

PARENTS' PERSPECTIVES:
THE ROLE OF PARENTS IN THE EDUCATION OF THEIR CHILDREN

By

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Abstract

In this study, the behaviours, processes and self-perceptions of parents, in relation to their children's education across time, are examined. The study's primary purpose was to generate a theoretical model that describes parents' involvement in their children's education. Participants in the study included 15 parents of children in grade 10. Qualitative grounded theory techniques were used to investigate how parents are involved in their children's education. Data collection included one-to-one semi-structured interviews, diary entries, written responses from the participants, to the researcher's summary of the participants' responses, and field notes during interviews. All data were coded, categorized and analyzed using a constant comparative method. The researcher maintained an audit trail documenting the data analysis and the theory building. A peer auditor reviewed the data, the analysis process, and the product of the study. Findings resulted in a two-dimensional, visual representation of parent involvement in children's education, illustrating the primary processes of parent involvement behaviour. At the core of the model is the process of parents relating to their children. Surrounding this core category are the processes describing parent-involvement behaviours of planning, shaping, fostering and supporting their children's education. The parents' constructions and reconstructions of their roles and involvement in their children's education emerged as an indirect process of parent-involvement behaviours. Findings indicate that parent involvement in children's education is active, responsive and strategic, and that the involvement of parents in their children's education is developmental, changing as children grow. Implications of the findings for educators and school psychologists suggest efforts to involve parents need to be grounded in the knowledge that parents hold strong and deep beliefs that they are instrumental in their children's education and that children's education includes more than school learning.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Rapid transformation in technology and demand for increased knowledge is resulting in a demand for quality education that, in turn, is placing an emphasis on accountability and student achievement (Mortimer & Larson, 2002). With limited budgets, resources and personnel, and the increasing diversity of students' needs, schools are struggling to independently address this demand. It is important, therefore, to understand the factors that contribute to children's success in school. Much of the research on student academic achievement focuses on the child even though there is a well-documented relationship between parent involvement in children's education and student academic success (Epstein, 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Although a number of research studies point to the critical role that parent involvement in children's education plays in student academic success, because much of the extant research is not firmly grounded in theory, results are often difficult to interpret (Baker & Soden, 1998; Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

This study involves the examination of the behaviours, processes and self-perceptions of parents in relation to their involvement in their children's education. Learning how parents support their children's education provides data leading to the development of descriptive hypotheses that identify parent behaviours and actions and define parent involvement in children's education.

Although a number of studies have documented the predictive relationship of parent involvement in children's education to student achievement, many of these studies have not been firmly grounded in theory, and hence we are left with a dearth of data to describe the mechanism through which parents exert their influence. Models of parent involvement in children's education, such as those described by Gordon (1977), Epstein (1987), and Grolnick and

Slowiaczek (1994), provide frameworks constructed from an ecological perspective that describe and define the construct of parent involvement in children's education. Although the ecological perspective assists in the understanding of the complexity and multi-dimensional nature of parent involvement in children's education, and views parents as one of the primary stakeholders in children's education, the models do not clearly delineate the roles, responsibilities and relationships between home, school and community. Without a solid theoretical foundation these models are limited and have resulted in ambiguity and confusion regarding the definitions of parent involvement in their children's education and the role of parents in the education of their children.

The models are problematic in three areas. First, there is no consistent agreement on the definition of the construct of parent involvement in children's education (Asher, 1988; Baker & Soden, 1998; Fishel & Ramirez, 2005). Second, the current models fail to account for developmental changes that accompany adolescence; definitions of parents' involvement in children's education are disconnected from developmental issues (Fantuzzo, Tighe & Childs, 2000). As Fantuzzo and colleagues note, there has been little regard in the parent-involvement literature for what "constitutes developmentally appropriate parent involvement" (p. 368). Furthermore, until recently, the body of parent-involvement research has focused on early childhood and elementary school. Research concerning parent involvement in adolescents' education is still evolving. Third, the ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1986, 1992) assists in the understanding of the complexity and multi-dimensional nature of parent involvement in children's education and views parents as one of the primary stakeholders in children's education, but this perspective does not clearly delineate the roles, responsibilities and relationships between home, school and community. As a result, the ambiguity between the

transactional relationships adds further confusion to the understanding of parent involvement in children's education.

Current ecological perspectives of parent involvement in children's education describe the complexity and multi-dimensional nature of parent involvement in children's education and view parents as one of the primary stakeholders in children's education. However, this perspective is inclusive of many stakeholders and systems that contribute to student achievement. To date, the models of parent involvement in children's education incorporate a macro level of influence, inclusive of many ecosystems and multiple levels of analyses. What the models fail to do is focus on the parent at the parent-child, or dyadic level of analysis. As a result the role that parents play in their children's learning has become blurred. Although there are several factors that contribute to positive student outcomes, when identifying the role that parents play it is important to consider the proximal variables (parent) rather than the distal variables (school and community). In the development of a model to explain the involvement of parents in their children's education it is critical to focus on the dyadic level of analysis, specifically the parent-child dyad. What teachers do, what students do, or what the community does to increase student achievement does not necessarily contribute to the understanding of the involvement of parents in the education of their children. Thus, the problem that this study sought to address was the development of a theoretically grounded model, from the perspective of parents that focuses on the parent, defines the construct of parent involvement in children's education and explains the involvement of parents in their children's education.

Purpose of Study

The primary purpose of this study was to generate a theoretical model that described the involvement of parents in their children's education, based on the perspective of the parent.

Current ecological models of parent involvement in children's education describe the complexity and multi-dimensional nature of parent involvement in children's education and view parents as one of the primary stakeholders in children's education but do not lead to a clear understanding of parent involvement in children's education, account for the developmental differences that accompany children's development and establish the role of parents in their children's education.

Research Questions

In this study the following questions in regard to parents' involvement were examined:

- (1) How do parents perceive and describe their involvement in their children's education?
- (2) How do parents view the change in their involvement in their children's education as children progress from elementary to secondary school?
- (3) How does parents' daily involvement behaviour differ from, and relate to, major decision-making involvement behaviour?

Significance of Study

The present study is significant because it results in a theoretical model of parent involvement in children's education that is verified with related literature and embedded in the conceptual world as well as in the research context. Much of parent-involvement research has been limited to non-empirical opinion papers, program descriptions, and reviews describing the benefits of parent involvement for parents and student achievement (Baker & Soden, 1997). Parent surveys have served as the primary source of data for parent-involvement research. However, Baker and Soden noted that closed-ended self-reports cannot fully capture the dynamic transactional nature of parents' involvement in their children's education and instead suggest open-ended observational techniques. In a synthesis of 64 empirical studies Boethel, (2003) concluded that family and school staff reports on the extent of family involvement and school

outreach tend to be inconsistent. Furthermore, low response rates and non-response error are concerns of survey methodology (Dillman, 2000). Hearing from a non-representative sample of parents, limits schools' ability to use the information for improvement (Snell-Johns, 2004). Without accurate measures of parent involvement in children's education from a representative sample, "it is difficult to draw accurate conclusions about the relationship between parent involvement in children's education and student success or to understand the mechanisms by which parent involvement influences student success" (Snell-Johns, p. 127). Such shortcomings indicate the need for clarity achieved through qualitative methods and model building. This original research provides data that identify parents' behaviours, interactions and perceptions with respect to their children's education.

The results of this study are especially important in this era of accountability in public education. How schools involve parents is currently being scrutinized. If schools are to involve parents and measure their efforts to do so, it is imperative that their actions are grounded in a theoretical model that explains the process and involvement of parents in their children's education. An important part of the results illustrates how the theoretical model of parent involvement in children's education has grown from the perceptions and interpretations of the participants.

Chapter II: Review of the Literature

The objective of this review of the parent-involvement literature is threefold: (a) to summarize the literature as it relates to the parent-child relationship and parental role construction, (b) to examine the current models of parent involvement in children's education, and (c) to demonstrate the need for developing a solid theoretical foundation explaining the construct of parents' involvement in their children's education.

The Parent-Child Relationship

Parent involvement in children's education occurs within the context of the parent-child relationship. In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of a parent's involvement in his/her child's education from the parent's perspective it is important to examine the parent's view of the parent-child relationship. Based on Hinde's work (1979) on the interactional features of relationships, Lollis and Kuczynski (1997) presented a number of understandings that address the uniqueness of the parent-child relationship and that are relevant to this study.

The first understanding is about the participants or "*actors*" in the relationship. The parent and the child are both "*acting*" in the relationship. The relationship is bidirectional. According to Hinde (1979) a social interaction must involve both partners. Both the parent and the child contribute to the relationship in actions, thoughts and emotions through dynamic interchanges with each other. Second, there are a sufficient number of interactions to have a relationship. Lollis and Kuczynski (1997) suggested that parent-child relationships are distinctive from other relationships in terms of the immense quantity of interactions that occur. Third, there is an anticipated future based on the past. Parent and child develop mutual expectancies for how each will act in the relationship based on the accumulation of their past interactions (Lollis & Kuczynski). Lastly, the parent-child relationship endures. According to Laursen and Collins

(1994), the parent-child relationship is a closed rather than an open relationship. That is, the parent-child relationship is nonvoluntary, stable and permanent. Indeed, more than any other relationship, the parent-child relationship consists of a long-term past and a long-term future (Lollis & Kuczynski, 1997). The parent and child remain in the relationship even during challenging family times. However, inherent in the parent-child relationship is the expectation of a future. Hinde (1979) noted that over time, as the child grows, the relationship changes in power and content. The major changes in parent-child relationships demand great sensitivity on the part of the parent. According to Lollis (2003), it is the reconstruction of past interactions and the anticipation of future interactions based on the reconstruction of the past that influences the present interactions and relationships of parents and children.

Role Theory and Parent Role Construction

Role theory suggests that roles are socially constructed, shared norms applied to those in a social position (Heiss, 1981). Past experience and events give shape and form to the content of roles. Roles are sets of expectations for behaviour that go together, not a set of behaviours (Boss, Doherty, LaRosa, Schumm & Steinmetz, 1993). The construction of a role, then, is a socially interactive process between a group and its members that changes over time (Boss et al., 1993; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Role theory suggests that the groups to which parents belong will hold expectations about the appropriate role of parents in their children's education. Given these expectations about their role, and past experiences and events, parents construct their role and reconstruct their role over time given changes in social norms, their development and the development of their child. Roles are dynamic and change over time; indeed, roles can be said to have "careers" (Goffman, 1959; McCall & Simmons, 1978). Parental role construction is important to the involvement process because it establishes activities that parents construe as

important. Parental role construction begins before the child is born and is related to a parent's involvement behaviour.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) identified three major constructs believed to be central to parents' basic involvement decisions: parent role construction; a parent's sense of efficacy for helping their child; and general invitations, demands and opportunities to become involved. They found that the two concepts of role construction and sense of efficacy, contribute more significantly to parent involvement in children's education than the concept of general invitations. In a revision of the original model, Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, and Hoover Dempsey (2005) suggested that parental role construction and self-efficacy can be organized under the broader concept of parents' motivational beliefs. The construct of general invitation to become involved is broadened to parents' perceptions of invitations for involvement and includes three definitions: perceptions of general school invitations, perceptions of specific child invitations and perceptions of specific teacher invitation. A third concept, parents' perceived life context, is added to the revised model and includes the two constructs of self-perceived time and energy, and self-perceived skills and knowledge. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) suggested strongly that in order to increase parent involvement in children's learning and extend the benefits parent involvement offers, it is important to focus on the parent's perspective in the process. "Parents who believe they should be involved in their children's education and who have a positive sense of efficacy about the usefulness of their involvement are likely to be involved" (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997, p. 36).

Models of Parent Involvement in Children's Education

Parent involvement in children's education is complex and multi-dimensional and is dependent upon child, teacher and parent variables (Eccles & Harold, 1996). Moreover, in recent

studies, Adams and Christenson (2000) suggested that the relationship between the key players – child, parent and teacher – influence parent involvement in children’s education. Models of parent involvement in children’s education, such as those described by Gordon (1977), Epstein (1987), and Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994), have attempted to provide frameworks that describe the construct of parent involvement in children’s education.

Gordon’s models of impact. One of the earliest models of parent involvement in children’s education, by Gordon (1977), suggested three levels or aspects of parent involvement that focus on the family, the school and the community. Gordon identified three major settings or ecosystems that impact a child’s growth and development: family, school and community. The family model assumed that the family wants to be part of the system but does not know how to participate and help their child acquire the necessary skills for success. In the school model, parents are involved at the school level through volunteer activities, parent-teacher conferences, and attendance at special school events. It focused on parent involvement in the school and is aimed at modifying the teacher and the school system (Gordon, 1979). Gordon’s third approach, the community model, involved connecting community resources to families and schools and is based on fostering and developing a strong relationship between community, families and schools. It is Gordon’s belief that educational achievement is influenced by a combination of the family and school models in a community model (Gordon, 1979).

Gordon’s (1977) models are problematic in that the models are about what schools do to involve parents. In his Family Impact Model, Gordon suggested that parent education programs be designed to have an impact on the family so that the child will “fit” the school and the system’s goals. Gordon noted that this is based on the assumption that the family wants to be “in” but doesn’t know how. Gordon said that this model is the basic model for all formal

education and that the model assumes that by “changing the parent in some way, without changing anything else, will enable entry” (p. 74). Furthermore, Gordon’s models involve multiple systems (home, school and community) and require multiple levels of analyses that move further away from the main subject in parent involvement in children’s education – the parent.

Epstein’s model of overlapping spheres. Recognizing the parent as the primary influence on the child’s education and development, ecological models such as Epstein’s model (1987) of overlapping spheres have provided the conceptual framework for understanding home-school and community partnerships associated with parent involvement in children’s education (Fantuzzo et al., 2000). The three spheres of influence or major environments simultaneously affect children’s learning and development. Epstein’s model is based on the assumption that the most effective partnerships have overlapping shared goals and missions concerning children and work in a collaborative fashion (Epstein, 1996). Like Gordon’s (1977) model, Epstein’s model or framework (1987, 2001), identifies three spheres of influence or major environments – family, school and community – that simultaneously affect children’s learning and development.

Seeking to explain the relationship between the key players that contribute to student achievement, Epstein (1987, 2001), in her model, identifies a framework of six types of parent-involvement behaviour. However, “To actualize the potential of the framework, the involvement categories must to be translated into culturally appropriate behavioural items for targeted respondents that represent relevant involvement behaviours for targeted developmental periods” (Fantuzzo et al., 2000, p. 368). Epstein’s model (1987) makes reference to the developmental patterns of children with respect to the interaction between parents and teachers; however, how parent-involvement behaviours change as the child develops is not clear. Epstein’s model is

focused on parents' involvement in children's school learning and parents' involvement with the school and community systems.

In a study using a large, long-term national database, the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS:88) Catsambis (1998) examined the effects of Epstein's six types of parent involvement in the high school setting. Findings revealed that within Epstein's six types of parent involvement, only some have a significant positive effect on achievement in high school. Specifically, Catsambis found that parenting practices tend to have weak effects on student's test scores. Very small positive effects were associated with the parenting practices of 'knowledge of students' coursework' and 'monitoring students' progress.' At the grade twelve level three of the six types of involvement were found to have very limited or no effects: communicating with school, supporting the school by attending events, and communicating with other parents. One type of involvement, learning at home, was found to have the strongest effect. Of greatest concern is the finding that some parent involvement in children's education activities appeared to have a negative effect on student achievement (e.g., involvement in coming to school late, unprepared, cutting classes). This is consistent with the parenting styles research that indicates that some styles of parenting can partially undermine the beneficial effect of parental school involvement (Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Darling, 1992).

Grolnick and Slowiaczek's multidimensional model. Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) examined processes through which the multidimensional nature of parent involvement in children's education may be associated with school performance. The model described by Grolnick and Slowiaczek focuses on the allocation of resources to the child's school endeavors and includes the association between parent involvement in children's education and motivational resources. The authors employed three process variables or dimensions to describe

parent involvement in children's education: behavioural, intellectual-cognitive and personal. The first category of involvement, behaviour, defines the parent behaviour through overt action, specifically, parents modelling the importance of school and learning. The intellectual-cognitive dimension involves exposing the child to cognitively stimulating activities and materials such as books and current events. The third variable, personal, focuses on the parents' personal involvement with their children. The model provided evidence of a multidimensional understanding of parent involvement in children's education and suggested that children's motivational resources (i.e., perceived competence, control understanding and self-regulation) are mediators between parent involvement in children's education and children's school achievement.

Unlike the models put forth by Gordon (1977) and Epstein (1987), Grolnick and Slowiaczek's (1994) model does not have a settings (home, school, community) focus but rather a process focus. Similar to the previous two models, Grolnick and Slowiaczek's model is about parent involvement in children's school learning. However Grolnick and Slowiaczek's model has more to do with children's motivation to learn in the school environment rather than children's school achievement. Specifically, Grolnick, Ryan, and Deci (1991) suggested parents' behaviour does not affect the child through skill building, as has been traditionally assumed, but through its impact on children's attitudes and motivations related to school. Although Grolnick and Slowiaczek's (1994) model focuses on the parent, it is more about parent involvement in school and children's motivation to learn than parent involvement in children's education.

The models of parent involvement in children's education have served to guide and direct the research on parent involvement in children's education. However, research has indicated that these models are limiting and have resulted in confusion in understanding and defining parent

involvement in children's education. This review of the research has documented concern regarding the models' failure to account for developmental differences in children and clarity in the role of parents in their children's learning. Although it is widely accepted in the literature that parent involvement in children's education is complex with many dimensions, there is little empirical support for the multi-dimensional nature of parent involvement in children's education (Fantuzzo et al., 2000). This may be due in part to the confusion surrounding the definition of parent involvement in children's education and the role of the parent. In the following, each of the concerns identified in the literature is discussed.

Defining Parent Involvement in Children's Education

Defining the construct of "parent involvement" has been a challenge for many researchers. A review of the literature on parent involvement in children's education reveals that there is no consistent agreement on what is meant by the term "parent involvement" (Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 2001). Several different terms (e.g., home-school relationships, home-school collaboration, family-school involvement, home-school partnerships) are often used interchangeably to describe the relationship between the parent and the school (Christenson, 1995; Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Christenson, Rounds & Gorney, 1992; Epstein, 1996; Epstein & Dauber, 1991). Furthermore, there is not one operational definition of parent involvement in children's education consistently used in the literature (Christenson; Christenson & Sheridan; Epstein; Fishel & Ramirez, 2005). Baker and Soden (1997) reviewed 200 studies and found that some researchers have defined parent involvement in schooling as parent aspirations, whereas others have operationalized it as activities at home (helping with homework) and at school (attending events, meeting with teachers) or as parenting styles or behaviours. In their conclusions, many researchers point to the importance of clearly defining the

construct for the study at hand and interpreting results in light of that definition (Christianson & Sheridan, 2001; Wandersman et al., 2002). As a result, definitions of parent involvement are fragmented (Fantuzzo et al., 2000), vary according to the individual research study (Kohl, Lengua & McMahon, 2000), and have changed throughout the years (Fishel & Ramirez, 2005).

Evident by the confusion in the literature, what parents do with respect to their involvement in their children's education is not clearly presented in the models. As a result various self-developed measures have been developed and various studies have employed a few aspects of the models in their studies (Fantuzzo et al., 2000). This has lead to diverse findings making it difficult to interpret and compare findings. Although diversity is important in the overall schema of research, at this point in the field of parent involvement, the wide variance in the understanding of parent involvement in children's education is making it difficult to interpret and apply research findings effectively.

Developmental Differences

Parent involvement in adolescents' education, though similar to parent involvement in children's education during the elementary years, is distinct and different. Research on parent involvement in children's education has included children from kindergarten to high school without adequate regard for what constitutes developmentally appropriate parent involvement in children's education (Fantuzzo, et al., 2000; Manz, Fantuzzo & Power, 2004). Differences in how models of parent involvement in children's education apply to the young or preschool age child, the child in the elementary years, the student in the secondary years and finally the student launching into the university or workforce are not well articulated. Furthermore, measuring the same indicators of parent involvement across grades does not adequately capture the nature of the involvement of parents of adolescents (Amaral, 2003; Fantuzzo et al., 2000; Manz et al.,

2004).

Catsambis (1998) reported that the most effective types of parent involvement in children's education are not those geared toward behavioural supervision, but, rather, those geared toward advising or guiding teens' academic decisions. Catsambis (1998) maintained, "parents' educational expectations and encouragement are by far the most important type of family practice that affects all measures of senior achievement" (p. 24). Research findings report parent involvement in children's education typically declines (Brough & Irvin, 2001; Dornbusch & Glasgow, 1996; Eccles & Harold, 1996; Izzo, Weissberg, Kasproh & Fendrich, 1999; Walker & Hoover-Dempsey, 2001) or shifts (Catsambis & Garland, 1997) as students get older, and cite low levels of involvement for parents of students in middle and high school grades (typically between the ages of 13 to 18 years), specifically in the area of school-based involvement (Hickman, Greenwood & Miller, 1995). Given that research shows parent involvement in children's education is most readily identified as being those activities that are primarily based at school, it is not surprising that parent involvement in children's education (as it is typically measured) is seen as decreasing as children progress through school (Kavanagh, 2005). Collectively these studies illuminate the changes in the extent and nature of parent involvement throughout the child's education and indicate that present models and subsequent measures do not adequately describe or necessarily represent parent involvement in children's education.

Roles and Responsibilities

Parent involvement in children's education is complex and multi-dimensional. Various models illustrate and describe the complexity of parent involvement in children's education by identifying the different ways parents are involved and the many factors that influence parent involvement in children's education. In the literature it is generally agreed that school, family

and community partnerships are necessary to improve children's opportunities for success; however, in practice, teachers, parents and students have little understanding of each other's interests in learning (Epstein & Sanders, 2000; Halsey, 2005). Most teachers do not know the goals that parents have for their children, how parents help them learn, or how parents would like to be involved. Conversely, most parents do not know much about educational programs in their children's schools or what teachers require of them. The models of parent involvement in children's education presented in this literature review are constructed from an ecological perspective. With the multiple levels of analyses and systems, the role of parents in the ecological perspective has become blurred and is ambiguous. Furthermore the models focus on the involvement of parents in their children's learning at school. Although the models included parent behaviours that occur in the home, these behaviours are about helping children with their school learning. Better data than currently exist and more exacting analysis are needed to clarify the roles and responsibilities of parents' in the involvement in their children's education and learning. This creates a need for a model or theoretical framework that focuses on the parent and role that parents have in their children's learning.

Theoretical Framework

The literature on parent involvement in children's education clearly indicates the need for more information about the dimensions of parent involvement that are grounded in a solid theoretical foundation, explaining the construct of parent involvement in children's education. It is postulated in the present study that the construct of parent involvement in children's education lacks a strong theoretical foundation and has, thus, contributed to models that do not adequately explain parent involvement in children's education. The models have led to confusion in the understanding of parent involvement in children's education, specifically inconsistency in

defining the construct. Moreover, the phenomenology of parent involvement in children's education has not been fully investigated. Strauss (1987) maintained that complex social phenomena such as parent involvement require a grounded theory methodology that "emphasizes the need for developing many concepts and their linkages in order to capture a great deal of the variation that characterizes the central phenomena studied" (p. 7). Thus, before the construct of parent involvement in children's education can be defined and measured, it needs to be grounded in theory.

The present study used qualitative grounded theory techniques to investigate the research question. Grounded theory techniques are especially useful in providing information about phenomena such as parent involvement that have not been subjected to much formal investigation, and about which little is known (Sandelowski, Davis, & Harris, 1989). Grounded theory is concerned with the exploration of social processes (Strubert-Speziale & Rinaldi-Carpenter, 2003) and the multiplicity of interactions that produces variation in that process (Heath & Cowley, 2003).

The goal of the present study was to describe the processes of parent involvement in children's education that result in positive educational outcomes for the child. Because grounded theory explores the richness and diversity of human experience (Strubert-Speziale & Rinaldi-Carpenter, 2003), it is an appropriate approach to explore the experience of parents as they interact with their children and their children's learning. In grounded theory, phenomena are not conceived of as static but as continually changing in response to evolving conditions (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). The present study, concerned with the changing nature of parent involvement as children progress through school, demands an approach such as grounded theory that illuminates the evolving phenomenon of parent-involvement behaviour over time.

Summary

In this chapter, a review of the literature summarized the parent-involvement literature as it relates to the parent-child relationship and parental role construction. Both the parent and child contribute to the relationship through numerous interactions across time. Parents construct their roles based on beliefs, expectations and experiences. Parents' construction of their roles influences their involvement in their children's learning. Three models of parent involvement in children's education were discussed and found to be problematic in explaining the role of parents and more specifically in defining the behaviours and processes associated with parent involvement in children's education. In this chapter the case for developing a solid theoretical foundation through qualitative methods and model building was presented. Specifically, the literature cites confusion in defining the construct of parent involvement in children's education. Developmental differences are not accounted for in parent-involvement measures. Lastly, ecological models of parent involvement in children's education have resulted in ambiguity in the role and responsibility of parents.

Chapter III: Method

In this chapter the rationale for the method is explained, the purpose of the study is discussed, and research questions guiding this study are listed. The setting for the study and the participants involved are described. Instruments and procedures used are recorded and data analysis strategies are outlined. Finally, strategies to ensure trustworthiness and rigour of study are presented.

Grounded Theory

The research method used in this study is consistent with grounded theory. The term, grounded theory is used in relation to a particular form of data collection and analysis that was developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) (Morse & Field, 1995). The underlying principle of grounded theory rests in symbolic interactionism, meaning taking the perspective that reality is negotiated between people and is always changing, always evolving (Morse & Richards, 2002). The primary purpose of grounded theory is to generate explanatory models of human behaviour that are grounded in data (Morse & Field, 1995). Data collection and analysis of data occur simultaneously. Patterns and relationships between patterns are identified through constant comparative analyses between or among groups. Grounded theory assumes that through detailed exploration, with theoretical sensitivity, theory *grounded* in data can be constructed (Morse & Richards, 2002).

Grounded theory is reflective of process and change over time and a commitment to understanding the ways in which reality is socially constructed (Morse & Richards, 2002). Parent involvement in children's education is socially constructed. Change is a major aspect of parent involvement in children's education. Grounded theory was used in this study for two reasons: 1) to give parents the "voice" to describe their involvement in their children's education, and 2) to

develop a theory explaining parent involvement in children's education that is "discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis pertaining to that phenomenon" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 23).

Purpose of Study

The primary purpose of this study was to generate a theoretical model that described the involvement of parents in their children's education, based on the perspective of the parent. Current ecological models of parent involvement in children's education describe the complexity and multi-dimensional nature of parent involvement and view parents as one of the primary stakeholders in children's education but do not lead to an understanding of parent involvement that is consistent, account for the developmental differences that accompany children's development and clearly establish the role of parents in their children's education.

Research Questions

In this study, the following questions in regard to parents' involvement were examined.

- (1) How do parents perceive and describe their involvement in their children's education?
- (2) How do parents view the change in their involvement in their children's education as their children progress from elementary to secondary school?
- (3) How does parents' daily involvement behaviour differ from, and relate to, major decision-making involvement behaviour?

Setting

The present study was conducted with parents of children in grade ten, attending public high schools located in southwestern British Columbia. Specific schools were located in two school districts in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. A similar number of participants from each district took part in the study. One school district is a small rural district of

approximately 3,800 students; the second is a large urban school district with approximately 54,000 students. For the current study of parents' perspectives of their involvement in their children's education, the settings for data gathering were locations that were both quiet and conducive to this kind of data gathering and convenient for the participant and the researcher. In consultation with each participant, the researcher selected a convenient location and time to conduct the interviews such as the participant's home, rooms at the university and school, libraries, and coffee shops. The majority of the interviews were conducted in the afternoon or early evening.

Participants

The participants in a grounded theory study demonstrated experience within the social process being studied, specifically involvement in their children's education; participants reflected on, and talked about their experience (Strubert-Speziale & Rinaldi-Carpenter, 2003). Sampling began as purposive but changed to theoretical so that participants were recruited according to the needs of the developing theory (Swanson, 2001). Twenty parents volunteered for the study, fifteen parents were selected. Theoretical sampling is an important tool for recruiting participants who have had the experience of interest and are willing and able to articulate the experience. Grounded theory approaches do not require a large number of participants. The purpose of this type of sampling is to focus categories and concepts, not to achieve a specific mass of data.

Theoretical sampling, as used by grounded theory, dictates that the researcher knows whom best to select to participate, based on the theoretical needs of the study and knowledge of the participant (Morse & Field, 1995). The validity of this study was preserved by information about sampling choices. Theoretical sampling, in which the researcher deliberately selects

persons to participate in the study according to the emerging theoretical scheme (Morse & Field), were documented in the study to support reliability so that researchers who want to replicate the study will have access to the sampling decisions of the original researcher.

Participants were parents of children in grade 10 in the two school districts specified earlier, recruited on a volunteer basis through a poster advertisement placed in the newspaper and in community centers (see Appendix B). Parents of grade 10 students were selected because grade 10 is a year of transition between the junior grades of grades 8 and 9, and the graduating years of grades 11 and 12 (Graber & Brooks-Gunn, 1996). Students in grade 10 tend to be established in the secondary school system and are engaged in career exploration and development.

Characteristics of participants. An initial screening-intake process ensured that participants included in the study were parents of students in grade 10 without special needs demonstrating successful achievement in school (see Appendix C). Participants were asked questions about the age and grade of their child, their child's learning ability and their child's achievement in school. Not all volunteers were accepted for the study; those with children with special needs or children in grades other than grade 10 were excluded from the study.

Participants in the study included parents from a variety of parent-child relationships (father-son, father-daughter, mother-son, mother-daughter; and birth, adopted, step). Ten mothers, five fathers, nine daughters and six sons are represented in the study. Both two-parent and single-parent families are represented, with families varying in size from one-child to two-, three- and four-child families. The children in the study attend schools ranging in size from small (approximately 115 students) to medium (700–900 students), to large (1,600–2,000 students). Table 3.1 presents the participants' characteristics in greater detail.

Table 3.1 Participant Characteristics (N=15)

Descriptor	Number of Participants
Parent/Child relationship	
Mother/Daughter	7
Mother/Son	3
Father/Daughter	2
Father/Son	3
Parent/Child birth relationship	
Birth child	12
Adopted child	2
Step child	1
Family configuration	
Two-parent family	12
Single-parent family	3
Family size	
Only Child	5
Two-child family	6
Three-child family	2
Four-child family	2

Two principles guided the qualitative sampling: appropriateness and adequacy.

Appropriateness refers to the identification and use of participants who can best inform the

research according to the theoretical requirements of the study. Adequacy means enough data are available to develop a full and rich description of the phenomenon – that a stage of saturation is reached (Morse & Field, 1995). Thus, the exact number and type of participants was not pre-determined; sampling was guided by data collection and analysis. Sampling was halted when data categories were rich and thick and replicated by participants.

Participant profiles. During the screening process, participants responded to a questionnaire that inquired about family demographics and configuration. During the interview process, many participants provided information about their employment, working hours, and child's school achievement and history. Individual information gathered about each participant in the study is described below. Participants and their children were assigned a pseudonym to protect their anonymity. An attempt to select appropriate and matching pseudonyms was made by consulting a name website, sorting names by gender and by country of origin.

Connie: Connie lives with her husband and two children. Christa, the elder child, is 16 years old and in grade 10. Connie stayed at home with Christa until she was 18 months old. Connie and her husband currently work full-time. School is relatively easy for Christa and she likes going to school. Connie stated that Christa has been on the honour roll since grade 8. She likes to swim, play volleyball and play baseball. She likes music and animals.

Julie: Julie lives with her husband and two children. Alan, the younger child, is 16 years old and in grade 10. Julie stayed at home with Alan during his preschool years. Julie's husband works out of town during the week. Julie reported that Alan has a hard time in school, especially with tests. He likes the social part of school. His favourite class is Foods. Alan enjoys sports, especially snowboarding, lacrosse and basketball.

Margaret: Margaret lives with her husband and her daughter Karen, the youngest of

three children, who is 15 years old and in grade 10. Margaret stayed at home with Karen until Karen went to school. Margaret now works full-time. Margaret said that Karen is very willful and outspoken and has a very strong personality. Margaret reports that Karen does well in school. Karen enjoys reading and playing the violin.

Andrea: Andrea lives with her husband and her daughter Tina, who is 16 years old and in grade 10. Tina is the only child in the family. Andrea and her husband both work full-time. Andrea and her husband adopted Tina when she was 6 weeks of age. Andrea reported that in school Tina does reasonably well. She is an active involved student. Tina loves to dance and to swim. She has taken dance lessons for several years in hip-hop, ballet, jazz and break-dancing.

Linda: Linda lives with her only daughter, Marie, who is 16 years old and in grade 10. Linda is currently working full-time. Linda stated that Marie is an average student with no specific learning difficulties, though she finds math challenging. Marie is interested in the arts. She plays the violin and is involved in the school drama program. She has taken highland dancing and some art courses.

Marina: Marina lives with her husband and her son Theodore, who is 15 years old and in grade 9. Theodore is the only child in the family. Marina's husband works away from home for extended periods of time. Marina worked prior to her son's birth, and now Marina is a stay-at-home mom and homemaker. Marina described her son's achievement in school as high. He enjoys acting and, according to his mother, has shown incredible initiative in seeking a variety of acting roles.

Audrey: Audrey lives with her husband and three children: one son and two daughters. Audrey's two daughters are adopted. Georgia, the youngest of three children, is 16 years old and in grade 10. She came to live with the family when she was 9 years old. Both Audrey and her

husband work full-time. Audrey stated that Georgia's achievement in school is average. Audrey says Georgia likes writing assignments, especially poetry.

Ardith: Ardith lives with her two children. Mary, the elder child, is 16 years old and in grade 10. Ardith's job involves travel. Although Ardith is out of town frequently, she reported that she is actively involved in her children's learning and education. Ardith described her daughter Mary as independent and strong-willed, empathetic, kind and caring. Mary loves to read and enjoys gymnastics, karate and swimming.

Jack: Jack lives with his wife and four sons. Calvin, the youngest son, is a 16-year-old student in grade 10. Jack has been retired for the past 10 years and currently works various contracts from home. Jack's wife works full-time. Jack reports that Calvin does well in school; his achievement is high. Jack noted that Calvin is a very good athlete who especially enjoys playing basketball.

Seth: Seth lives with his wife and her two children. Peter, the younger child, is 16 years old and in grade 10. Seth has lived with his wife and her two children since Peter was 10 years old. Seth and his wife work full-time. Seth reported that Peter learns rapidly. Seth stated that Peter has always been an independent learner. Peter likes math and science and does well in languages.

Flo: Flo lives with her husband and two children. Kevin, the younger child, is 15 years old and in grade 9. Flo's husband works full-time, while Flo is a stay-at-home mother and homemaker. The family has spent a number of years abroad. Flo noted that Kevin does well in school. Flo said that Kevin reads well and is mathematically inclined. Kevin spends a lot of time both playing and viewing soccer.

Carl: Carl lives with his wife and his son. Les is 15 years old and in grade 10. Les is the

only child in the family. Carl and his family immigrated to Canada in 2004. Carl and his wife both work full-time. Carl stated that in the country of his birth, Les did well in school. In Canada, Carl noted that Les's lack of English-language skills inhibits his school performance. Carl said that Les likes to chat on the Internet, watch TV and listen to music.

Roy: Roy lives with his wife and two daughters. The elder daughter, Sheryl, is 15 years old and in grade 9. Roy works full-time. His wife was at home until the younger child began attending school. Roy's wife now works part-time and is seeking full-time work. Roy described Sheryl as a self-directed, independent individual. Roy stated that Sheryl has always done very well academically. Roy noted that Sheryl also enjoys music and sports.

Kendra: Kendra lives with her daughter, Tallis, who is 15 years old and in grade 10. Kendra works from home. Kendra reported that Tallis enjoys school. She stated that Tallis's achievement in school is high. Kendra said that Tallis is very active in the sporting community; she plays volleyball, basketball, and rugby. She swims, canoes, and kayaks. She enjoys the outdoors and is passionate about drama.

Jeff: Jeff lives his wife and three daughters. Elly, the eldest daughter, is 15 years old and in grade 10. Both Jeff and his wife work full-time, though Jeff's wife stayed at home until Elly was 14 years old. Jeff noted that Elly does extremely well in school. She likes English especially the creative part of English but finds math a challenge. Elly likes art, music and band. She plays the drums.

Instruments and Procedures

Data for grounded theory are typically collected through in-depth, repeated individual-participant interviews and researcher observations of participants (Charmaz, 2000; Strubert-Speziale & Rinaldi-Carpenter, 2003; Swanson, 2001). Sources such as diaries are less used in

grounded theory studies but may also provide data (Charmaz; Strubert-Speziale & Rinaldi-Carpenter).

In this study, data collection included one-to-one semi-structured interviews, diary entries, written responses to the researcher's summary of the participant's responses, and field notes during interviews. Interviews were audio taped and transcribed verbatim.

The purpose of the initial one-hour interview was to collect historical information regarding the parents' involvement in their children's education from pre-school to present, as well as long-term involvement in their children's learning. During the initial interview, the research project was explained to participants and written consent was obtained from them to commit to the 4-month duration of the project (see Appendix D). At the time of the initial interview, participants were asked to respond to a series of questions, though the interview was more of a dialogue as the interviewer followed up on the responses of the interviewee (see Appendix E). At the end of the interview, participants were provided with a response booklet to record their experiences of involvement in their children's learning (see Appendix F). Participants were asked to complete entries describing their involvement in their children's education on a frequency basis that best fit for them. On average, participants made at least one entry each week. Some entries were lengthy, describing involvement behaviours and actions from a number of days. Other entries were brief, describing a single involvement behaviour or action.

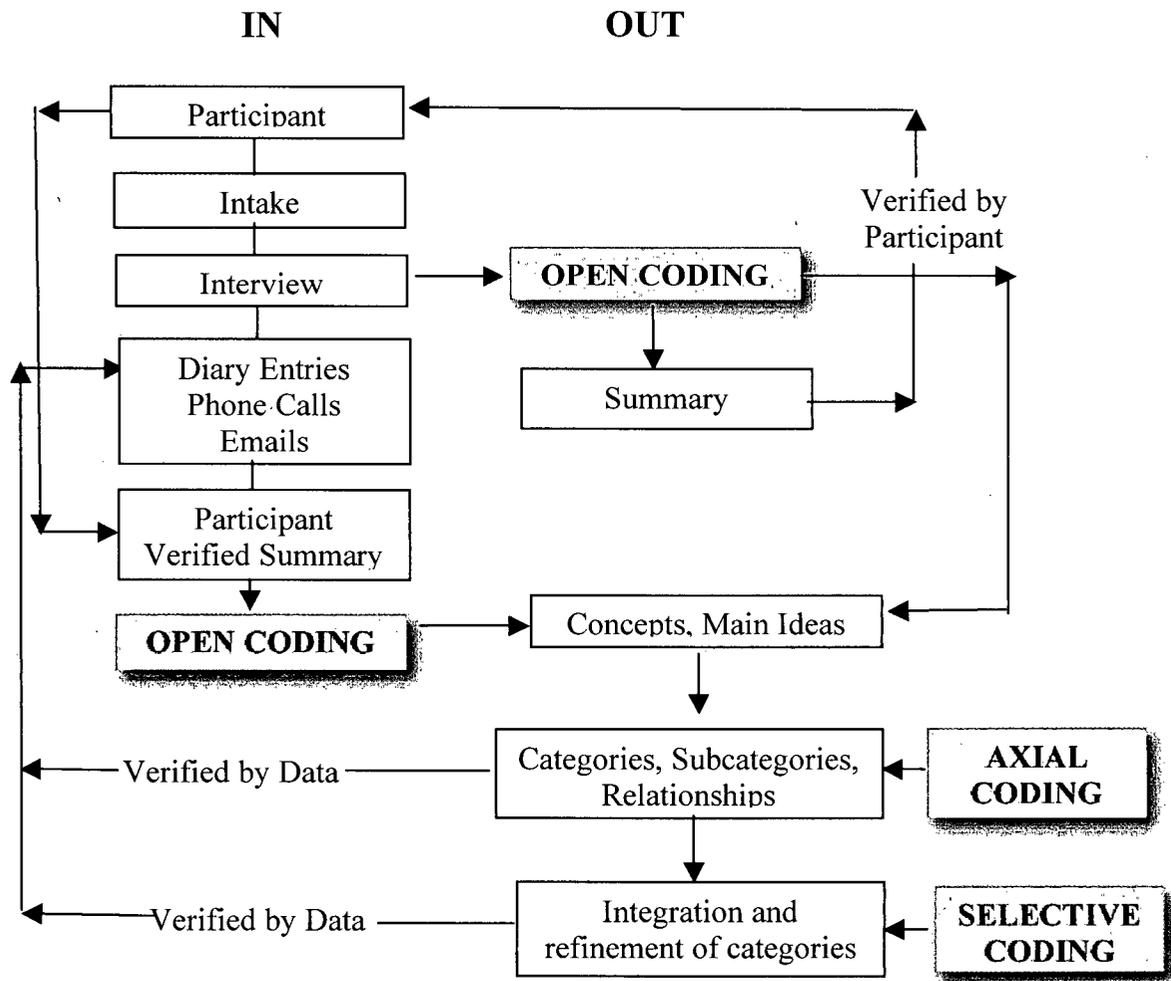
During the 4-month monitoring phase, participants were contacted four times by telephone and email to ensure continued participation and to discuss with participants their thinking about their involvement in their child's learning and education. Diary entries documented specific parent-involvement behaviours on a daily basis and served to provide

details about concepts that participants tended to refer to in a general fashion during the initial interview. At the end of the 4-month monitoring period, participants submitted their diary entries. Later, participants received a written summary of the information provided to the researcher during the initial interview, diaries, phone conversations and email messages. Participants were requested to review the summary and reflect on their involvement in their children's education by commenting on their actions, including major decisions they believed resulted in positive outcomes for their child and actions performed on a daily basis they believed positively influenced their child's learning. At this time participants were provided the opportunity to clarify and/or elaborate upon any statements, comments or information previously offered to the researcher (see Appendix G).

Field notes were used to supplement other forms of data gathering (Morse & Field, 1995). Field notes included observations of the physical setting the participant chose for the interview (e.g., home, coffee shop, community centre, ice arena, school, office), the impressions the researcher gathered or the nonverbal communication observed during the interviews. Field notes documented the biases and hunches of the researcher as data were collected (see Appendix H).

In this section the instruments and procedures were described. As data was gathered, the data was coded. The first level of coding was verified by the participants and subsequent levels of coding were verified by the original interview transcript. At midpoint in the data analysis process, data was simultaneous at the three levels of coding. To assist with the understanding of the reiterative process associated with the data analysis, a diagram of the procedures and analysis is displayed below.

Figure 3.1: Diagram of Data Procedures and Analysis



Data Analysis

Data analysis is a process of breaking down, organizing and reassembling the data to develop an understanding of the phenomena (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Coding occurred at three levels: 1) Open coding: as data were collected, concepts were suggested or gathered implicitly by the original words of the participants; 2) Axial coding: as data were compared with new data, clusters of data emerged and categories were constructed and coded; 3) Selective coding: themes

were assigned based on questions that ask what basic social processes are emerging from the data (see Appendix I). Although described as though the phases of the data analysis process were distinct, in fact the various coding tasks occurred simultaneously. Concepts were developed as data collection continued, and the process was halted when further collection did not yield new information or reveal new concepts. As data were collected, standard grounded theory coding procedures and analytic strategies were used to reduce and interpret the data. All data including interviews, diary entries, telephone conversations and email messages were coded, categorized and analyzed using a constant comparative method consistent with grounded theory methodology (Strubert-Speziale & Rinaldi-Carpenter, 2003). Categories or themes of information were formed and reassembled through systematically relating the categories in the form of a visual model.

Open coding. The first level of coding is called substantive or open coding (Morse & Field, 1995). The purpose of open coding is to break down the data into concepts and facts as closely as possible to the participant's words. As interviews were transcribed, they were coded and summarized to generate a list of main ideas. Interview questions 2, 3, and 4 were not coded; the purpose of the questions was to give participants an opportunity to consider what others do to support their children's learning and to give them time to consider what they do as parents. Participants received a copy of the summary of the main ideas of their interview. Verification from each participant that the list of main ideas had accurately captured their involvement in their child's education and learning was received, and the main ideas were then placed in categories. Review of the data resulted in over 30 categories of concepts (see Appendix J). Theoretical memos compared and contrasted the categories and defined the involvement experiences defined by each category. For example, parents described providing learning

activities and experiences, and spending time with their child (see Appendix I). Some of these experiences included simply spending time with their child and building a relationship with their child; some of these experiences were communicating with their child. While some of these experiences were specifically planned to support learning in the home or learning at school, others were a part of the environment that the parent developed, and some others were designed to foster the child's independence. Memos assisted in determining which category each of these activities and experiences best fit.

Axial Coding. The second step in the coding process was to reassemble the data fractured during the open coding process (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In this phase, categories were grouped into main categories and subcategories (see Appendix K). Through the process, thirteen main categories representing the experiences of the majority of the participants were grouped into five processes or constructs (see Appendix L). At this stage of coding, relationships between categories were identified. Notes and raw data were examined to determine the properties of these main categories or processes. The relation between categories emerged and the processes were ordered.

Selective Coding. The final stage in the coding process is the integrating and refining of categories. The primary goal of this step is to develop a theoretical scheme explaining how each of the categories relates to each other. The emergence of relationships represents the beginning of theory emergence (Morse & Field, 1995). Most noteworthy in the present study was the change in the position of the category "Relating to Child" to "Parent-Child Relationship," which emerged as the core of parent-involvement behaviour (see Appendix M). Analysis of relational statements resulted in the development of a scheme linking the construct. The category, "Relating to Child," had fallen into the centre of the process in stage two of the process. In stage

three, it quickly became evident that the parent-child relationship formed the core of parent involvement in children's education and was the link that related the other four processes to each other. As such, the parent-child relationship became the centre to the other four processes. Furthermore, the influence of the parent's construction and reconstruction of his or her role as a parent soon became evident as influencing and contributing to each of the four main processes.

A diagram describing the emergent theoretical model was developed to explain the processes of the involvement of parents in their children's education and learning. Finally, the narrative of each participant was reviewed to assess its fit to the theoretical model proposed.

Trustworthiness

In any research study the issue of rigour or trustworthiness is an important concern. In determining the trustworthiness of qualitative studies, Lincoln and Guba (1985) described four general criteria for the evaluation of qualitative research: credibility, applicability, consistency, and confirmability. However, as Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson and Spiers (2002) indicated, while the strategies of trustworthiness may be useful in attempting to *evaluate* rigour, they do not in themselves *ensure* rigour. It is important to build rigour into the study at the onset. Miles and Huberman (1994) described practical guidelines in the form of questions that can be applied to the concepts of trustworthiness in qualitative work. Several of the questions address more than one of the four areas of criteria. For the purposes of this study, although one concept may cross more than one criterion, it has been discussed under only one criterion.

Credibility. Credibility refers to internal validity and is subject-oriented and not defined in advance by the research (Morse & Field, 1995). Does the account "ring true?" (Miles & Huberman, 1994). To ensure trustworthiness, the investigator returned to the participants to check on findings and interpretations. Maxwell (1996) referred to this strategy as "member

checking” and stated that it is the “single most important way of ruling out the possibility of the meaning of what they say and the perspective they have on what is going on” (p. 94).

Participants received a list summarizing the main ideas of the individual interview as interpreted by the investigator. Participants were asked to review the summary and to report if the summary accurately captured their involvement with their child’s education. Twelve of the participants responded; these participants indicated the need for minimal or no revisions.

Applicability. Applicability or transferability refers to whether the findings can be applied in other contexts or settings, or with other groups (Morse & Field, 1995). Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested that “thick description” allow the readers of the study to assess the potential transferability and appropriateness for their own studies. Specific information about the recruitment of participants and criteria for participation were outlined. Furthermore, the profile of each participant was provided, including family size, configuration, and parent-child relationship. Records were kept of field notes following each interview and memos documenting the data analysis and the evolving theory. Finally, an abundance of direct quotes of the participants provide a rich and thick description allowing readers to assess the transferability of the findings for their own study.

Consistency. Consistency refers to whether the findings would be consistent if the inquiry were replicated with the same subjects or in a similar context. This means that the process is consistent, reasonably stable over time, and reliable across researchers and methods (Miles & Huberman, 1994). To ensure consistency in the present study, multiple sources of data (interviews, phone conversations, email transactions, field notes, diary entries) were used to triangulate the data and clearly report the perspectives of the participants. Patterns and repeated experiences rather than single occurrences have been emphasized. Data collection was

exhaustive to the point of saturation.

Confirmability. Confirmability refers to freedom from bias in the research procedure and results. Trustworthiness is increased by prolonged contact with the informants or by using long periods of observations (Morse & Field, 1995), and through a record of the study's methods and procedures detailed enough to be followed as an audit trail (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Data were collected across a 4-month period of time, ensuring the recording of common and frequent parent-involvement behaviours across multiple sources of data. An audit trail of the investigator's decisions, choices and insights was documented by the researcher through field notes and memos. Original transcripts, field notes, memos, summaries of participants' ideas and participants' emails were reviewed by an unbiased and objective peer auditor who is an academic researcher familiar with the topic and the qualitative method. Furthermore, the peer auditor consulted with the researcher throughout the process, read the analysis of the data as it appears in this document and provided feedback information on the data analysis and the emerging theoretical model.

Summary

A grounded theory method was used in this study to provide parents a voice on their involvement in their children's education, and to develop a theoretical model explaining parent involvement in children's education. Three research questions about how parents are involved in their children's learning and education over time guided this study. Parents' daily involvement, as well as their involvement based on major decisions, was a focus of the study. The study was set in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. Participants were fifteen parents of children attending grade 10 in various school and community settings. Data were collected through structured one-to-one interviews, diary entries, email transmissions, phone calls, field notes and

memos across a 4-month period. Data analysis included three levels of coding, including open coding, axial coding and selective coding. As data were collected, standard grounded theory coding procedures and analytic strategies were used to reduce and interpret the data. Finally, a number of strategies were employed including member checking, thick description, triangulation and auditing to ensure the trustworthiness and rigour of the study.

Chapter IV: Findings

Introduction

The primary purpose of this study was to generate a theoretical model that describes the involvement of parents in their children's education. Grounded theory methodology was used to analyze interview data, diary entries and email correspondence from fifteen parents of children age 15. The study examined how parents viewed their role in their children's education. Emphasis was placed on parents' current involvement practices as well as their involvement behaviour across time. The study also examined how parents' daily involvement in their children's education related to their major decision-making involvement about their children's education.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a comprehensive examination of the emergent theoretical model and the processes that comprise the theoretical model. A discussion of parents' constructions and reconstructions of their roles in their children's education lends understanding to the parent-child relationship that sets the context for a detailed explanation of each of the four processes. How parents construct their roles, and their views of their relationships with their children, are presented. This section outlines how parents describe the time they spend with their children, how they communicate with their children, and how their involvement changes as the children grow and develop. Following the discussion about parents' constructions of their roles in their children's education, the four processes are explained. Finally, the emergent theoretical model is presented.

The first process, "Planning the Child's Education," describes the process of planning parents engage in not only as their child grows and develops, but also the planning parents engage in even before the child is born. It includes planning for the child's learning both in the

home and at school from daily, as well as long-term decision-making involvement. The second process, “Shaping the Child’s Environment,” examines parent actions and behaviours associated with creating the environment in which a child grows, develops and learns. This process includes parent behaviours of being present and available, physical and emotional nurturing, initiating and engaging in a variety of activities, establishing a sense of order and organization in the child’s life through routines, and modelling and communicating the message that learning and education are valued and important. In the third process, “Fostering the Child’s Independence,” the concept of parent involvement changing over time comes into focus. In this process, parent behaviours described include involving their child in addressing the challenges of daily living experienced by most families, setting goals with their child, stepping back, allowing the child to make informed decisions, and helping their child with career exploration and development. The fourth process, “Supporting the Child’s School Learning Experiences,” examines parent behaviours that support the child’s experiences in school. Parent-involvement behaviour both in the home and at school is described. Finally, a discussion of daily parent behaviour and major decision-making behaviour concludes the chapter.

In the following presentation of each process, direct quotations from the participants are included to assist in illustrating the emergent theoretical model. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym and quotes have been coded under this name. Similar to Richie et al., (1997) and Mewborn (2005), findings are presented using phrasing defined by the number of participants endorsing the category. Hence, the phrases “the majority of,” “many” and “most” indicate that 10 to 15 parent participants made reference to the concept. The terms “some,” “several” and “a number of” are used to discuss concepts expressed by five to nine parent participants. “A few” is used to denote that the concept was articulated by four or fewer parents. Table 4.1 presents the 4

processes and 13 categories and an indication of the number of participants providing evidence of involvement behaviours characteristic of each category.

Table 4.1 Participants Providing Evidence of Involvement (N=15)

Categories	Number of participants
Planning the Child's Education	
In the home	9
At school	14
Shaping the Child's Environment	
Present and available	12
A nurturing environment	15
Establishing organization and routines	9
Activities and experiences	15
Modelling and communicating messages	12
Fostering the Child's Independence	
Problem-solving and decision-making	9
Setting goals	11
Stepping back	7
Career exploration and development	5
Supporting the Child's School Learning Experiences	
Parents at home	15
Parents at school	15

Parent Role Construction

Parents' perceptions and descriptions of their involvement in their children's education are integrally related to their constructions of their roles as parents. Role theory suggests that the role of parent is developed through multiple experiences as a member of groups relevant to parenting responsibilities. Some parents in the current study described the construction of their role as rooted in their experiences as a child observing their own parents; other parents referred to their experiences with friends and relatives whom they view with respect and admiration; others reported experiences based on their membership in parenting groups and information gathered through the media. For example, Margaret shared, "My whole family like back to my grandparents, aunts and uncles, are very active learners and my parents were very involved with me too, so I've probably been modelling my own mother." And Roy noted the influence of his grandmother on his role as a parent: "Actually, my grandmother was a huge influence with Sheryl too, and would talk about these stories, but she was a huge influence in terms of how to raise her as well." Marina reported that she and her husband, before Theodore was born, took a parenting class to learn about effective parenting techniques and strategies as well as about child development:

The main idea we came away with was that children required a strong stable attachment in order to provide them with the security and safety they need to develop as individuals.

We decided to incorporate his theories on child development into our parenting style and made a number of decisions.

Parents in this study indicated that the role they construct for themselves in their children's education impacts the parent-involvement behaviours and activities they construe as important and in turn are important to their children's education. Parents see themselves very

much as the directors of their children's education. This directing is executed by parents with care and skill within the context of a loving, caring parent-child relationship. The experiences, routines and environments that the parent constructs for the child during infancy and the preschool years very much sets the trajectory from which the parent-child relationship continues to grow and develop, allowing parents to step back from the child with confidence knowing that the child will make the appropriate choices for his/her life. In this study, parents referred to their roles in their children's education as one that is active and dynamic: new information, child interest, child personality, experiences and activities influence the parent's plan for the child and the parent's interactions with the child. Parents respond to their children's needs by adjusting the plan for the children and assisting the children and/or changing the children's environment. What is noteworthy is that the parents' actions continue to be purposeful and in accordance with their constructions of their individual roles and their overall plans for their children. It is this sense of purpose that is the driving force that motivates parents to take an active role in their children's education. Parental involvement actions are intentional; parents intend to meet the goals they have set for their children (Hoover-Dempsey & Jones, 1997).

Relating to Child

The process, Relating to Child is at the core of the emergent theoretical model. Both Glaser and Strauss emphasize seeking a core category around which local theory will be built (Morse & Richards, 2002). The core category in grounded theory is the centerpiece of the model, an abstraction that represents the main theme of the research (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). It brings together understanding of the data. "It is relevant and works. Most other categories and their properties are related to it" (Glaser, 1978). In this study the core category was determined after examining the four processes and the components for each process. Questions were posed such

as “What is not in this picture? How are the parents in the study describing their involvement in their children’s education? What is common across the four processes?” The core category, Relating to Child, is described in the following discussion. It is important to note the influence of the parents’ constructions of their role in the parent-child relationship, specifically that the parent’s interactions with the child are strongly influenced by the parents’ constructions of role.

The parent-child relationship can be understood through interactional principles and relational principles (Hinde, 1979; Lollis 2003). Lollis stated that that parent-child interactions are the building blocks of the relationship that forms, while at the same time the relationship is the context for the specific interactions that occur. As Lollis indicated, parent-child relationships develop through interactions and both parent and child contribute to the interactions and, thus, the relationship. Furthermore, parents and children interact more frequently on a daily basis than do partners in most other relationships. Lollis stated that the abundant history of interactions is what makes up the parent-child relationship.

The participants in this study each made reference to an abundance of interactions with their child (e.g., “spending time with [their child]” and “keeping the lines of communication open”) and expressed that they considered these interactions to be of great importance. Many of the parents commented on the energy they put forward in defining their relationships with their children. Marina’s comment, that “it has been exhausting at times but well worth the effort,” captures many of the parents’ impressions of their involvement in the parent-child relationship.

To gain an understanding of the process, Relating to Child as perceived by the participants of this study, parents’ interactions with their children are presented. Specifically, the parent-child interactions described by the participants can be grouped into two main themes: spending time together and communicating.

Spending time together. Common to the parent-child interactions described by the parents in this study is that the time together rather than the activity or the experience is the key. Furthermore, parents believe that spending time with their children is directly related to increased academic performance. Finally, parents refer to time together as involving a sense of caring for each other and a sense that both the parent and the child enjoy the time with the other, although this feeling is often unspoken. Seth illustrates that time together is more important than the activity. He stated,

... activities could be fun (e.g., playing tennis, chatting in Spanish) or more of a responsibility type (e.g., doing the groceries); they seem just as effective as it is the time spent together that has an impact and not the activity itself.

Several other parents also perceived that the time spent with their children, rather than the activity, is key in their parent-child relationship. "I just spent as much time with her as I could" (Connie); "We do, we do a lot together, and we do family activities" (Andrea); "I have never done anything outstanding, but I have just tried to be there" (Julie); "We spend like lots of time with her ... just spending huge amounts of time with her" (Audrey); "We actually you know as a family unit, we spend all our time together" (Roy); "It's really simple but we don't live in a simple house ... we do all lots of stuff. ... Lots of simple stuff... like camping in a tent" (Jack).

Some parents indicated that they believed that spending time with their children influenced their children's academic performance. "It seems that what really impacts Peter's performance [at school] is what we do that has nothing to do with school. Family outings and family activities motivate [him] more" (Seth). Or, as Julie noted,

I don't know about doing so much academically but I was certainly here to spend time with him and take him to the beach and you know... and we used to go to the park every

night after dinner, and play a game of something or other, I taught them how to kick a ball and stuff.

Flo described how she attempted to structure the time together with her son by initiating academic tasks. However, she discovered that spending time with her son “deciphering” their experiences contributed more powerfully to his learning.

We had a lot of time together and I tried to enforce the... style of flashing cards with him... but somehow I don't know it doesn't seem to take off with him in the literature sense but I did talk to him a lot... and then of course just explained life situations to him a lot. Like even things like simple things like we were living in an apartment and I said you know if this fire alarm should go then you should not be taking the elevator but you have to run down the staircase and all that. And the other thing what I did a lot was I would watch TV, like *Batman* was on and this penguin guy was jumping out the window with an umbrella and because we were in the apartment I explained to him that that does not work and then as he grew up I still spent a lot of time with them. They were allowed to watch shows like *Friends* and I explained or even like *Home Improvement* and I said you know they show you things, that does not show you the consequences then I would explain the consequence like you know there's no such thing as a girl and boy studying in the room upstairs kind of thing, I explained those things to both my children. I spend a lot of time just deciphering.

Parents in this study underscored that in the parent-child relationship what is important is that both the parent and the child value the time spent together. Parents reported that they valued the time with their child. Julie noted that, “You know he likes to come into the kitchen with me. He will take over a meal once in a while.” Marina noted that she and Theodore often “spend the

afternoon cooking and baking together, discussing various topics including sex ed.” And Roy stated that Sheryl will “get an invite for an overnigher and she’ll probably very often depending on what we’re doing, she’d rather be with us.” In addition, many participants viewed spending meal times together as a valued time. For many parents in the study, the evening meal is not only a time to provide nutrition, but also a time to spend together. Parents such as Connie referred fondly to meals shared together. “So the end of the day when we’re sitting down and eating, it’s usually ‘How was school?’ and it’s usually the time it’s all of us together.” Julie recalled Friday nights at the arena, “When he played hockey, that was a good time because the whole family was involved, every Friday night we would all go up to the arena and then go out to dinner as a family so that was nice.” With great importance, Andrea referred to the evening meal with her daughter and her husband:

I insist that everybody sit down at the table for supper. I always do that and I’m thinking future, you need to know how to sit at the table with others, you need to know how to have conversations and she’s actually quite good with adults, to talk and um, though she’s shy at first. I guess I have built in something.

For Jack, the evening meal is an important time to spend with his son: “Saving dinner or changing our schedule slightly so that we can all eat together is something we try and practice as much as possible.”

Communicating. The concept of communicating with their children as an important aspect of parents’ involvement in their children’s education emerged from parents’ comments about daily verbal interactions with their children. Communication is basic in the parent-child relationship. Baxter (2004) equated relationship and communication, proposing that the relationship is the communication. In this sense, parent-child communication is at the very core

of parent involvement in children's education and can be viewed as a primary parent-involvement behaviour in the category, Relating to Child.

Very closely connected to "spending time together," the concept of "communicating" involves talking together as well as spending time with the child. Both concepts are interactive and both develop, or as Baxter (2004) suggested, *is* the parent-child relationship. As the activity in "spending time together" is not as important as being with the child, similarly the topic of the "communicating" is not as significant as dialoguing with the child. The differentiation between communicating and spending time together as presented by the parents in the study, however, is that in communicating there is often no other physical action or activity other than sitting and talking – communicating with their children is the *activity*. By contrast, in spending time together, communicating is not at the core; instead, *being present* is the focus. Parents referred to communicating with their children as a daily occurrence. At minimum, communicating involved a daily check-in but frequently parents described having regular conversations and discussions with their children.

Parents in the study described daily check-ins as short, regular exchanges of information about the children's day, primarily directed by the parent, whereas conversations and discussions were focused on the children's interests and were often associated with learning activities at school. Connie noted,

I'm always asking her questions at the end of the day as to whether she has homework, what project she is working in, if she is having any problems. Every day Christa and I talk about school and how her day went and what was good and what was not so good.

Many parents, such as Jack, monitor homework through daily check-ins:

My involvement in his learning part is probably just providing the environment to learn

where he can learn but in daily schoolwork and stuff like that mostly my involvement is have you done your homework? Whereas, discussions about, what is happening in the world [is] at the dinner table, or in the car.

Jack perceives his participation in “Calvin’s learning is primarily achieved through engaging him in conversation about what interests him.” Communicating with his son through daily conversations is a major part of Jack’s involvement in his son’s education. Similarly, Ardith commented that she and Mary:

... communicate constantly about her schoolwork, the grade curriculum and expectations that she needs to meet to go onto a post-secondary institution. We talk about current world events and individuals, whether they are political leaders or citizens that perform in ways that affect the lives of others by the work they do. Every day there’s something that you know she’ll have her own opinion about that might differ than mine and differ from what’s been said on the news.

Seth referred to the value of communicating:

A simple positive presence has a tremendous impact on his learning. Listening to what he has to say about different situations, not necessarily linked to school, puts him in a disposition that helps him learn. The idea behind the discussions is to impact his attitude towards learning more than to correct any difficulties he might have with content.

Connie expressed the perceptions of most of the participants regarding communicating: “Spending the time to talk and listen to your child is very important.” And Audrey expressed her belief that closeness is an important aspect of the parent-child relationship that is achieved through communication and spending time together: “We keep her close and we spend like lots of time with her.”

Planning the Child's Education

Parents' planning for their children's education is a pivotal process that emerged from the data. Planning begins with the parents' hopes and dreams for their children. Planning acts as a trajectory from which the other three processes are formed. How parents plan for their children's education influences, how they shape their children's learning environment, how they relate to their children, how they work with their children to enable independence and how they support their children's school experiences. Planning as described by the parents is likened to blueprints for the construction of a house, firmly grounded in the parents' values and beliefs about education. Hoover-Dempsey and Jones (1997) stated that parents often behave in accordance with their beliefs about what they should do to help their children succeed in school. Parental planning for a child's education is integrally linked to the parents' hopes and dreams for their children. This planning for education starts early and is strongly influenced by the parents' constructions of their roles as parents. When asked what her most important involvement behaviour is, Connie replied, "I thought about her education from day one." As the child grows and develops, plans may change to accommodate child interest, talents, skills or needs, and increase in detail as the child nears high school graduation.

Parents in the study reported two areas of planning – home and school – and two types of planning – daily or short-term planning, and long-term planning. Both are integrally connected and difficult to separate. In both areas, home and school, parent planning is best described as a long-term commitment to the child. Parents' planning for the child often starts even before the child's birth. For example, Connie said, "From the time she was born I have had an education plan in place." And Margaret said, "I've read to her since she was in the womb," or, as Flo stated,

I made the decision to stay home, maybe because I came from a very large family and being the baby I didn't really have the attention. So when I was pregnant I decided that I would give up [my career] and sacrifice so to speak and of course, I'm fortunate enough to be able to.

Parental planning continues as the child grows. Kendra referred to the parent planning in her comment about her daughter's thinking about careers, "She is 15 and does she know what she wants to do after she finishes? No. Should she know? No. And do most kids know? Not really. Their parents do, but the children don't." In this short statement, Kendra has articulated the heart of the planning concept: parents know what they want for their children.

Parents spoke of their plans for and commitment to their children's education with passion, enthusiasm and a sense of serious responsibility. Parents referred to their involvement in their children's education as a choice, something they chose to do that significantly impacted the parents' lives. Kendra stated, "Learning starts at home from the day they were born and [I] chose to have [her], I feel [I] should be there. No one else is raising my child." Jeff said, "[my wife] chose to be a stay-at-home mom," and, "We made a conscious effort to move here." The parents in the study made reference to choices made prior to the child's conception as well as during the child's life. Furthermore, based on their perceptions of their role in their children's education together with their values and beliefs about education, parents in this study spoke of daily planning actions as well as major decision-making planning behaviour. The concept of planning is not static but, rather, a dynamic process that changes and develops as the child grows and progresses; it is not a one-time activity but, rather, occurs constantly, influencing both daily as well as long-term parental involvement actions.

Planning the child's learning in the home. The basic underlying process of "planning

in the home” is best viewed by parental actions that describe what parents do in the home that supports the children’s learning and education primarily in the home; however, what children learn in the home influences their learning in school. Furthermore, describing the planning behaviour of parents regarding the children’s life is not easily separated from the other four processes. What parents do in the planning processes influences their actions and behaviour in shaping the child’s environment, relating to the child, fostering the child’s independence and supporting the child in school.

The involvement behaviour of parents associated with planning for the child’s learning that is primarily home-based, fell into three areas: caring for the child; increasing parent knowledge and skills through parenting and child-development reading and coursework; and planning learning experiences for the child. Based on their plan for their children, some parents made a conscious choice to “stay home”; others changed careers; some moved to a location that they believed to be a better environment for their children or to be closer to the school that they believed to be a better school for their children; others read books and engaged in coursework related to parenting.

The first area, caring for child, involved the parents’ decision to “stay home” or change careers. A number of parents referred to their decision to care for their children. This action of parents speaks to their belief that spending time with their children and being available to their children is important. For example, Connie stated, “I feel the most important thing that I have done for Christa is to be home in the early years of Christa’s life. Spending time to talk and to listen to your child is very important.” For Marina it was not only important for her to be with her son, but also critical to raise her son in a small community. She indicated that their move from the city to a rural environment, allowing her to change careers from a businessperson to a

stay-at-home mom, was based on her “desire to raise Theodore in a small community and be educated in a rural school.” In contrast, Roy made a conscious decision not to move away from family and friends: “we talked about moving. ... she literally would be in upheaval in her life. I think it would be an upheaval for her to lose her friends.” Jack stated, “I retired when Calvin started school. I’ve got more flexibility. He can always count on me.” Margaret said she “was at home and then when I worked I’ve always had really flexible hours and it enabled me to be there when needed.”

Second, motivated by their plan for their children, some parents took parenting courses, others read about child development, while a few enhanced their personal skills by taking classes and workshops in areas such as yoga, meditation and living healthily. As Linda explains, “I think to some extent my yoga and meditation studying has influenced very directly Marie’s learning in the sense that it helps mediate my own reaction to things.” Linda’s plan for Marie’s education includes post-secondary. Linda has set high standards for herself, completing a master’s degree as a mature student. For Linda to realize her plan for Marie, it was important that Linda be grounded and responsive rather than scattered and reactive. Linda also noted that she “read a lot about child development and [sought] answers as a parent,” from authors such as Barbara Colaroso. For Marina to make informed decisions about Theodore’s education, she and her husband took a twelve-week course on parenting prior to Theodore’s birth. The course influenced her plan for Theodore’s education, specifically that she “planned Theodore’s education to include him in all adult activities and events as appropriate and resist the growing tendencies to separate children from adults.” Indeed, Marina’s plan for Theodore’s education is very purposeful and informed by the parenting classes in which she and her husband participated. Flo read books about how to teach babies and “tried to apply that.” Flo described

the time she spent with her young son as a time when she purposefully planned activities and provided materials for him to pique his learning. She stated, "I usually keep things like my aluminum foil cups and all that. ... he built a little robot." Based on her reading, Flo "did a lot of groundwork with him when he was little in the sense that I was an at-home mom. I cultivated habits with regards to work so he picked it up from a way back." Long-term planning to develop strong work habits is evident in Flo's early involvement in her son's learning.

Several parents discussed their conscious effort to plan experiences that would contribute to the child's broader education. This category is similar to "Activities and Experiences" discussed later in terms of shaping the child's environment. What is important about this aspect of learning activities and experiences is the element of planning. Planning refers to the planning of an activity or experience for an expressed purpose whereas in the following section, activities and experiences are discussed in terms of providing access to an activity or experiences. Planning suggests that parents orchestrate the learning activities and opportunities for their children for an expressed purpose. For example, Connie's plans for Christa included learning to share. Given that Christa was her first child and Christa was cared for in the home, Connie said, "I took her to Sunday School when she was 3, just so that she could be taught how to share because I didn't want to put her in daycare." Connie also indicated that she herself "was terrified of water because I don't swim. I took her to swimming lessons and got her to swim so that I wouldn't be too nervous" when she took Christa on a family camping trip that included lake swimming. Similarly Andrea, mother of an adopted and only child, purposefully planned social activities for her daughter Tina. "What I've tried to do when she was little was try to get her into social situations because we always seemed to live in places where there are no kids." In contrast, Ardith's value of the simplicity of life led her to

... always take [the children] away for at least 10 days to what I called pastoral settings where there was no technology, no propane, no TV, no computer, no anything and we always take books and games and go to an island.

Furthermore, Ardith travels extensively and views travel as valuable learning experiences. Each year she plans an educational travel experience for her children. For example: "I took the kids away for 3 weeks to Peru, Galapagos, this past Christmas and we were on a guided tour every day – 2 to 4 hours of tours where we were all educated about each site." Kendra, a single parent of an only child, spoke of the learning experiences she planned for her daughter:

I feel strongly that you have to be, to be an only child and to be raised properly you still need the total picture that there's other people and kids in this world and it isn't just you and so yeah she was highly involved ... swimming lessons, baby groups, preschool, baton, gymnastics.

Marina expressed the purpose in traveling to Mexico was to provide her son Theodore with a learning experience. "We went on a trip to Mexico. No accommodations booked prior to arrival. It gave us an opportunity to experience a sense of adventure, risk-taking, and a chance to problem solve." What is reflected in these parent-involvement behaviours and actions is the parents' long-term commitment and overwhelming investment in their children's education. The process of planning for their children's education in the home involves major decision-making and daily involvement behaviour associated with caring for the child, increasing parent knowledge and skills through parenting and child-development reading and coursework, and planning learning experiences for the child.

Planning the child's learning at school. The basic underlying process of "planning the

child's learning at school" is best viewed through parental behaviours and actions that have to do with the child's life in a school environment. This category evolved from participants' discussions of their plans for their child in school from kindergarten to graduation, as well as preschool activities and post-secondary education plans. Planning the child's learning at school includes the parent's planning of schools the child will attend or courses the child takes, financial planning for post-secondary activities, and thinking about post-secondary education and/or careers. Once again, the three aspects of this category include both long-term decision-making, as well as short-term daily planning.

First, the idea of selecting schools the child will attend or courses the child will take was noted by a number of parents. The idea of selecting schools is best illustrated by Kendra, who carefully considered and made the decision to change schools when her daughter was in grade 4: "We switched in grade 4. I mean it is the best time to do it because your primary grades are over and now of course you're heading into letter grades." Kendra made the decision to change schools because "they had a great group of parents that were really involved" and "I loved the community." Kendra's actions reflect the intent with which she made this decision for her daughter's learning. For Andrea, choosing a school close to her work was important to her:

She attended school across the street from my office. So that was handy and I could be there when she got sick or whatever, be there right away. She knew where I was when she went to after school care.

Connie spoke of her involvement in helping Christa select her courses in high school: "We try to keep her on the same road map ... if this is what you want, that you need to get all these courses." Similarly, Roy discussed his involvement in helping Sheryl with her course selection:

Well right now like the course selection is coming out and this is critical because it's going to be grade 10, 11, 12 for the graduate program so really right now is the time where we have to sit down and have a good long talk about what she's wanting to do, at least trying to get the pathways so it's keeping some multiple doors open so I can see her going into humanities more than sciences and so it's kind of at this critical point.

Kendra's reference to her involvement in her daughter's course selection involves working with the school counselor:

It's her grade counsellor and he will actually stay with us through grad ... so that way it's a kind of community and the counsellor kind of gets to know some of the kids. ... I've had to go up to the school a few times this year and the three of us have met and he's really receptive.

A second aspect of planning for the child's learning in the school environment is the concrete aspect of financial planning. Five of the parents in the study made reference to their plans to support their children financially in post-secondary learning. This aspect of planning is significant in that it concretely represents the parents' long-term involvement in the children's education. Connie said, "From the time she was born I have had an education plan in place. So when she gets out she will have enough to cover her for the first 3 years." And Linda said, "We have an RESP. We have been contributing to that since she was 2, so that we can provide some financial ease at the beginning." Roy indicated, "We will provide financial and academic support for post-secondary education. Sheryl will have the means to pursue whatever career she wishes." For these parents to begin saving for their children's post-secondary education 16 to 18 years in advance requires long-term planning and foresight. Furthermore, regular monthly contributions to such a plan serve to constantly reinforce the parents' long-range educational plans for the

child and influence daily parental involvement actions.

Thirdly, many of the parents discussed their actions associated with thinking about their children's post-secondary education and/or careers. For example, in addition to saving financially for Marie's post-secondary education, Linda has taken Marie to universities and museums, cultivating Marie's interest in history of costuming: "And she's been up to the university, up to UBC. She quite likes the rare books library. She's very interested in history so we've always gone to museums." She stated further, "I'll certainly be talking to her about choices for university, why she would choose one over the other, how she's going to live while at university." Linda's long-range plans of university for Marie influences the daily activities she engages in with Marie. Similarly, Ardith spoke of her plans to:

... go to the university and go around to some of the colleges and bring home some of their brochures so that we [Ardith and her daughter Mary] can start to look through and see what the courses are and what the prerequisites are and I think it's really important to start to think about that.

Travel is a very integral part of Ardith's and her children's lives. For Ardith, during the next few years while Mary is in grades 11 and 12, the travel plans include visiting universities across the country and internationally. Jeff has given much thought about Elly's post-secondary, given the family income and her incredible artistic talents. He said:

We've done a lot of talking about that. Because she's been having such a hard time, we did express to her that we didn't expect her to go to university or expect her to do anything that was beyond what she wanted to do. If she wanted to go to work that would be fine, if she wanted to go to college or if she wanted to go to Emily Carr, we would help her with that, as well. Whatever we could do, whatever she chooses. We've talked to

relatives that live in Vancouver about her staying with them and we've tried to talk to her and explain to her – we're setting the groundwork – that even though she's not happy that she might be staying with family, we wouldn't be able to afford it otherwise. That's something that she has to understand.

Each of the examples provided describe the nature and extent of parental involvement associated with post-secondary education and/or careers. Individual strengths, personalities and experiences form the very different ways that parents planned for their children's learning after high school. What is common is that the majority of parents are thinking about their children's post-secondary life and how they could strategically act now to ensure positive outcomes for their children.

Summary of planning the child's education. In this section, a number of planning behaviours and actions as described by the study participants have been highlighted. Planning behaviour as outlined indicates a sense of purpose and involves a parent's long-term commitment to his or her child. Based on the construction of their role as a parent, parents' planning for their children's learning and education forms the foundation upon which subsequent parent-involvement behaviour develops and evolves.

Shaping the Child's Environment

Shaping the child's environment emerged from the data early on in the process. All of the participants in his or her own unique way discussed how they were building or creating an environment in the home that values learning and education and is a safe haven for their children. Although shaping environment refers primarily to the physical space of "home," it also makes reference to a general feeling of safety and security. Each participant spoke about his or her involvement in different ways – nutritious food and meals, consistent bed times, books in the

home, reading, radio news and newspapers in the home to promote discussion and debate, and daily chat or check-in times. The majority of the participants discussed being present and available for their children. As Seth stated, “A simple positive presence has a tremendous impact on his learning.” Indeed, the central theme of this process is about creating an environment that is responsive to the child’s needs, supports the parent’s educational plans for the child and contributes positively to the child’s learning and education.

Shaping the environment, as described by the parents, might be likened to building the foundation and framing the house. That is, given the blueprints or plans for the child’s learning and education, shaping the environment involves the parent in laying the foundational work from which to foster the child’s independence, and supporting the child’s learning in the school environment. The participants in the study discussed the relationship between the environment and the other aspects of their involvement, as well as the interaction between the process of shaping the child’s environment and the parent-child relationship. The parents in the study explained the importance of maintaining a strong, steady presence in their children’s lives, carefully and thoughtfully nurturing their children, purposefully establishing and maintaining routines and guidelines for their children, provide their children with a number of experiences and activities and how they consistently and subtly modelling and communicating the message that education is important and to be valued.

As previously noted in the planning process, the parent’s beliefs and values about education heavily influence the environment that is created and way in which the environment is shaped. Jack, who retired when his son went to school, aptly articulated the critical importance of the shaping process: “My greatest support to Calvin is providing him a home where his parents get along, are respectful of each other, and are consistent in their upbringing of him.” Shaping

the child's environment includes providing for both the child's physical and emotional needs. Like planning, shaping is a critical process, integral to the theoretical foundation of parental involvement.

It is important to note that parent-involvement behaviour associated with shaping the child's environment includes both daily involvement as well as major decision-making involvement behaviour. For example, Jack expressed how major decision-making behaviour, such as in what activities the child engages, shapes the learning environment for his son Calvin:

My involvement in his learning part is probably just providing the environment to learn. Like mine is more in the areas of creating an environment where Calvin can do work. Like there are certain things, certain decisions... It was a decision we made way back and years ago when it first came out and we ended up but I think [one of the main decisions] is just about Nintendo.

And Roy discussed how the daily involvement or routines creates an environment that allows the child to learn: "We really consciously focused on routine with the kids and that's probably why as a student in kindergarten, she was able to get up, make her bed, make her lunch, and be ready to go." Jack and Roy clearly illustrated the purposefulness of their parental actions in shaping the environment for the child. Both daily as well as major decision-making involvement behaviours describe the shaping process.

Parents in this study reported five areas associated with shaping the child's environment: being present and available; providing a nurturing environment; establishing and maintaining organization and routines; coordinating activities and experiences; and modelling and communicating the message that learning and education are to be valued. In each of the five areas, parental involvement is purposeful with the expressed intent to create an environment

conducive to learning.

Present and available. Present and available emerged from the participant interviews as a key concept. It was supported in participants' diary entries and follow-up interviews. Participants most commonly referred to this concept as "being there." In the final interview when asked "What one or two things that you do on a daily basis are most significant in your child's learning?" Kendra stated, "being there for questions," and "letting them know you are available." Kendra elaborated, explaining that being present and available

... doesn't mean that your kid is not going to make mistakes, [or] your child is not going to try things ... drugs are in all of our high schools, these things are there. It's just talking and just being there and try not, as the parent, to put too much of your own abilities and judgments, because ... you still have to be more open because they're a teen and understand them.

Jeff stated it simply: "I think that really she wants to know that we're in the house." Being there, to many of the study participants, means being present and available unconditionally without judgment. Being there suggests that children are enveloped with a feeling of safety and acceptance because help is readily available. Feeling safe, confident and accepted creates an environment conducive to learning. Seth thoughtfully stated, "Listening to what he has to say about different situations ... puts him in a disposition that helps him learn."

A few parents spoke of how they are present and available to their children with respect to activities in the community. Connie described the process Christa uses when she is away from the home:

We know where she is going. If she leaves that place and goes somewhere else, she phones and makes sure it is okay. She has always asked from day one to do things. She

just doesn't go and do things. So I think that just being on top and being around.

Similarly, Jeff related that when Elly goes out on Friday nights he drives her and her friends to the event. "I go down there, drop her off and then sit outside and you know, wait for her, I read or do something like that. I sit outside the whole time so that she knows I'm there if anything happens." Jeff and Connie not only provide their own children with a sense of security, but also their children's friends. For example, Jeff said:

I've made friends with a lot of her friends and I shouldn't say 'friends' but they don't dislike me being around because they know that [I'm okay]. I give them a ride home when they need it and pick them up.

Being there, present and available means the child "can always count on me" (Jack) "always ask me for support" (Seth) or know that "I'm prepared to give him a hand at any time," (Carl), and know that help will "be there right away" (Andrea).

A nurturing environment. The concept of creating a nurturing environment includes both the child's physical and emotional needs. It is difficult to separate the two. As Jack stated, "I believe having a lunch prepared for him to take to school is a great reinforcement that we care and love him." In reference to shaping the environment to nurture the child's physical needs, the majority of parents in the study discussed involvement behaviours such as getting their children out of bed in the morning, ensuring the child got to bed at night, providing the child with nutritious food, transporting the child to and from school, ensuring the child had the necessary materials and equipment for school, and making sure the child had clean clothes. For example, Ardith stated, "I've raised the kids eating mostly an organic diet and work in the natural product industry," and so Mary has "been indoctrinated by me her whole life about healthy eating, and safe food, clean environment and this kind of thing." Flo underscored the importance of food for

her teenage son: "I think food for his frequent bouts of hunger differing in variety is what he looks forward to after his school, homework, and games." Furthermore, Flo considers the preparation of nutritious meals for her son as very important. Careful thought and consideration goes into "the buying, and the planning and then the organizing too," of meals. For Flo, whose family of four lives on one income, it is important to not only make nutritious meals but also prepare economical meals:

I mean there are people who like to go out and eat, but that's equivalent to a week's meals, so you know I make sure that food is very important to them too. I like to give them nourishing food; hardly ever do I give them fast food, hardly, or box meals.

Some parents made reference to providing a nurturing environment by transporting their child to and from school and other activities. As Julie indicated, "I have always driven my kids places, I have always done it because we have chosen to live out here." Kendra's daily involvement in getting her daughter to and from school is remarkable. She rode the public bus to and from her daughter's school twice a day. She said:

... [Tallis] hasn't been able to walk to school in years because her elementary school was a long way and we had to bus. ... she was too young to bus by herself so we would bus together. So I was at the school twice a day no matter what.

In addition to meeting the physical needs of their children, parents spoke passionately about addressing the child's emotional needs. The majority of parents discussed the importance of telling their child that they loved them. As Roy stated, "We show our love for Sheryl every day. We tell her every day that we love her." Audrey shows her love for her adopted daughter by "keeping her close" and spending "lots of time with her." Audrey said that everyday she "communicated to her [daughter] by word and deed, that she was smart and could learn." Marina

spoke of the importance of providing Theodore with a “strong, stable attachment,” and providing him with a sense of security and a safe environment. Jack stated that he tries to make Calvin’s send-off each morning, “positive, regardless of how I might feel that particular morning.” In addition, at the end of the day Jack ensures that “Calvin arrives home from school to a positive and encouraging place. This means that at times I need to bite my tongue when he walks into the house and wait for the appropriate time to ‘discuss’ something, which may have caused me some displeasure or concern that day. I strongly believe that if anything, this is one of the most important things you can do for your children.” As evidenced by the plethora of statements, the parents in this study viewed the emotional nurturing connected to learning as a very integral part of the daily involvement in the child’s life.

Organization and routines. The idea of establishing organization and routines is a concept discussed by several participants. The establishment of organization and routines includes all that parents do on a regular daily basis; however, most routines and organized structures are a result of major decisions. Thus, many of the parents in the study referred to the establishment of routines and organization based on their values and beliefs. For example, daily reading with the child was a decision made early on because of the parents’ belief that reading is important. In discussing her daily check-in with Christa, Connie is representative of several parents:

I’m always asking her questions at the end of the day as to whether she has homework, what project she is working in, if she having any problems. From day one since she went to school that was always the question after school.

Ardith speaks for many parents in her description of the bedtime routine: “We had pretty much our standard evening routine for their life until such time that they were on their own ...

books, bath, bed and teeth. ... I sat and read every night to both of them.” As Ardith points out, routines are developmental and gradually change as the child grows; however, what is interesting to note is that the adolescent begins to adopt a form of the routine. For example, a parent-initiated routine of reading to the child before bed often leads to a child-initiated routine of reading before bed. Flo discussed how routines become more relaxed as Kevin grows older. She said:

... every time he would come back [home] it's like okay first thing is homework and then they got into that routine. A little bit more relaxed now, snack comes first. Yeah, and once the tummy is filled and his soccer news is updated, he would sit down to do his homework. Although the routine changes, there is still a routine.

Routine, as Jack so aptly reported, “adds support to Calvin [and he has] an easier time with his education and learning.” Routine “frees” the family for time for other activities. For example, Roy spoke to the benefit of routines as allowing more time for those items that are not routine: “We communicate the week’s and daily tasks that need to be accomplished. If it is not a routine task, we process together [as a family], critical factors that need to occur for success.” Indeed, the establishment of a daily family routine has been associated with children who are doing well (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

Activities and experiences. With respect to creating an environment conducive for learning, the concept of activities and experiences include both what parents provide and choose not to provide their children. It is about creating an environment that not only encourages learning but also embraces learning. Parents referred to creating an atmosphere that fosters lifelong learning and a quest for knowledge. All of the parents in the study discussed the various and numerous activities and experiences that they provide for their children. Parents referred to

these activities and experiences as supporting the child's school learning: "In our home like we have without exaggeration, probably 3,000 titles. ... reading is a real big part of our life" (Jack); "filling in the gaps of learning not offered in the school environment or music lessons, art lessons that sort of thing" (Margaret); and rounding out or augmenting the learning happening in the school. For example, Flo believed that her son's early experiences building with household materials as well as commercial building blocks such as Lego "helped a lot toward his mathematical skills."

For some parents, the idea of keeping their children busy, active and involved was more important than the activity itself: "I always kept her busy" (Kendra). Other parents spoke of a variety of activities and experiences simply to "give him an opportunity to be exposed to a lot of different things," (Julie). Parents such as Ardith and Jack viewed the provision of activities and experiences as activating many of the thinking and reasoning processes associated for learning. Ardith noted, "Newspapers and talking about what's going on in the news is everyday talk in our house. I turn on CBC radio first thing in the morning ... and whatever the topic is, that's our topic for the day." Jack said,

My primary objective is to provide an environment, which expands Calvin's horizons beyond what his peer group, for the most part, is doing. There has to be life beyond watching videos, playing computer games and conversing on MSN or a combination of all three.

A few parents discussed restricting their children from participating in some activities and experiences. Most parents referred to this idea with regards to screen time – that is, viewing television shows and videos. Jack articulated this idea: "I think one of the biggest things you can do for a kid is not let them have Nintendo." Jeff stated it succinctly for many parents, "You

know, we just try and monitor what they watch.” Based on the parenting classes she took, Marina made the decision that Theodore would not attend preschool or daycare. She would be his early childhood educator. Furthermore, Marina thought it important to “limit access and influence of peers.”

What is common across the parents in this study is not the offering or the restricting of similar activities and experiences, but, rather, that the parents have created an environment that is familiar and comfortable to their children as individuals, responsive to their children’s needs and conducive to learning. For example, Flo responds to and activates her son’s learning by offering access to a variety of materials and resources, Jack responds to and activates his son’s learning by offering access to a number of books and Ardith responds to and activates her daughter’s learning through radio news. With energy, passion and confidence, each parent creates a caring and nurturing environment that is rich in activities and experiences that foster learning and positive outcomes. These parents’ actions are purposeful and strategic, intending to support their children’s education.

Modelling and communicating messages. Whereas the provision of activities and experiences is direct and specific, the concept of modelling and communicating the message that learning and education is important is subtle. Firmly grounded in the parents’ values and beliefs about learning and education, the concept of modelling and communicating messages involves parent actions, the message that parents communicate, and the way that the message is communicated to the child.

Parents in the study spoke to the importance of modelling and how they modeled to their children the importance of learning and education. Several of the parents modeled the idea of lifelong learning by taking additional coursework. Roy shared:

The other thing is she's also seen me do a couple of university degrees and so I've been a consistent learner. Her mom's also... she's also seen her going to course work and doing course work so we've always been going to school as long as she can remember even right up to today.

Linda recounted her return to grad school when Marie was in elementary school: "I went back to school and she saw me working hard and you know, bearing down under the pressure and setting goals for myself." Similarly, Carl, a new Canadian states that he is "taking the pre-entry communication courses. Yes, [Les] should look at me to study hard." Ardith and Jeff engage in ongoing course work. Ardith said that she:

... tends to take about one course every year or two in my industry that I work in so I've been sort of trying to attempt this diploma in nutritional science through an institute called the Allied Institute so I tend to have the books out and be studying, our house is pretty small so she sees me,

Consistent with this, Jeff said that he:

... is constantly upgrading and doing things so when I was in the fire department I was taking courses, through work I take courses all the time. I spend probably about two weeks a year in Vancouver or somewhere taking courses through the Justice Institute and the kids say, 'Oh yeah, dad's gone off to school.' It's normal for them.

Jack models the process of lifelong learning through reading and conversation:

What I have tried to do for Calvin is to create a sense of what we value as a family relating to education and learning. For example, being motivated to find out, figure out new ideas, and pursue new interests. I try and model this, by reading a lot, talking about what I have read, and staying up on current affairs.

In addition to modelling the process of learning, several of the parents also commented on modelling other aspects of learning. For example, Roy commented on skills: "I think it's very key to her success the fact that I can model how to research and problem solve and things like that. ... We include Sheryl in our issues and problems. We rarely ask her to leave conversations or problem-solving times. We model for her how we approach these challenges and work together on strategies." Kendra reported that she "models using correct speech at all times, not slang." Linda viewed herself as the key person in Marie's life with regard to modelling the love of learning: "I think that the modelling sort of, you know, not bad work habits and enjoyment of education and stuff like that has been mostly my job." Ardith referred to areas in which she believed her modelling influenced Mary's learning: "I would like to think that I am a role model for Mary by getting up and going to work everyday." Jack's focus is one of modelling doing one's best. He says, "I try and model, not always successfully, that doing your best is honourable and desirable, and will in the long run, make you feel better about yourself." Parents perceive themselves as models for their children and view modelling as a powerful tool in shaping the child's environment and realizing the planning associated with their children's education.

In addition to modelling, parents in the study communicated a number of messages about learning, education and achievement to their children, including: "both her dad and I see education is a really valuable asset" (Linda); "I have the attitude that learning is important to growth as a human" (Margaret); and, "we have stressed [to Kevin] so much about school and performance, he knows the importance and he knows that he has to be involved in society and to give back (Flo). Furthermore, Roy stated,

We've always said from day one when's she's a little child growing up being an independent person will empower you to be, bring something to a relationship and a

family so the way to do that is through education. High school is not the end of education.

Seth aptly captured what several of the parents discussed with regard to giving their children messages about learning. He stated, “The idea behind the discussions is to impact his attitude towards learning.” The idea of messages about learning and education is to shape the child’s ideas about what is important – specifically the importance of learning and education. Additionally, parents strive to communicate not only the importance of education but also the importance of achieving the child’s personal best. Parents use messages to encourage and challenge their children to achieve and to strive to do well. Jack said:

What I have tried to do for Calvin and our other boys is to create a sense of what we value as a family relating to education and learning. For example, being motivated to find out, figure out new ideas, and pursue new interests. I try and model this, by reading a lot, talking about what I have read, and staying up on current affairs. At times we discuss what is happening in the world at the dinner table, or in the car. His grandmother provides him with a yearly subscription to *National Geographic*, which he reads cover to cover each month.

As Roy noted: “We have the expectation for success and work toward it.” Seth commented on his parental involvement behaviour over time, saying that, “our ‘sermons’ may evolve but the message will be the same. ... we will continue to set high expectations.”

Parents in the study discussed a number of ways in which they communicated their messages to their children. The following examples are indicative of the way that parent involvement in children’s education varies from individual to individual and how the parents’ actions are responsive to their children. Audrey stated that she “communicated to her [daughter],

by word and deed that she [her daughter] is smart and can learn.” Roy said that he tells his daughter “she is capable of doing whatever she wants and that we will support her.” Jack said that he “creates a sense of what you value as a family related to education and learning. ... you know that whole learning card, it’s just part of the fabric of our house.” These statements are similar in that they provide a message to the child that (1) the child is a capable learner, and (2) that learning and education are important and valued. Audrey’s method is direct and specific – giving her daughter the message that she can learn. In his message, Roy is telling his daughter that not only can she learn and be successful but also she has the support of her family. Jack’s method is indirect and general –giving his son the message that learning and education are part of their family’s identity. Ardith uses a dual approach to communicate her messages about learning and education to her daughter. Ardith said, “I cut out articles and every once in a while I’ll find something that I think is really interesting and then I tape them to the bathroom mirror.” Ardith uses articles and quips and quotes as an avenue to “communicate constantly about her school work, the grade curriculum and expectations that she needs to meet to go onto a post-secondary institution.” In addition, Ardith said she “tends to repeat in ever different subtle ways my moral and ethical standard which I expect from my two children. What’s right and wrong, what’s expected, what’s needed, in order to achieve one’s goals and dreams.” Although the method of communicating the message varies, the result is very similar. In each case, relative to the child’s needs the parent is shaping the child’s environment to one that promotes and fosters learning.

Parents in the study clearly stated the importance in both word and actions that learning and education are important and to be valued. Although the parents’ modelling and communication about learning and education were often subtle, the parents ardently believed that

their words and actions provided a powerful message to their children.

Summary of shaping the child's environment. Parents' values, beliefs and experiences strongly influence how they construct their role as parents and in turn how they shape the environment for their children. In this section, many parents echoed Jack, who expressed the importance of shaping the child's environment: "It's just always been really important that when our kids come home that this is a really safe, good place for them." The power and influence of a positive learning environment is clearly established in the literature. In a review of 49 studies, Henderson (1988) found that creating a positive learning environment at home has a powerful impact on student achievement, and Christenson et al. (1992) reported that parents who accept, nurture, encourage and are emotionally responsive to their children's developmental needs tend to have children who are successful in school.

Fostering the Child's Independence

The concept of fostering independence is about parental actions that set up the child for successful independent learning and living. The concept is very closely linked with the parents' construction of their role as parent and dependent upon the parent-child relationship. A number of constructs and variables refer to the nature and quality of fostering independence, including parental support, parent-adolescent closeness and warmth, attachment to parents, parent-adolescent communication and separation from parents (Young et al., 2006).

Fostering independence begins when the child is young. Parents who perceive their role to be inclusive of fostering their child's independence incorporate it in their planning for the child's education and in shaping the environment. The parent provides the child with opportunities for independence that will result in success for the child. For example, the parent teaches the child a task and then provides the child with opportunities for the child to practice the

task successfully. For some parents, fostering independence is part of family life. It is natural and simply woven into the fabric of family life. It starts when the child is young and increases as the child grows. Jeff provided a simple example: “[The children are] included with everything that we do. We have a barbeque... they learn how to flip the grill, you know, with us. But it’s one of those things where they’re very interactive with everything we do you know.”

The process of fostering independence refers to all the actions and behaviours of the parent that lead to the child living independently. It involves many of the parent-involvement behaviours already noted in planning and shaping. Parents in the study referred to their involvement in the child’s younger years as directed and generated by them, the parents. Over time, as the child learns and gains skill, and becomes independent in a specific task or area, the parents noted that their involvement is less direct, less visible, more subtle and sensitive to their children’s needs. Parents perceived the process of fostering their children’s independence as a serious role and a very important piece of their involvement in the their children’s education. Jeff spoke for several parents: “I think what we tried to do is to give her an all-round education where she knows how to cook a little bit, she knows how to clean, she knows how to turn a wrench in the garage and hammer...”

The process of fostering independence involves a shift in the parent-child relationship. Over time the child takes a more active role in his or her learning and education. In contrast, the parent begins to step back; the role of parent is less direct and one that is less visible and subtle, although still very involved. Young et al. (2006) referred to the reciprocal nature of the parent-adolescent relationship as “joint action.” As the child becomes an adolescent, the person in the driver’s seat changes from the parent to the child. The parent takes on the role of a coach; offering, rather than providing assistance, advice and encouragement. The process of fostering

independence is not incidental but, rather, an integral part of the parent's overall plan for the child that begins early in the child's life and early in the involvement process with parent planning. As the child grows and develops, the role of the parent requires an increasing amount of energy and effort. In reference to her parent-involvement behaviour during her daughter's teen years, Kendra indicated, "There is a huge difference and required effort on the parent's part to continue to remain involved in their children's learning." In this study, four constructs emerged in defining the process of fostering independence: problem-solving and decision-making, setting goals, stepping back, and career development.

Problem-solving and decision-making. The construct of problem-solving and decision-making refers to parent-involvement behaviours that lead the child to successfully solve problems and make decisions independently. Parents in the study reported that to foster the child's problem-solving and decision-making during the child's early years they provided their children with structured choices; involved the child in family discussions about choices, problems and the making of decisions about family life; and provided a sounding board to their children by asking the child questions to provoke thinking.

For a few parents in the study, structured choices means structuring the child's choice within specific limitations. For example, Jack explained, "We give him lots of independence... [he] can decide where he wants to go but we'll say like you have to be home at such [a time]." To facilitate independence, the child's choice needs to be a real choice and needs to be structured to ensure success for the child. Connie referred to the parent-child relationship as she explained how structure and routines pay-off as the child grows older:

And we do give her a little bit of space now. We will let her go out overnight at a friend's house. We have a lot of trust that way. So I think from day one we've had our little

routines.

Structured choices, limitations, routines and guidelines shape and mould the child's problem-solving and decision-making skills so that the parent has a sense of trust that the child will make appropriate decisions should problems arise when the parent is not with the child. Thus, the parent is able to provide the child with greater independence because of the parent's early work to foster the child's independence.

Part of creating child independence is providing the child with necessary information and skills to solve problems and make decisions independently. For Roy, this means giving Sheryl the tools [a calendar] and information [week's tasks] she needs as well as helping her work through problems.

You know they can make decisions themselves... knowing that there are issues and they have a calendar to think about decisions. We communicate the week's and daily tasks that need to be accomplished. If it is not a routine task, we process together, critical factors that need to occur for success. We help her anticipate pitfalls or barriers and after the fact, review the success and celebrate it. We talk to Sheryl about her as a learner: what is her learning style, what does she experience and if she knows herself better, it'll help her make the right decisions when it comes down to problem solve.

Similarly, Andrea shared an example of providing Tina with the information she needed to make an informed decision: "My husband took her through, actually drove her to every school in the city. And they went and had a little tour themselves." Andrea and her husband helped Tina gather the necessary information so that she could make an informed decision about which school to attend.

Some parents discussed the use of questioning techniques to help their children work

through a problem. Margaret shared how she helped her daughter Karen problem-solve when her daughter thought about moving from home to university:

Like right now she is thinking ahead to when she goes to university; she's got a waterbed. She's saying, 'Well when I go to Quebec, how will I pack my bed.' I said, 'Well you know maybe you won't pack your bed, maybe you'll just buy a new bed.' 'No, no, I love my bed. I'm going to take this bed.' So I ask, 'How's it going to get there? Is your father going to drive you in his truck or you going to have to save up a bunch of money to have it moved there?'

Setting goals. The construct of setting goals is subsumed under the concept of fostering independence because parents referred to setting goals as a way of interacting with the child to help their children take greater responsibility for their learning. Goal setting is a socially constructed process that involves both the parent and child jointly. Goal setting includes helping the child work through a problem or a large task. Goal setting is the action plan piece of problem-solving and decision-making.

Connie articulated how she works with Christa in using goal setting to complete long-term assignments at school,

I was always teaching them that they had to organize their time. Step-by-step. You have so many things to do and so much time to do them. So we would sit down and if she had a project due on Friday and she knew about it Monday, we'd say 'Okay if you work on it a half hour a day each day, it is going to be done by Friday. If you work on it 3 hours tonight you are going to have it done before Friday.'

Jack referred to goal setting following report card time: "We generally spend a bit of time working out a plan for improvement whereby he can either continue to maintain grades and/or

continue to develop in his subjects.” Similarly, Carl noted,

Firstly, we made a study goal trying to make A for every subject. Secondly, when meeting difficult problems, we studied together until the problems were solved. The most important thing I did is that I helped my kid find a lot of good solutions of study in a new cultural atmosphere.

Linda hinted at the problem inherent within goal setting – setting goals too high or consistently beyond the child’s level of performance often creates a sense of inadequacy or never being “good enough.” Linda discussed how she uses goal setting and how she communicates why a certain goal is set:

One of the things that’s influenced the way I help Marie learn is to encourage a certain goal setting, but not really excessive. Something that she has told me many times was, ‘You know I think this is pretty great. Can you be happy for that?’ Of course, sometimes I’ll say, ‘But I think you can do better.’ I try to minimize that because I was told that a lot. And the time when I said, ‘That’s just not it with the math,’ it wasn’t screaming and yelling, it was just point of fact. It’s not that 50 is bad, it’s not that 90 is good, it’s that 60 is what you need to get your mark to a place to where if you fail an exam you’ve got wiggle room. So you have to find yourself wiggle room. So that’s why you get to a certain place, right? Not because one is bad or better, but because you’ll have more flexibility and more freedom.

Stepping back. In this study of involving parents of adolescents, most parents referred to the idea of stepping back. Given the nature of adolescence, that it is a time for striving for independence and self-discovery, the concept of stepping back is common to parents of adolescents. As the child enters adolescence, tension in the parent-child relationship is a common

occurrence. The parents in this study confidently referred to stepping back – confident that, through planning the child's education and shaping the child's environment, they, as parents had a level of trust and knowledge that their children would have positive experiences and encounters. Their stepping back related to the concept of the adolescent's "readiness." Kendra expressed the thoughts of many of the parents:

As teenagers age and mature we as parents must respect their need for autonomy. In this vein we must step back and let them share whatever is on their minds, without us probing. This does require just a simple 'Hi' upon their return home from a busy day at school. If and when they wish to discuss the day, letting them know you are available is top priority. I've always listened to her...in the younger grades you do make all the choices, it is just a given... but then in the higher grades... that's when you kind of know that you need to actually stand back a bit and this is for her to fall, how far will she fall and that she will be all right, she'll still get back up. It's not the easiest thing for a parent to see but you have to be there and you have to let them try stuff.

Referring to stepping back involvement, Ardith sees it as giving Mary a certain degree of freedom: "I participate in Mary's teenage world by providing constant contact and closeness while at the same time giving her a certain degree of freedom to grow and mature and experience life's rites of passage." Jeff explained the construct of stepping back by comparing early involvement behaviour to present involvement behaviour. Jeff also considered what might have happened had he not encouraged and planned for Elly's independence:

Before we'd set everything, all the activities, up for her to do and she would do them and we'd watch her and make sure she did them right, now all we do is give her ideas for well maybe you'd like to do this, and let her develop setting the stage and that. And even with

her learning, we show her what she should do and then I let her go, I mean if she doesn't want to do her homework, I can't make her. Eventually if she wants to move out on her own, if we're still you know cutting up her peas and carrots for her, it's just not going to work.

Seth perceived stepping back as conscious and intentional, but absent of any direct involvement behaviour: "We strive for autonomy and planning for the next steps, reminding him that he will have to live with the choices he made. There is no real direct involvement on my part in his learning." Similarly, Jack said,

It is important to establish a sense of give and take in supporting Calvin in his education and the role we expect him to take. Part of how we role model and live our family life is through discouraging a sense of entitlement. I often ask Calvin why he feels he is entitled to have or do something. The answers aren't always profound and are sometimes articulated in just one word, "Because." Just asking the question does invoke a thought process to take place, which I believe is fundamental in alleviating the thought we are entitled to everything.

Note that Jack's involvement, termed as "stepping back" is subtle and indirect but nevertheless causes his son to think about his [Calvin's] requests and actions.

Career development. The concept of career development, similar to 'stepping back,' is more applicable to parents of adolescents than to parents of younger children; however, parents did make reference to early involvement behaviours that helped their children prepare for a career. An important dimension of career development is the relationship adolescents have with their parents (Whiston & Keller, 2004). Helping their children gain pre-employment skills, explore careers, make decisions and commitments about careers is an area of parent involvement

in children's education on which several of the parents in the study commented. Young et al., (2001, 2003) described how career is socially constructed through the joint and goal-directed actions and projects of adolescents and parents. Most of the parents reported that they initiated the idea and/or encouraged their children to seek a volunteer position and/or a part-time job. Many of the parents in the study spoke about helping their children develop a resume, fill out job application forms, and prepare for job interviews. Ardith said,

I encouraged Mary to get a part-time job this summer. Encouraging Mary to participate in individual and team sports, to take a babysitting course and then become a regular babysitter for a family with a growing baby now a pre-schooler, taking the Leadership Level 1 and now this summer the Level P program through the YMCA is also very important to Mary's learning. All these activities encourage participation, commitment, patience, teamwork, problem-solving skills, etc.

Connie discussed her ongoing involvement behaviour associated with helping her daughter Christa gain necessary pre-employment skills and find a career area that matches her interests, "I am trying to prepare her now because as of grade 11 and 12 you need a portfolio in school and she needs to volunteer and she needs to get a job." Connie reported that in January of grade 10, she and her daughter "started looking through the paper for volunteer jobs." In February, she reported helping her daughter Christa complete the application form, resume, and cover letter for a volunteer job. She was pleasantly surprised to report in February that she noticed Christa waiting for the weekly newspaper to arrive. Similarly, Linda reported in her diary entries that she was helping her daughter, Marie, complete job applications and prepare for job interviews. Julie's son, Alan, already had a part-time job at the time of the interview. Julie, however, was in the process of connecting Alan with family friends who were successful in

career areas in which Alan had indicated interest. Similarly, Marina discussed how she was supporting her son's interest in developing an acting career by taking him to auditions he had arranged on his own. In her diary, Marina reported not only joining but taking a position on the executive of a local acting group to support her son's interest in acting and his desire to be an active member on the executive for the group.

Summary of fostering the child's independence. In this section of fostering independence the parent-involvement behaviour that increased child independence was presented. The four constructs in defining the process of fostering independence: problem-solving and decision-making, setting goals, stepping back, and career development, were presented and discussed. In the previous two processes of planning and shaping, the role of the parent is much more that of a director, whereas in fostering independence, the parent begins to step back and work together with the child, in more of a team-like fashion. At times, the parent takes on a coaching role.

Supporting the Child's Learning Experiences in the School

The process of supporting the child's learning refers primarily to the child's learning experiences in the school environment. This process is an area of parent involvement in children's education frequently described and reported on in the literature. Supporting the child's learning experiences at school includes all that parents do at home and school to help their children succeed at school. The process of supporting the child's learning experiences emerged early from the data and can be easily understood by parent-involvement behaviours in the home and parent-involvement behaviours at school. Although the involvement behaviours are associated with a specific environment, several of the parents' actions across the two environments work in concert with each other.

Supporting the child's school learning experiences: Parents at home. Participants named four areas of involvement that they brought to the home context and thought to be instrumental in supporting the child's learning experiences. These involvement behaviours include providing individual assistance to the child; providing information, resources and equipment; reading to the child; and monitoring the child's progress.

Every parent in the study referred to providing individual assistance to help his or her child. The assistance mainly focuses on helping the child with homework and assignments. Parents' reports of providing assistance, though varied, were described as consistently being provided on a regular basis. Audrey noted; "What we do is we kind of really work with her all the time. Like, 'What did you have today?' or 'What is the homework?' and sit down and look at the homework together." Parents cited a range of helping behaviours, such as providing the child a tutor to help with specific learning activities at school, helping the child with the Internet to complete research activities, proof-reading and editing written assignments, helping with the word processing and formatting of written assignments, helping the child remain focused to complete homework assignments, helping the child select the salient points of a chapter reading, reading and discussing a novel assigned to the child, listening to oral reports, helping the child study for a test, and teaching the child concepts and skills the child missed at school. Linda captured most parents' belief that their help contributed to their children's success at school: "I think that's a big help."

Providing information, resources and equipment so that the child can complete homework and assignments is an area of supporting the child's learning that was noted by several of the parents. Jack succinctly defined this concept of providing information, resources and equipment, "provide him with the tools necessary so he can have a good educational

experience.” This area of providing support is about ensuring that the child has the necessary tools to do the job of learning. It is specific to the child’s individual and unique needs that are ever changing. For Jeff it was important that he “purchase a calendar white board to help Elly organize herself and her schoolwork.” Jeff’s wife made Elly a purse that is small enough to “hang around her neck,” yet large enough to carry her planner and pen because Elly “has a problem with planning.” To help Tallis with a novel comparison study, Kendra noted that she, as a parent, “made a point of completing her part by phoning to find the DVD/VHS copy of the movie [Tallis] had to compare with the novel and picking it up on my way home from work.” It is interesting to note how Kendra constructs her role in her daughter’s education. Kendra views herself as a partner in her daughter’s learning team. Similarly, Margaret reported that she “rescued [Karen] by getting her a couple of library books while I was out grocery shopping. Flo referred to the timeliness of providing support:

I think we do sort of act on his requests quite quickly too. If he needs something for a project like his technology at the moment, we would... go out and get it or go together and get it and look and browse in Home Depot... But we act on it and we make sure that he gets his materials to work on.

Reading to their children is an area of supporting the child’s learning that many parents in the study emphasized. Linda represented many of the parents in her comment:

I read to her since she was in the womb. I really believe that, and it’s not just because of my profession, but even before that I really believe that a child who likes to read will do well in school because it’s so visually based and so word-based. If they enjoy that process, you know it’s going to be a lot easier.

Monitoring progress is an area that each of the parents referred to as one of their

involvement behaviours that supported their children's education. Many of the parents described this involvement behaviour in connection to communicating with their children through daily check-in times at dinner, driving to and from school, after school, or at bedtime. Jack explained:

One area that I have been working on with him is to ensure that he finishes assignments and turns in projects. I do that by asking him if he has projects he is working on, ascertain what the due date is, and make a mental note of when I have to check with him again.

Jack continued: "Calvin's performance at school is one that I closely monitor. I treat his report card as an important document." Likewise, Seth noted in his diary, "Discussion on upcoming report card. Questions around expected grades, possibility of meeting with some teachers. Peter returns home with some grades that we discuss." Other parents reported that they monitored their children's progress by checking in regularly with teachers and counsellors at school. Andrea said that she was "at school at least once a month. We had a standing appointment with the counsellor once a month." Many of the parents, such as Marina referred to establishing a working relationship with his or her child's teachers early in the school year so that monitoring progress became a natural, non-intrusive and regular activity: "Every year I meet the teachers in September." Jeff described that his involvement as a volunteer parent in the band program provides him a natural opportunity to "drop in to the school periodically to check with the teachers on how Elly is doing."

Supporting the child's school learning experiences: Parents at school. Parents in the study described their involvement in their children's school. Most of the parents used the past tense to discuss their involvement behaviours at the school site. Consistent with the literature, parent involvement at the school is greater when the child is in the elementary grades than when the child is in secondary school. As the child transitions to the secondary school, parent

involvement in children's education becomes less visible at the school site. Participants in the study referred to their involvement behaviour at the school site in four areas: attending school events, participating in school organizations, volunteering, and connecting with the teacher. Every participant in the study reported being involved in at least one of these four areas. Specifically, the majority of parents reported connecting with their children's teacher(s) and volunteering at school, some parents noted their involvement in the school's organizational structures, and only a few said that they attended school events.

The majority of parents described involvement behaviours that included connecting with his or her child's teacher(s). Most parents reported attending parent-teacher interviews. Connie said,

I go to the parent-teacher interviews. I make sure I talk to the teachers to make sure she is doing okay. If she is struggling in a class I will set up an appointment to see the teachers.

I've talked to all the teachers this year.

Margaret discussed how she connects with the teachers when Karen is absent from school: "I will contact her teachers to let them know she will be away from school for 2 or 3 days and ask them to give Karen work in advance." Most of the parents indicated that he or she were an active volunteer in their children's school. Volunteer activities included participation in the school's hot lunch program, coaching, driving and or supervising on field trips and band trips, listening to students read, helping out in the library, helping out with fundraising initiatives, and being the class parent.

Attending school events not necessarily specific to the child was mentioned by a few parents. This involves attending functions at the school such as pizza night, sporting events such practices, games and tournaments, drama concerts, art shows and awards nights. A similar

number of parents indicated past involvement in schools' organizational structures, including Parent Advisory Councils (PACs), School Planning Councils (SPCs), open forum meetings, budget meetings, etc. One parent indicated current involvement in the organizational structure at her son's school.

Summary of supporting the child's school learning experiences. In this section, actions of parents supporting the child's learning experiences in the school environment were presented and discussed. Although parent actions were grouped into two categories, parent involvement in the home and parent involvement at the school, very often parent-involvement behaviours across settings worked in concert together to support the child's learning and educational experiences in the school environment. Parents reported that as their children transitioned to high school, the parents' visible involvement at the school level decreased; however, connecting with the child's teacher(s) a parent-involvement behaviour, is a behaviour that most parents in this study practice.

Daily and Major Decision-making Involvement Behaviour

Parents' daily involvement behaviour is governed by their construction of their parental role, their relationship with their children, the overall plan for their children's education, and parent and child variables. Research on parents' involvement in children's schooling has suggested that parents often do behave in accordance with their beliefs about what they should do to help their children succeed in schools (Hoover-Dempsey & Jones, 1997). In this study, the parents' daily parent involvement and major decision-making involvement behaviours are integrally related and grounded in assumptions, beliefs and values that learning and education are important, that the child is a successful learner, and that their parental role in the child's education is active. Based on their beliefs, experiences, and observations, parents construct their

role as a parent including their involvement in their children's education. Founded in the parents' role construction is the parent-child relationship.

Parents in the study discussed the major decisions often made prior to the child's birth or during the child's early years – that set their involvement behaviour on a trajectory. Parents discussed various variables that contributed to the major decision that they made about their children's education, including experiences as a child observing their own parents, experiences with friends and relatives who are viewed with respect and admiration, and experiences based on their membership in parenting groups and information gathered through the media. Parents in the study made reference to the link between major decision and daily involvement behaviour, noting that daily involvement behaviour often resulted from major decision involvement behaviour. In this study, the parents' major decisions about their children's education are founded in the parents' construction of their role.

In the daily involvement, parents described their behaviour as responsive to their children's needs and daily occurrences at home, school, and in the community. Parents described their daily involvement as natural and "just common sense." In this study, the parents' daily involvement was not based on a recipe for success or a set of steps to follow, but, rather, a result of the major decisions they made about their children's education, often determined long before the child entered school and, in many cases, prior to the child's conception. Parents' daily involvement contributes significantly to the parent-child relationship.

The Model of Parent Involvement in Children's Education

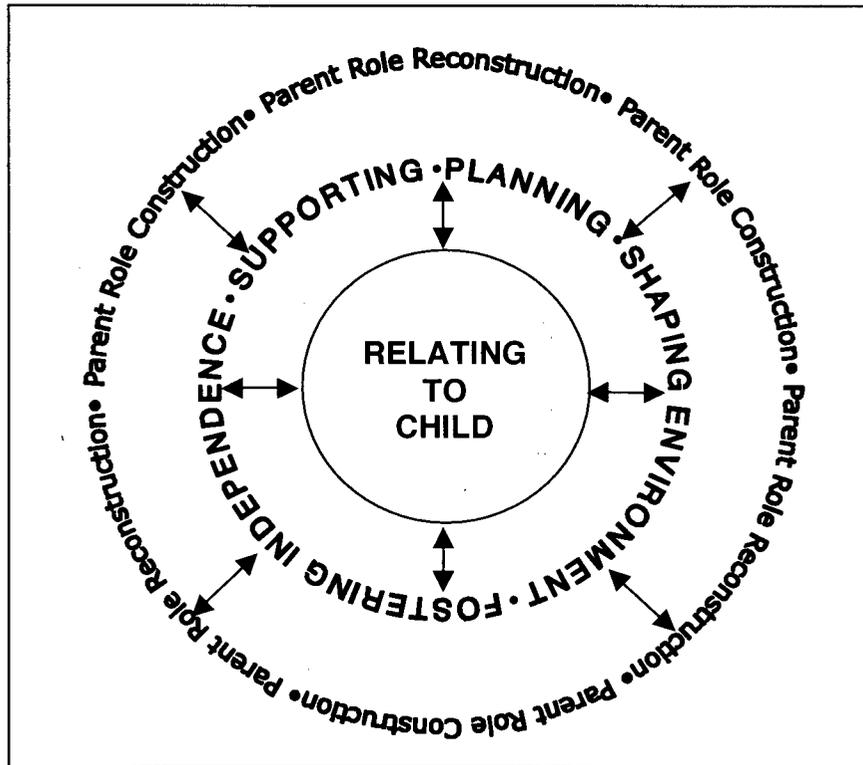
The emerging theoretical model proposes that parents perceive their involvement in their children's education as one that is responsive and strategic. Parent involvement in children's education as explained by the emerging theoretical model is continuous, anticipating and

responding to the changing needs of the child as the child grows and develops. Parent-involvement behaviour is strategic, characterized by purposeful planning and designing of positive child outcomes. The theoretical model is best understood as a dynamic, interactive parent-child relationship that is influenced by the parent's construction and reconstruction of the parent's involvement in the child's education. Parent involvement in children's education includes the parent's hopes and dreams for the child, continuous planning for the child's success and independence by shaping the child's environment and providing experiences for the child, and supporting the child's learning experience in school. Analysis resulted in four processes that relate to the core process, Relating to Child and describe how parents perceived their involvement in their children's education: (1) Planning the Child's Education, (2) Shaping the Child's Environment, (3) Fostering the Child's Independence, and (4) Supporting the Child's School Learning Experiences. Thirteen specific categories are subsumed within these four processes. At the core of these four processes is the category, Relating to Child. An influence explaining parents approach to their role in their children's education is the parents' construction and reconstruction of their roles in their children's education.

Figure 4.1 is a two-dimensional visual representation of the theoretical model, illustrating at the core of the emergent theoretical model and embedded in the parent-child relationship, the process of Relating to Child. The parent-involvement behaviours of planning, shaping, fostering and supporting flow from and to the core category. The theoretical model illustrates that the child's education is continuous, active, and dynamic depicting the parents' roles as anticipating and responding to the child and planning for positive child outcomes. The two-dimensional diagram simplifies the emergent theoretical model that is best understood as interactive and dynamic – the parent's actions, influenced by their role construction and reconstruction are

responsive to the child's growth and development across time.

Figure 4.1: Diagram of Parent Involvement in Children's Education



Summary of Findings

In this chapter the findings of the study, specifically the emerging theoretical model and accompanying processes and influence, were presented. The emerging theoretical model of parent involvement in children's education detailed the process, Relating to Child at its core with parent role construction and reconstruction explaining how parents approach their role in their children's education.

Four main processes of parent involvement in children's education surfaced as primary parent-involvement behaviours: Planning for the Child's Education, Shaping the Child's Environment, Fostering the Child's Independence and Supporting the Child's School Learning.

Parents described their involvement in their children's life, in which education is a major component, with passion, joy and pride. The parents in this study referred to their involvement as one of active involvement and personal responsibility, not an involvement or responsibility viewed as a burden, but, rather, as a choice. Indeed, participants described their involvement in their children's education as a way of living. It is just what they did.

The parents described themselves as the key directors in their children's education; the parents have an overall plan for their children as their children grow and develop, in which learning and education play a large role. Parents viewed their involvement actions as processes that are clearly directed by them, the parent. That is, the findings suggest that parent involvement in children's education that contributes to positive school achievement and successful outcomes for children is not "left to chance" but, rather, is thoughtful and purposeful, often planned prior to the child's birth and carefully considered as the child grows and develops. As the director in their children's education, parents in this study carefully orchestrated and planned activities and experiences, ensuring their children's independence and autonomy, health and well being, and successful school achievement. As the child moves into adolescence, the parents' role changes to a role in which the parent works jointly with the child to support the child's school experiences and fosters the child's independence.

The present chapter presented the components of the emergent theoretical model as well as the relationships between the processes and constructs defining the theoretical model. The following chapter, Chapter V, will review the findings of the study in terms of the research questions that guided this research. At the same time, related connections between the findings of this study and existing research in the field will be discussed.

Chapter V: Discussion

The goal of the current study was to generate a theoretical model that describes the involvement of parents in their children's education. Data analysis resulted in a model with the process, Relating to Child at the center or the hub, encircled by four interactive parent-involvement processes: Planning the Child's Education, Shaping the Child's Environment, Fostering the Child's Independence and Supporting the Child's School Learning. In the model, parent-involvement behaviour, including the parents' relationship with the child, is strongly influenced by the parents' constructions of their roles in their children's education. The model is best understood as a dynamic and interactive parent-child relationship over time that involves the parent's continuous planning for the child's education and independence by shaping environment and providing experiences, and supporting their child's learning experiences in school. It is the dynamic and interactive nature of the model that is most remarkable and critical to the understanding of parent involvement in children's education. Of equal importance is the dynamic nature of the parents. The construction and reconstruction of their role explains that parents are not passive recipients of information about their involvement in their children's education, but rather actively engaged in developing and implementing the role that they perceive to be instrumental in their children's education. The core category, Relating to Child, the four parent-involvement processes, and the parents' constructions and reconstructions of their roles are acting in concert, interacting with and influencing the other.

In this chapter, significant findings will be discussed in terms of the specific research questions that guided the project. Aspects of the model will be discussed in relation to the concerns expressed about existing models. Within the context of the research questions, findings will be presented. A discussion of the strengths and limitations of the present study and

implications for schools and future research conclude the chapter.

The Model

This study identified concerns with existing models of parent involvement in children's education. Concern was noted in the area of defining parent involvement, accounting for developmental differences, and specifying the role of parents. The theoretical model that emerged from the findings of this study addresses the concerns identified.

Although previous research has provided conceptual frameworks and models explaining the complex and dynamic construct of parent involvement in children's education, and identified the positive correlation between academic success and a strong parent-child relationship (Christenson et al., 1992; Zook & Repinski, 2000), the models have failed to clearly describe or explain the dynamic nature of parent involvement in children's education. A review of the literature indicates that a lack of a clear definition and understanding of parent involvement in children's education is contributing to poorly grounded parent-involvement programs. Furthermore, the traditional parent-involvement perspective hinders a "full and valid view of how parents and families are indeed involved in their children's lives. This [traditional] paradigm fails to validate many parent/family actions that are important to children's well being (Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006, p. 188). Indeed, finding that the parents' relationship with their children is at the heart of parent involvement in children's education is significant.

The present model contributes to the development of a definition of parent involvement in children's education that is grounded in parents' experiences. The model defines parent involvement in children's education as integrally connected to the parents' relationship with their children. How parents construct their role and relate to their children directly influences how parents are involved in their children's education and the parent-involvement behaviours that

they, as parents engage in. This theoretical model of parent involvement in children's education defines parent involvement as parents relating to their children by planning their children's education, shaping their children's environment, fostering their children's independence and supporting their children's school learning. As such parent involvement in children's education is active, dynamic, responsive and strategic. Active and dynamic in that parents relate to their children in a nature that is bidirectional and is inclusive of multiple interactions based on parents' active construction of their role in their children's education. Responsive and strategic in that parent-involvement behaviours result from purposeful planning that is responsive to the ever-changing needs of their children.

Second, the model addresses the developmental differences that accompany children's growth and development. As children grow and develop, parents respond to the children's changing needs and construct their roles to match the developmental stage of the children. That parents engage in this dynamic activity of constructing their roles demonstrates the effect that parents have on themselves. Four processes identified by the model define what parents do and are present at each stage of children's development. Each of the four processes of parent involvement in children's education is associated with each stage of children's development. Further explanation of the change that occurs in parent involvement across their children's development is included in the discussion of Research Question 2.

Third, the role of parents was not clear in previous models. Based on the ecological perspectives, previous models of parent involvement in children's education are inclusive of multiple systems demanding analyses at a number of levels. As such the roles, responsibilities and relationships of the key players contributing to student learning are not clear. Furthermore, in practice, teachers, parents and students demonstrate little understanding of each other's interests

in learning (Epstein & Sanders, 2000; Halsey, 2005). The model that emerged from this study focuses on the parent-child, a single level of analysis and describes the role of parents based on the parents' construction of the role of parents in their children's education. An important finding of this study is that parents identified that their perception of their involvement, although inclusive of school learning is more than school learning and refers to parents' involvement in their children's growth and development. Furthermore, the process of role construction and reconstruction that parents entered into, although indicative of dynamic change, serves to clarify the role of parents in their children's education as one that is ever-changing and responsive to their children's developmental needs. A discussion of Research Question 3 lends further understanding to the role of the parent by addressing what parents do on a daily basis as well as the major decision-making that parents make regarding their children's education.

Research Question #1: How do parents perceive and describe their involvement in their children's education?

The primary question guiding this research examined how parents perceive and describe their involvement in their children's education. As noted above in the discussion of the model, perhaps the most remarkable finding of this study is that the parents' relationship with their children is at the core of parent involvement in children's education. Or perhaps what is significant is the oversight in the extant literature regarding the parent-child relationship in the definition and understanding of parent involvement in children's education. Although previous models of parent involvement in children's education have acknowledged that relationships between the partners is important, highlighting the parents' relationship with their children as key in parent involvement in children's education has not been brought to the forefront of the research. This finding is especially significant given the various backgrounds of the parents who

described their involvement with their children's education by explaining their relationships with their children. These parents represented different levels of education and socio-economic status, urban and rural environments, various types of relationships (single, married) and a number of parent-child relationships (birth, adopted, step).

A second finding that makes a significant contribution to the parent-involvement literature is the process of parental planning behaviour, one of the four main involvement processes. Although Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) referred to the parental role construction as beginning long before the child is born, they did not directly link parental planning behaviour to parent involvement in children's education or demonstrate that parental planning behaviour is ongoing across the child's life. The process of planning as described by the study participants included planning for the child's education in the home as well as planning the child's education at school. That is, parents in the study reported that their children's education included more than school learning and that a major aspect of their parental role involved the teaching of knowledge, skills and attitudes not addressed at school. In the literature, the process of planning has not been identified as a process of parent involvement in children's education. However, there is some similarity to what previous research has referred to as parental expectations or aspirations. By far the most important effect that is consistent across studies is that of parents' educational aspirations for their children (Astone & McLanahan, 1991; Catsambis, 1998; Catsambis & Garland, 1997; Christenson et al., 1992; Keith et al., 1993; Milne, Meyers, Rosenthal & Ginsburg, 1986; Singh et al., 1995).

This study represents the first documentation of planning as a major aspect of parent-involvement behaviour. More than expectation or aspiration, planning implies action. Although research has documented the correlation between parental aspirations and student achievement,

and schools have acknowledged that parents want the best for their children, the impression that parents are actively involved in planning their children's education is not widely held.

Furthermore, the concepts that education is broader than school learning and that parents assume the responsibility for this broader education are not necessarily recognized or validated by schools.

There is a general belief by teachers that parents are not willing to become involved in their children's education. Souto-Manning and Swick (2006) noted that a key problem with the traditional paradigm of parent involvement in children's education is teacher beliefs about parents and families. Halsey (2005) found that differences in teachers' and parents' perceptions impeded parent involvement in children's education. For example, although schools had an open-door policy, parents did not perceive this as an open invitation for involvement and, as a result, teachers perceived parents as not willing to become involved. In the current study, the finding that parent planning is an integral part of parent involvement in children's education confronts schools with important information about parent-involvement behaviour. In order for schools to effectively involve parents, schools need to acknowledge that parents are already involved in their children's learning and education even before the child enters school. The fact that parents are involved in their children's learning and education even before the child is born tells schools about the nature and extent of parent-involvement behaviour. What would happen if schools consulted parents, asking them about their plans for their children's learning and education? What if schools asked parents what they, as parents, believed they were doing to support their children's learning at school? As schools re-craft their parent-involvement programs and initiatives, it is critical that the educators acknowledge and value the involvement of parents in children's learning and education that has occurred long before the children entered

school. Furthermore, schools need to build parent-involvement initiatives based on the fact that while the child is in school, parents continue to take an active role in their children's learning and education.

Research Question #2: How do parents view the change in their involvement in their children's education as the children progress from elementary to secondary school?

The second research question investigated parent involvement in children's education across time. Related to parent involvement in children's education across time, the most striking findings from the current study are twofold: (1) parents reported that their involvement is consistently high throughout the child's growth and development; and (2) the role of the parent changes as the child becomes an adolescent and the child demonstrates an increasing level of independence.

Research findings (Eccles & Harold, 1996; Dornbusch & Glasgow, 1996; Izzo et al., 1999; Walker & Hoover-Dempsey, 2001) reported that parent-involvement behaviours typically decline as students get older. However, parents in this study overwhelmingly reported high involvement in their children's education as their children progressed from elementary to secondary school. In fact, participants noted that as the child grows and develops, the role of the parent requires an increasing amount of energy and effort. On the other hand, schools – especially secondary schools – clearly do not perceive that parents of adolescents are highly involved in their adolescent's education. Therefore, this finding that parents maintain a high level of involvement through their children's years in school is significant for schools. This information challenges schools to gain familiarity and a greater understanding of the way that parents are involved with their children.

A second related finding, similar to the findings of Catsambis and Garland (1997), is that

parents reported a shift in their involvement behaviour. Additionally, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) noted parent involvement in children's education must change as the child grows and develops. In this study, parents reported that their involvement paralleled the development of the child and resulted in a change in role. Parents described the role they played with their young child as direct. Specifically, parents reported that when the child was in elementary school that they managed and directed the child's education. As the child became older and transitioned to high school, parents described their role as indirect and subtle – one in which the parent steps back but is still very present and available, much like that of a coach. The role of coach matches the adolescent's development and respects the adolescent's increasing desire and need for autonomy and independence.

Research Question #3: How do parents' daily involvement behaviour differ from, and relate to, major decision-making involvement behaviour?

The third research question examined parent-involvement behaviour from two perspectives: that of daily involvement and that of major decision-making involvement. The primary finding with respect to daily involvement and major decision-making involvement focused on parents' constructions and reconstructions of their roles as parents. In their work, Hoover-Dempsey and Jones (1997) found that parents' constructions of their roles in their children's educations are conceptualized as two relatively distinct behaviour components, one related to the child's daily education, the other to major decisions that emerge in the course of the child's schooling. Consistent with Hoover-Dempsey and Jones' finding, parents, in the present study, reported daily involvement behaviour as distinct from major decision-making behaviour. An unexpected finding of this study was found in the parents' frequent reference to the relationship between the two types of involvement behaviours. Often, major decision-making

behaviour was reported as contributing to and influencing the parent's daily involvement behaviour. Occasionally, daily behaviours were viewed as impacting and influencing major decision-making behaviour. For example, participants described how the daily practice of checking in and communicating constantly about schoolwork, grades, curriculum and expectations influenced decisions about post-secondary education. Conversely, participants reported long-term and major decision-making behaviour, such as the process of planning for the child's education, as forming the foundation upon which subsequent parent-involvement behaviour developed and evolved.

Research supports both daily and major decision-making behaviours; the combination of these behaviours is not as critical as the fact that both are present. For example Baker and Stevenson (1986), in their study of mothers' strategies for managing the child's transition to high school viewed the child's school career as more than daily involvement and suggested no one crucial point of parent influence affects student achievement, but, rather, that the influence of effective parents is cumulative and that parents must be effective managers of their children's education. Building on previous research, the finding that daily parent involvement influences and is influenced by major decision-making involvement behaviour provides an important contribution to the parent-involvement literature. It is important for schools to understand that daily parent-involvement behaviour is a result of decisions made before the child enters school and often before the child is born. Conversely, daily parent-involvement actions influence decisions that the parents make regarding their children's education in the future. Understanding the dynamic relationship between daily involvement behaviours and major decision-making involvement behaviours will help schools in designing parent-involvement interventions.

Implications for Schools

The proposed theoretical model has implications for schools, teachers and school psychologists. Given that this project has focused on parents' perspectives on involvement, implications for practice are concentrated on parents and on schools' interaction with parents. However, it is important to acknowledge that the parents' perspective must be considered in the broader context of the school and community and must be viewed as a major aspect of the full parent-involvement picture. How parents relate to their children is key in understanding parent involvement in children's education. Efforts to involve parents should be grounded in the knowledge that parents hold strong and deep beliefs about their role in their children's education. More than ever before, parents strongly believe that they are their children's first and foremost teacher. Efforts to increase parent involvement in children's education and the effectiveness of parent involvement in children's education must recognize the role parents have constructed and are continuing to construct about their involvement in their children's education. The findings of this study challenge schools to embark on a re-envisioning process to review parent-involvement practices that have been built on the child-centered approach of schools, and to re-craft parent-involvement programs to reflect a family-centered approach that acknowledges and validates the powerful ongoing experiences between parents and children.

It is critical for educators to acknowledge the involvement behaviours in which parents are currently engaging, and to seek out what parents believe they need in order to be more effectively involved in their children's education. For example, parents in this study referred to wanting information on child development, what to expect from their children at current age, course information, graduation requirements, post-secondary information, student job opportunities, etc. It is likely that parents' needs with respect to their involvement vary from

community to community, school to school, or even parent to parent. It is also likely that commonalities across parents, schools and communities will be identified; however, parent involvement in children's education is not necessarily a template that can be followed at each school or in each community. What is most important is that parents be acknowledged as being involved in their children's education and be consulted about their past involvement and their plans for their children's education. Parent involvement in children's education needs to be viewed as responsive and strategic. The challenge for educators and schools is to identify parents' unique needs and how to work with parents in responding to their children's changing needs and planning their involvement effectively and strategically.

While parents are being encouraged and welcomed to participate in school planning and decision-making activities, it is their direct involvement in their own child's learning and education that is effective and results in positive student achievement. The change in viewing parents as the child's primary teacher may require a change in in-service as well as pre-service training programs. Traditionally, teachers have directed and managed student learning. Recognizing that learning and education that take place outside the school as well as in the school is a major shift in thinking that may well increase student learning. In-service training workshops that include direct contact between parents and teachers to design student education programs may be beneficial. Furthermore, pre-service training programs that acknowledge and explore the involvement of parents in children's education may increase the effectiveness of new teachers entering the school system. Schools that provide increased time for teachers, parents and students to meet to discuss student learning, and schools that increase parent-desired information to parents may well realize increased parent involvement in children's education and increase student achievement. Conversely, initiatives to increase parent involvement in children's

education that do not focus on the parents' perspective and do not acknowledge that parents are involved in their children's education are likely to achieve little success.

Strengths and Limitations

This study is significant in that it provides insight into parents' perceptions of their roles in their children's education. Several aspects of the study give the study strength; however, the study is limited in a number of ways. In the following discussion, a number of considerations are presented as strengthening and limiting the study at the same time, including the voice of the parent, the identity of the participants, and the trustworthiness of the research.

Voice of the parent. This study focuses on the parents' perspectives of parent involvement in children's education. This is a strength and a limitation. The interview format giving parents a voice is a primary strength of this study. Valuable insights from parents about their involvement in their children's education were gathered through the personal interviews, telephone conversations and email messaging. There are few studies addressing the parent's perspective. This study brings to the forefront of parent-involvement research the experiences of parents actively involved in their children's education and generates a theoretical model from which to gain a comprehensive understanding of parent involvement in children's education. However, the present study focused on only one facet of parent involvement in children's education: the parent's perspective. The responsibility for children's education is shared; parents are the primary caregivers in children's lives. A major limitation of this study is that only the parents' perspective is presented. Nevertheless, the voice of the parent is a needed addition to the parent-involvement research field and is a powerful strength of this study.

Identity of the participants. The participants in the study strengthen and limit the project. The participants self-selected; that is, participants responded to an advertisement poster

contacting the researcher requesting to participate. Once prospective participants had contacted the researcher, a set of screening questions was used to purposively sample participants. However, initial response to the advertisement poster was a result of individual initiation on the part of the participant. Research has shown that participants who volunteer for research studies have a specific set of characteristics and as such the participants in this study may be more representative of those individuals who respond to invitations for research participation. The participants are few in number and from a limited geographical area, the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. However, the participants in this study have children attending five different schools in various locations and of various sizes, and are likely a good representation of different-sized schools. This study is based on the experiences of 15 parents and as such is limited by the experiences of these 15 parents. Strength of the study is found in the wide representation of a number and variety of relationships, including mother-daughter, mother-son, father-daughter and father-son. Furthermore, parents of birth children, adopted children and stepchildren, as well as both two-parent and single-parent families volunteered to participate in the study. Only parents of successfully achieving students were included in this study. In this way, the study did not examine the experiences of parents of students who were not successful in school. It is possible that some involvement behaviour of parents of successfully achieving students may not be unique to parents of high-achieving students and may indeed be observed in parents of students struggling in school. Despite this limitation, that the participants represent a wide variety of families living in rural and urban environments adds strength to the study.

Trustworthiness of research. Trustworthiness refers to methodological rigour. As in all original research, it is critical that the outcomes of the research can contribute to the development of new knowledge in the field. In order to achieve this step, the findings must be a result of

“having practiced good science” (Sandelowski, 1993, p. 2). Trustworthiness is about representing the experiences of the participants fairly. In the present study, the research maintained a systematic and detailed recording that provided an audit trail documenting the use of method throughout the research, the development of theory, and the researcher’s personal biases, thoughts and feelings that may influence the study. According to Morse and Field (1995) there are four issues associated with the trustworthiness of research: truth value (credibility), applicability (transferability), consistency and neutrality (confirmability).

Truth value or credibility is related to internal validity and is subject-oriented and not defined in advance by the research (Morse & Field, 1995). Given that the current study grew from the researcher’s previous research, the current study had the potential to be biased by the researcher’s previous findings. Continual checking with colleagues regarding codes, categories and the development of concepts assisted the researcher in grounding the findings in the participants’ experiences. Credibility is grounded in the researcher’s skill in presenting the perspectives of the participants. That each of the participants (the primary data source) reported back to the researcher that the summary of his or her description of involvement experiences was accurate lends the current study credibility.

The transferability or applicability of findings refers to whether the findings can be applied in other contexts or settings or with other groups (Morse & Field, 1995). Although participants in a similar study may describe different involvement experiences than those described by the participants of this study, it is likely that their experiences would result in many similar constructs. The emphasis on each of the specific processes may vary slightly with the age of the child and may vary across cultures. However, given the wide representation of parent-child relationships and the number of participants with other children, the applicability of these

findings to other contexts or settings, or with other groups, is strong.

Consistency places emphasis on whether the findings would be consistent if the inquiry were replicated with the same subjects or in a similar context. Qualitative research emphasizes the uniqueness of the human situation so that variation in experience rather than identical repetition is to be expected (Morse & Field, 1995). However, given that the researcher conducted all of the interviews, consistency of interview style achieved across informants is strong. Conversely, researcher bias is increased because the researcher is working in isolation and may have missed following up on points presented by the participants. A team of researchers might have provided a broader perspective on the participants' responses, but the consistency afforded by a single researcher is an asset to the current study.

Trustworthiness or confirmability refers to freedom from bias in the research procedure and results. Trustworthiness is increased by prolonged contact with the informants or by using long periods of observations (Morse & Field, 1995). The trustworthiness of the current study is achieved through multiple sources of data: interviews, diary entries, phone conversations and email transmissions. The study is limited in that not all participants responded in all areas; the multiple sources of data were primarily the researcher's means of gathering data in the most effective way from each participant. The study's strength, however, is found in the 4-month length of time the researcher communicated with the participants. Each participant was involved in the initial interview and at least one of the other data sources (diary entries, phone calls, email transmissions), and many were involved in two or more data sources.

Implications for Future Research

Findings from this project suggest a number of avenues for future research. First, researchers may consider using the interview method to explore the involvement experience of

parents of students in the elementary grades, as well as parents of preschool children. One of the primary findings of this study is that parent involvement in children's education as perceived by the parents began long before the child entered school. It would be important to determine if parents of young children perceive their interactions and behaviours with their young children as "involvement" in their children's education.

Second, a primary outcome of this study is the difference in the perspective of the parents regarding their involvement from that of previous research. The parents in this study presented a strong voice that their involvement involves not only their children's school learning, but also their children's education. That is, parents view school learning as only one aspect of their children's education. For them, education is broader than school learning. The parents in this study view themselves as involved in their children's education, not simply the learning that takes place in school. Future research aimed at examining the difference between parent involvement in children's education with parent involvement in children's school learning may well serve to bring clarity to some of the confusion associated with the definition and understanding of parent involvement in children's education.

The results of this study are especially important in the current era of accountability in public education. How schools involve parents is presently being scrutinized. If schools are to involve parents and measure their efforts to do so, it is imperative that their actions are based on theory that thoroughly explains the involvement of parents in their children's education. Future research may involve the examination of strategies to increase parent involvement in children's education developed from participants' identification of involvement behaviours. For example, a strategy targeted at helping parents shape the home environment or foster child independence may be evaluated for its effectiveness.

A fourth area of research may involve conducting similar interview methods to identify how students and teachers perceive parent involvement in children's education. Such information may be extremely valuable in identifying the differences in perceptions of those involved. Recognition of difference provides the foundation for studies that explore bridging gaps between parent and student, and parent and teacher.

Summary

The present study represents an attempt to develop a theoretical model explaining the involvement of parents in their children's education as perceived by parents themselves. Parents of successfully achieving students were selected to participate in the study to ensure that involvement practices described by the participants are more likely to be associated with academic success. The emergent theoretical model proposes that the parent-child relationship is at the centre of effective parent involvement in children's education. The parents' constructions and continuous reconstructions of their roles as parents have been identified as a primary influence on the parent-child relationship as well as on the involvement behaviours associated with parents of successfully achieving students. As perceived by the participants of the study, involvement behaviour has been described as an active and dynamic process rather than a static construct. Furthermore, in describing their involvement in their children's education, the parents in this study described their relationship with their children. The participants in this study explained that parent-involvement behaviours develop from their relationships with their children. How parents relate to their children is at the core of parent involvement in children's education.

Parent-involvement behaviours emerged in four processes: planning for the child's education, shaping the child's environment, fostering child independence and supporting the

child's learning experiences in the school. Each of the processes is described as occurring simultaneously from well before the child enters school and in some instances prior to the child's birth. The processes are described as occurring continuously, sensitive to the child's growth and development. Parent involvement in children's education is described not as a series of actions in a "recipe" fashion, but, rather, is responsive and strategic. Parent-involvement behaviour is responsive in that it anticipates and responds to the child's changing needs as the child grows and develops; it is strategic in that parent-involvement behaviour involves purposeful planning and designing for positive child outcomes. Parent involvement in children's education is developmental and changes over time, especially noted as the child enters adolescence. Parent involvement in children's education includes more than involvement in the child's school learning. Parent involvement in children's education includes all that parents do to help their children learn and gain independence.

This research expands previous work in the area of parent involvement in children's education. It provides a research-based framework, grounded in experiences of parents, that describes parents' involvement in their children's education. The most significant finding, that the parent-child relationship emerged as the core of parents' involvement behaviour, has important implications for schools and educators. This finding is noteworthy and serves to explain and understand the actions of parents with respect to their children's education as their children move through school toward graduation. It provides the opportunity for the field to develop a common definition of parent involvement in children's education from which to develop parent-involvement practices.

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Appendix C

Intake Screening Form

Parents' Perspectives: The Role of Parents in the Education of their Children

Intake-Screening Form

Participant #:	
Date:	
Name:	
Phone Number:	
Best time to call:	
Street Address:	
Mailing Address:	
Name of Child:	
Relationship to Child:	
Family Living in the Home:	
Other Relevant Info:	
Name of School:	
# of years in this school	
Special Needs	Yes? No?
Achievement in school	

4. At the end of four months, you will be asked to meet with the interviewer to discuss your involvement in your child's education. During the final meeting, you will have a chance to review the summary of our earlier interview and phone calls.
5. Your taking part is voluntary and will not affect any services that your family or child receives. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and you have the right to not answer any of the questions.
6. This research will be used in part for a thesis.
7. Your taking part in this study is confidential; only the investigators of the study will see your responses. All documents will be identified only by code number and kept in a locked filing cabinet. No one will be identified by name in any reports of the completed study.
8. You will receive general information about the results of this study when the study is done.
9. By taking part in this project, you may help to improve educational services for children and their families.
10. If at any time you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research participant, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at the University of British Columbia at (604) 822-8598.

If you have any questions or concerns about the project you may contact either of the researchers at the numbers above.

Laurie Ford, Ph.D.
Principal Investigator

Debbie Amaral, M.A.
Co-Investigator

Parents' Perspectives: The Role of Parents in the Education of their Children

Parent Consent Form

Please check one of the following:

_____ Yes, I agree to take part in this part of the project.

_____ No, I do not wish to take part in this part of the project.

Participant's signature (please sign):

Participant's name (please print your name):

Date:

Your signature indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form (Pages 1-3) for your own records.

Participant's signature (please sign):

Participant's name (please print your name):

Date:

Appendix E

Initial Interview Schedule

Parents' Perspectives: The Role of Parents in the Education of their Children

Initial Interview Schedule

1. Tell me about your child. How does she or he learn? What she or he likes and dislikes about school?
2. How have teachers in school helped and supported your child in school?
3. How has your child's friends helped him/her learn?
4. Have others been involved in your child's learning? (piano teacher, sports coach, grandparent, etc) If so, who? How have they supported your child's learning?
5. How do you support your son or daughter's learning?
6. How did you help your son or daughter when they were in elementary school? pre-school?
7. What did you do when your child was a baby that might have influenced their learning?
8. How has your involvement in your child's learning changed over the years?
9. How might you continue to stay involved in your child's learning as he or she prepares to graduate and leave home?
10. What affects and influences how you help your child's learning?
11. What day-to-day activities do you do that affect and influence your child's learning?
12. What major decisions have you made that affect and influence your child's learning?

Parents' Perspectives: The Role of Parents in the Education of their Children

Final Interview Schedule

1. As you reflect on your involvement in your child's education and the written summary of your initial interview and diary entries
 - a. what two or three things that you do and or have done are most significant in your child's learning?
 - b. what one or two things that you do and or have done on a daily basis are most significant in your child's learning?
2. Are there any statements, comments, or information previously offered that you would like to clarify or elaborate upon?

Appendix H

Samples of Field Notes

Interview #4

Interviewee – Mother (daughter)

Two parent family. Only child. Adopted at 6 weeks

I interviewed this participant in the evening after her workday. This participant is a social worker. The participant and her husband have moved their place of residence so that their daughter could attend the high school of her choice. This means that the family lives in two-one bedroom apartments. Her daughter is an average student in school. Her daughter's passion is dance. The daughter selected the high school based on the dance program of the school. She chose to attend a different school other than her friends so she could be a part of the dance program but it did not work out, so mid year she transferred to a high school where her friends attend. The participant presents as a loving caring parent who is very involved in her daughter's learning and education. She connects daily with her daughter regarding her homework, drives her to and from school, and pays for a tutor to work with her daughter. She has bonded with her daughter from the first day they met. They do things together as a family such as movie evenings and dinner together every night.

Initial impression of the parent's perception of their primary involvement: be there for her daughter; daily check in about what happened in school

Interview # 5

Interviewee – Mother (daughter)

Single mom. Lives with daughter

I interviewed this parent in her home after the daughter's violin practice. The participant was very thoughtful in her responses. There were long periods of silence but her choices of words were carefully chosen, precise, and painted a clear picture of her involvement. She described her involvement in her daughter's learning as "curious" about her daughter's learning. She described her daughter as an average learner. She reported that her daughter could achieve higher marks but her present achievement is okay because she is doing a lot of extra learning activities to support her school learning.

Initial impression of the parent's perception of their primary involvement: model learning, value learning, assisting with access to information

Interview # 6

Interviewee – Father (son)

Two parent family. 4 children. Youngest.

I interviewed this parent in his home in the late afternoon. His son had arrived home from school but as I arrived, he was on his way out the door. The mother was not home from work. The

father has been retired from the RCMP for 10 years, since the son was in grade 1. The son in grade 10 is the youngest. Three other sons have graduated and left home. The 3rd youngest son was arriving home for a visit so the father was baking bread. He described his son as the lawyer in the family. He picks things apart and challenges the issue. The son is not as academically or athletically talented as the other 3 children. His teachers report that he socializes too much. The participant reported that his marks are in the 85% range. He explained how he isn't too involved in the at school part of his son's learning but that his focus is on creating a stable environment at home that his son views as a safe haven. He wants his kids to enjoy coming home and being home. He enjoys cooking and prepares the meals. He is conscious of time and makes sure his son starts for bed about 10 and is in bed by 10:30. They made a rule when the first child was young – no Nintendo and they have stuck by it. He attends sports events and special events at school and when his son was in elementary school, he attended parent-teacher conferences. He spends time with his son but made it clear to me that he is not his son's friend. He gives him independence but not freedom.

Initial impression of the parent's perception of their primary involvement: create an environment of a safe haven in the home so that his son feels good about himself and is ready to learn

Interview # 9

Interviewee - Mother (daughter)

Single parent family; only child.

I interviewed this participant in a coffee shop. This participant had a spring in her step and spunk. She didn't say but I'd expect her to be associated with the arts, perhaps a writer. She spoke as if she was in a role. She often spoke for the characters she was describing and then added her sarcastic editorial comments. She stated that she was involved at the school level as the PAC chair. She said she rode the bus to and from school each day with her child until recently. She is totally devoted to her daughter. It sounds like she is connected to her parents and older and younger siblings (one of each) but is not necessarily close. She spoke proudly of the fact that her daughter was going to be the first grandchild to graduate. She did not say if she and her siblings graduated but I suspect that school and learning was not necessarily important in her family. She has and is making education important in her daughter's life although she stated that developing holistically was more important to her than simply academic development. She reported that her daughter is a natural athlete and is well known by all staff and students at the large high school because of her success in sports. At the same time, she noted that the school is noted for their academic programs not their sports programs.

Initial impression of the parent's perception of their primary involvement: Time

Appendix I

Samples of Memos

Time together versus Experience & Activities

Participants seem to differentiate these two by the level of formality, organization, and planning. Experience and activities are more formal, organized and planned whereas time together isn't necessarily (but can be) formalized, organized, or planned. A main difference is that the parent may not be actively involved in the experience and activity and some times may not be present for the activity or experience. The parent has planned or organized the activity/experience, provided transportation to and from, paid for the activity. For example, a camp or soccer game watched by the parent is coded an Experience/Activity whereas cooking with child or going to the movies or going camping with child is Time Together. The time together is time when the parent and child are together. Taking a trip is an experience/activity but there may be time during the trip the parent-child spend time together. It also depends on the purpose behind the activity. Some parents plan an activity to provide the child with an experience; at other times they are spending time with their child to develop their relationship with their child. In my coding I wanted to separate this. The providing of experiences and activities would suggest that the parent is one step removed from the experience/activity but are responsible for its happening, whereas time together, the parent is an important part/piece and must be present and it is more about building the parent-child relationship but it is more of an activity whereas relationship which is under emotional caring is all that parents do to build their relationship with their child, one of which is through spending time together.

What Is Not There

When I look at what is not there --- I see that parent involvement isn't a "job". Parent involvement is not a "have to", it is not a "chore", it is not a "burden"... parents involved in their child's education do refer to their involvement with a large sense of responsibility however the parents in this study speak about their involvement with joy and pride. Many of the parents in the study speak of the choices that they made. They made a conscious choice to "stay home", to change careers, or to move to a location that they believed to be a better environment for their child or to be closer to the school that they believed to be a better school for their child.

What is not in the diagram is a "recipe". Parents do not report that if you do this; then the child will do well in school. The parents in this study were not following an established process or implementing a strategy known to result in higher student achievement. Parent involvement as described by the parents in this study is not about doing specific actions or behaviours so that the child will successfully achieve in school. Parent involvement in their child's education for the parents in this study is their way of life. Their involvement is part of their belief system about families, children, and living. Education and the parent's involvement in their child's learning is a major part of their belief system.

What is not in the diagram is "control" or manipulation. Parents are not controlling their child but rather they carefully plan or control the experiences and opportunities their child engages in.

What is not in the diagram is a sense of isolation. Many of the parents in this study do not view themselves as involved in their child's learning as on their own – the sense of partnership with

the school and the community does not come out clearly or strongly, yet I do not get from the parents that they feel they are left on their own although many of them are critical about the lack of practical content and skills taught in school.

The parents in this study demonstrate a positive coping style that they model to their child and often involve their child in. Parents talked about how they are open and upfront with their children. They include their children in problem solving and decision-making.

The parents in this study see themselves and their children as a family unit, engaging in family time and activities frequently and regularly.

The parents' interactions with their child and their involvement in their child's education is so related to the parent's past and their anticipation of their child's future.

Planning

The process of Planning has 3 categories – planning for child's success, lifestyle, financial planning. As I start to work with this process – those 3 categories do not capture the planning that parents do... what the parents are saying is that the planning that takes place is around two areas: home and school. Around the "home" area parents plan where to live, how to care for the child, whether or not they work in or out of the home etc. Around school they are planning that their child is going to be successful, that their child is going to go to post-secondary school and some even are planning which institution. Some have set up financial arrangements so that when the child graduates from secondary school there will be adequate funds to support the child in post-secondary.

Shaping

In the process of Shaping there are 3 categories – where to live, creating a home where child feels safe, cared for, confident and accepted, and modelling. I have changed the categories. Establish routines and organization from the process Creating Child's Independence better describes parent behaviour in the Shaping process. Although parent actions described in the category of routine and organization helps the child gain independence establishing routines is more about the environment. When parents establish routines around bedtime, eating, homework what they are doing is shaping the environment.

Fostering Independence

To the process of fostering child's independence process I added involving child in daily life, stepping back and pre-employment skills. When I reviewed what participants said about this area I found that what they did was developmental. During the child's early years the parents begin to create independence in their child by giving them structured choices. They involve the child in daily life – take them to activities and events as a family, include the child in discussion about family choices and decisions and then as the child reaches adolescence the choices become wider and the parent tends to step back but to step back in confidence. Part of the creating child independence is providing the child with information that they need to know so that they can make choices and they can behave independently. This was most evident in that most of parent spoke about helping their child develop a resume, fill out job application forms, and prepare for job interviews.

Modelling, Communicating, and Messages

The parent is through their words and actions demonstrating to their child what they expect of them – the child. Although modelling occurs in the environment, like communication and spending time together, modelling is more of a way of relating to the child than it is a behaviour that parents do to shape the child's environment. Is parents messages about education and learning part of “modelling” or part of “communication” or is it a category of it's own? Parents model and communicate their message to their children. modelling implies actions although it includes words. The parent's messages about learning and education can be very subtle at times and may not always include modelling or communicating. In this study messaging appears to be the subtle actions of a parent. One parent said, “I tend to repeat in ever different subtle way my moral and ethical standard which I expect from my two children.” Another parent stated, “you know the whole learning card, it is just part of our fabric in our house.” Another parent stated, “The idea behind the discussions is to impact his attitude toward learning more than to correct any difficulties he might have with content.” Another parent expressed it this way, “Our ‘sermons’ may evolve but the message will be the same ... and will continue to set high expectations.” One parent simply said, “We have the expectation for success, and work towards it.” The process of messages implies that the content of the message (education is valuable, learning is important) remains constant over time; however the process or the method of delivering the message may change from time to time and/or as the child grows and develops. Originally I had placed this process in the category of Time→Home→Communication. Now messages fits under the process of “Relating to Child” along with the categories of modelling, spending time together, and communicating. Communicating has subsumed the smaller categories of “daily check-in” and “discussions.” I made this move when I started to think of the categories more as processes. When my thinking changed to a process rather than simply a category or a grouping. The grouping of “encouraging and motivating” was divided. Some of the encouraging and motivating was associated with getting a job and creating independence within the child. Those descriptors moved to the process of Fostering Child Independence. The other items in encouraging and motivating fit in with messaging. The parents encouraged their child to achieve, to challenge him/herself, to do well. Thus, some of the encouraging and motivating items were another way parents communicated their message about education and learning to their children.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

TIME

ENVIRONMENT

School & Community

Home

Learning

Caring

1. Attend school – child specific
2. Attend school – general
3. Participate in school events
4. Advocate

Hands On

1. Assistance
2. Experiences & Activities
3. Info. Res. & Equipment
4. Child's Interest
5. Teach
6. Read to child

Communication

1. Daily Check-in
2. Discussions
3. Message
4. Encourage & Motivate
5. Problem solving & Decision

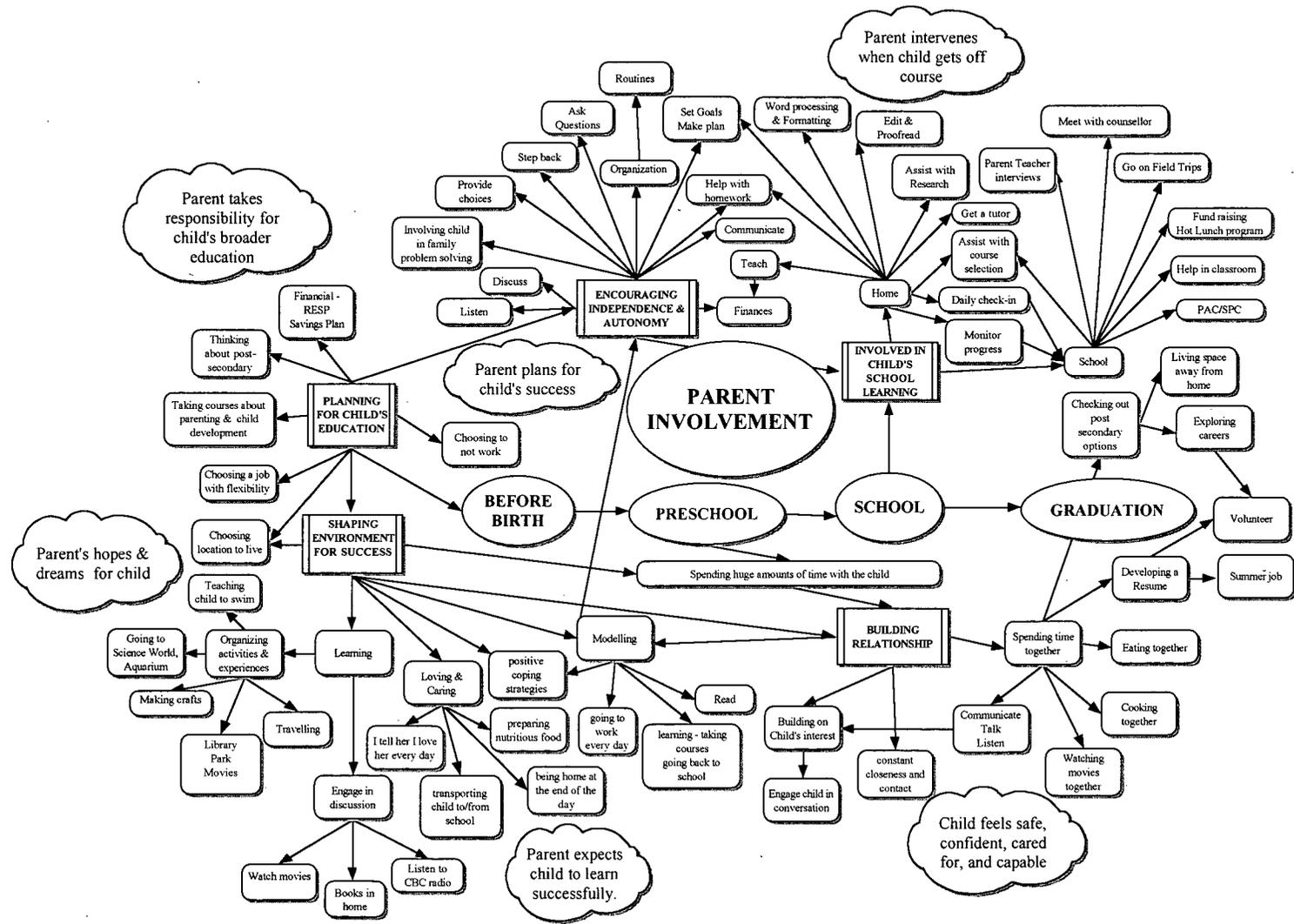
1. Routines
2. Model
3. Expectation – Values & Beliefs
4. Interest & Knowledge
5. Available
6. Time Together

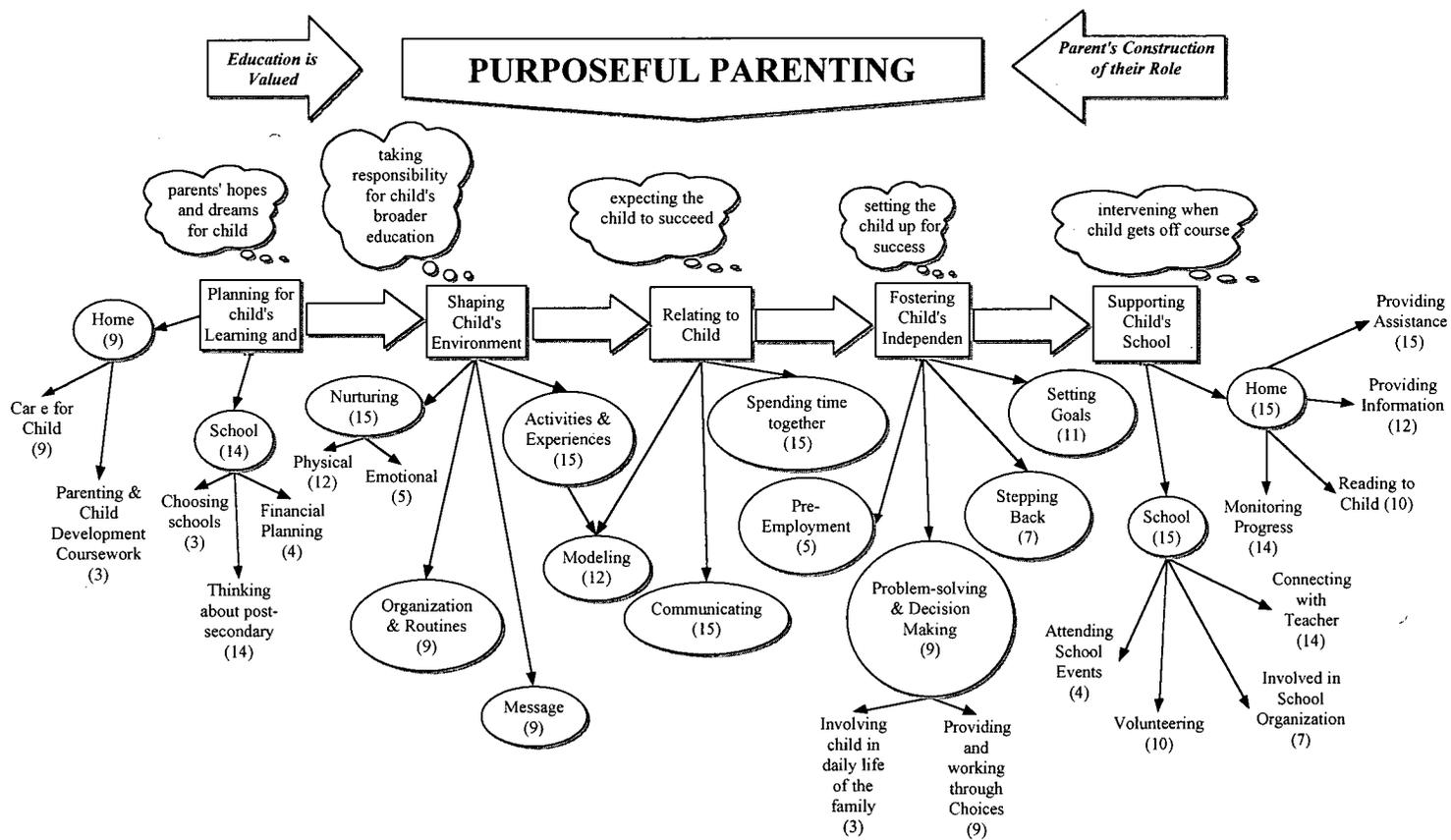
Physical Care

1. Food
2. Transportation
3. Clothing
4. Rest/Sleep
5. Shelter

Emotional Care

1. Feeling safe, cared for, confident & accepted.
2. Relationship





Categories Grouped by Processes

Change in Position of Categories

