Chapter 5

Discussion, Conclusions, Recommendations

This chapter summarizes the results from the research as well as presents the conclusions drawn and comparisons made with previous research. This chapter ends with recommendations and the significance of the research to the body of knowledge established by previous studies.

5.1 Discussion of Survey Results

A survey was administered to determine the demographics of students who participated in the research. The survey indicated the majority of the students stated they lived with both parents. In actuality, this terminology may have meant biological parents or one biological and a stepparent. Only one student specifically stated that she lived with her dad and stepmother.

Ninety-five percent of the students stated that they spent 5 hours or less on homework each week, but they also stated that they made above average grades. Most of the students said they participated in extracurricular activities, spending 3 or fewer hours each week involved in the extracurricular activity. The majority of the students said their parents had rules about bedtimes and how late they stayed out with their friends. An interesting note is that 45% said they asked their parents for help with homework, while 65% stated that they talked daily with their parents about things that happened at school.

5.2 Discussion of Interview Results

Five students were chosen for the interview portion of the study. The researcher attempted to choose students from varied backgrounds, but all of the students stated they were from middle socioeconomic families. Their ethnicity did vary and included African American, Caucasian, Hispanic, and African American and Caucasian combined heritage. No Native American students participated in the study, although they make up 2% of the population of the school system (Cumberland County Schools, 2012). The students varied in

ability and background, ranging in academic ability from participation in the exceptional children's program to academically gifted. Billy and Monica were involved in ROTC, Marvin and Billy were also involved in sports, while Marissa and Jasmine stated no involvement in extracurricular activities.

One question the researcher had was whether parental involvement declined as the students progressed through school into high school. The students gave the impression that their parents' involvement, or lack of involvement, had not changed during their high school years. They felt that having their parents involved in their education was important, but ultimately their success in academics rested with them. When asked how they would define academic success, all responded with a similar answer of making good grades or putting forth the effort to improve their grades even if they did not make straight As, doing what is right, and setting goals.

5.3 Conclusions

Catsambis (2002) and Lloyd-Smith (2008) stated that parental involvement tended to lessen in the high school years. The students interviewed in this study indicated that their parents' involvement in their schooling had remained consistent throughout their school years. Lloyd-Smith did theorize that parents may become less involved in their children's education during the high school years because students at this age are striving for greater autonomy. The researcher found that participants in the current study placed emphasis on self-responsibility for academic success, which agreed with the autonomy theme found by Lloyd-Smith (2008) and Whitfield (2006).

Lowman and Elliott (2010) and Hayes (2011) found little to no effect of socioeconomic and ethnicity factors on student achievement. The participants in the current study all stated they had above average grades. The students were from varied ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds, based on their interview

and survey answers. This indicates that these factors had no or little effect on the students' perceived academic success, so the findings were in agreement with Lowman and Elliott, as well as Hayes.

Patall et al. (2008) and Tan and Goldberg (2008) found no increase or a decrease when parents took an active role in their children's homework. The current study found no difference in student success when parents were or were not involved with homework. One student said his parents were not currently involved, nor had they been involved in the past. He attributed his academic success to his goal setting and striving to meet those goals as his motivation to do well in school.

Lloyd-Smith (2008) stated that administrators and teachers defined parental involvement as parents volunteering in the school and attending school activities and conferences. The students in the current study defined parental involvement as helping with homework, being actively involved with activities, volunteering, chaperoning field trips, and keeping up with the students' homework and grades. The definitions of both sets of participants were similar, so all entities agreed on the definition of parental involvement.

5.4 Implications

The study showed that although they wanted their parents to be involved in their high school careers, the students ultimately took responsibility for their own success. The study was based on Bandura's self-efficacy theory, which says that the confidence students have in their abilities affects the choices and outcomes of their endeavors (Usher & Pajares, 2008). Self-efficacy is influenced by peers, teachers, and parents (Usher & Pajares, 2008). This study verified that high school students feel they are confident enough to make choices regarding their ability to be successful in school, but it is their choice whether they are successful or not.

Trusty and Lampe (1997) described parental involvement as the way in which parents responded to and interacted with their children and the effects the interaction had on the children's behavior inside and outside of school. The responses of the participants during the interviews indicated this was a factor in their academic success. The students' definitions of parental involvement compared to Hickman's (1991) seven types of parental involvement.

Knowing how students responded to the questions set as the guidelines for the study will help local school administrators develop parental involvement implementation plans. Understanding that students take responsibility for their choices regarding their academic success will affect the emphasis placed on parental involvement during conferences and the incorporation of parents in school activities.

5.5 Recommendation for Further Studies

Although the current study adds to the body of knowledge that already existed surrounding students' perceptions of parental involvement, there is still much that can be gained from further studies of this type focusing on high school students. The majority of the previous research focused on elementary and middle school age students. Broader studies using a larger population with greater diversity would validate the information provided in this study and the few previous studies that have been conducted. Similar studies need to be conducted in other geographical locations with a different type of population to determine whether the same perceptions exist.