am currently teaching **Methodological and Philosophic Tenets of Qualitative Research**, a graduate level course that focuses on three broad philosophic traditions operating on qualitative research today.

Research Agenda

I am currently working on the notion of cultural collision as affecting the parent to school/teacher relationships. My present study with the rural Appalachian population revealed that differing community and school values erect an invisible barrier to parental involvement. This is especially important with populations that spawn high drop out rates, since parent involvement with high risk students is widely reported to increase student achievement. Through my early research assistantship I developed a familiarity with this literature, applying different ideas, discussion and designs to the problem over time. I would like to extend this research with other populations of families with schools (e.g., Moslem, Fundamentalist, etc.) looking into various cultures' experience with schools, that we may learn more about the complexity and multidimensional challenge of teaching and learning among and within diverse groups. The generalizability of the findings is less the desired outcome than the goal of extending an understanding of the range and complexity of learning realities that different groups experience. A greater clarity along conceptual lines will allow for more accurate perception of the challenges within educational communities. The following interests have a common root in a commitment to educational reform along conceptual and operational levels:

* teacher- training in the philosophy of education as rooted in *self- reflective practice*

* instructional strategies of teachers as related to fostering *basal mental health skills* in students

* the development of a *multicultural learning theory* that replaces the discourse and practice of competition with collaboration and better prepares children for the group-related activities that characterizes societal relationships.

Publications

Tarsi, N. L., "We want more!" Empowered parents speak of their involvement with COGNET schools. ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center), U.S. Department of Education. November, 1994. ED 385362

Higgs, G. E. & Tarsi, N. L. (in press January, 1997) New learning and agency in the student at-promise. Chapter in: At-risk youth: theory, practice and reforms, R. Kronick, Ed. New York, Garland Press.

Current Submissions

Tarsi, N. L. Parents and schools: the cultural collision that wounds. Submitted to Tennessee Education, November, 1996.

Higgs, G. E. & Tarsi, N. L. Beyond the comfort zone: multicultural learning theory and the opportunity for new learning. Submitted to Theory into Practice, January, 1997.

Conference Presentations

Tarsi, N. L. (1994, July) Teaching intelligence in a laboratory for learning. Forum discussion presented at the Sixth International Conference on Thinking, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Boston, Mass.

Tarsi, N. L. (1994, September) COGNET impact studies. Paper presented at the COGNET Leadership Conference. Pigeon Forge, Tn.

Tarsi, N. L. (1994, October) Parent involvement in mediated learning experiences. Paper presented at the Seventh Annual Conference of the California Association for Mediated Learning (CAAML), Oxnard, Cal.

Tarsi, N. L. (1994, October) Parent involvement in a high risk school. Paper presented at International Year of the Family: The Families and Schools Conference, Oakland, CA.

Tarsi, N. L. (1994, November) We want more! Empowered parents speak about their involvement in COGNET schools. Paper presented at the Mid-South Educational Research Association (MSERA), Nashville, Tn.

Tarsi, N. L. (1995, July) Parent narratives of empowerment. Paper presented at The International Association for Cognitive Education (IACE), North American Chapter, Lake Mohonk, N.Y.

Tarsi, N. L. (1996, April). Research Findings on COGNET Schools. Poster Session presented at Head Start's Third National Research Conference, Washington, D. C.

Prior Work History: 1979-1991

For about half of my post graduate career I worked as an Educator in various alternative classroom situations; a GED teacher in a state prison for adult men, an Alternative Education Program for at-risk adolescents, as an Instructor in two neighboring residential treatment centers for delinquent children. My duel training as an educational specialist and mental health counselor facilitated these positions incorporating both teaching and counseling responsibilities. Through these years, job changes were resultant of lost funding or opportunities that offered more responsibility and autonomy.

My next position was that of Co-Director of a counseling center where I was employed for almost eight years, after which I developed community lectures on substance abuse issues (drugs, alcohol, eating disorders) and facilitated group sessions for Children Of Substance Abusers (COSA) in K-5 schools. These activities were interrupted by a life-threatening automobile accident, necessitating my leaving the post to recuperate. It was at this juncture that I decided to complete my graduate work. Once I was ambulatory, I worked as the Head Counselor for eating disordered patients at The Rader Institute for over a year; the time it took to gain admittance to the doctoral program that offered the training I sought. The names and addresses of all post master's employers are listed below chronologically.

Post Master's Work Experience

Family Guidance Center, (part time) Education & Counseling Consultant : 4/91 - 12/91
The Rader Institute, Head Counselor: 9/90 - 3/91
Alliance Counseling Center, Co-Director and Educational Consultant : 1983 - 90
Grafton School, Case Worker : 1981 - 1983
Leary Education Foundation, Instructor/Counselor :1979 - 1981
State Correctional Institution of Camp Hill Graduate Instructor: 1978 - 1979

Professional Association

American Educational Research Association
American Counseling Association (ACA)
Institute for Innovation in Education

Personal Associations

U. S. Tennis Association
People for The American Way
Iyengar Yoga Club

Professional References

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Director:Residential Treatment Center

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Co-Teacher, Writing Seminar
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