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High School Dropout: A Study of Parental Perceptions of Dropout and Prevention Strategies

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HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUT: A STUDY OF PARENTAL PERCEPTIONS OF

DROPOUT AND PREVENTION STRATEGIES

by

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ABSTRACT

Dropping out from high school is becoming a growing trend that necessitates new and more powerful intervention strategies to be utilized. Large numbers of adolescents between the ages of 16- 24 have been shown to receive no high school diploma or equivalent. The effects of dropping out are far reaching, with many students who dropout facing depression and alienation that may lead to other negative consequences. This research focuses on the need for preventative action against the issue of dropout. One hypothesis to be tested is whether or not current dropout prevention techniques can be applied to students who are not at risk for dropping out. The researcher theorizes that if all students are exposed to these strategies then perhaps the overall school environment will yield less students who are at risk to begin with.

DEDICATION

For my family, friends, and girlfriend thank you for your encouragement and support.

For all lovers of lover's of education, thank you for your contribution to higher learning.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank my committee members, Dr. Olga Molina and Dr. William Wise, for their

guidance and assistance throughout the course of this thesis. Thank you Professor Mary Mann

for agreeing to be my thesis chair and assist me in every aspect of this project. I would also like

to thank Lexi Mauerman for her assistance in this project.

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INTRODUCTION

Adolescents dropping out of school prior to graduation is a growing problem that affects a number of interrelated issues impacting our entire society. The National Center for Educational Statistics (2001) estimates that between 347,000 and 544,000 high school students have not graduated over the past 10 years. The NCES (2002) also suggests that about 11% of adolescents ages 16 to 24 received no diploma or credential. The statistics disproportionately affect minority groups, with 13.1 % of blacks and 27.8% of Hispanics failing to finish school.

For the students who dropout, issues such as depression, life dissatisfaction and feelings of alienation are often present (Larsen & Shertzer, 1987; Tidwell, 1988). Research completed by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (1999) states that students who dropout often experience negative consequences. The identified consequences include a higher probability to join gangs, display violent and criminal behavior, and experiment with drugs and alcohol.

Experiential observations by this researcher led to questions about the overall efficacy of the education system as it relates to dropout prevention. Students suggest that their education and training has left them ill prepared for real world situations, especially those regarding a career choice. A few basic questions have guided the research: What should be changed? What can be done? How can it be done? Beyond the scope of this study an overall ambition would be to revolutionize the education system, utilizing the time students are in school to accomplish real learning thus motivating student retention. A focused strategy to accomplish this goal would be to create curriculum and utilize evidence-based teaching practices. Research would also focus on

gathering input from not only professionals within the education system, but also parents/guardians of students. Despite copious amounts of research delineating the problems in the education system from the point of the view of professionals within the educational system, including the issue of dropping out, there is a paucity of research that looks at this issue from the parent/guardian perspective. There is also a gap in the research around what parents/guardians believe should be the response to these issues. Through focus groups and surveys common problems can be identified and then a plan can be made for intervention. This thesis will report on the results of a survey and focus group directed at parents or guardians of students in grades 9-12.

Theoretical Framework

The research has shown that there are risk factors associated with dropout that can predict the likelihood of a student having issues in the school environment. An observable commonality these factors share is that they affect the student at a specific stage or age in their life and can impact issues around their development. Erik Erikson and his work focusing on the stages of psychosocial development (1950) provide a framework that can possibly explain why these factors exist.

According to Erikson (1994) youth oftentimes wear identity conflict on their sleeves. Youth encounter struggles that include sexual identity, style of dress, and other potentially negatively impacting identities that can affect their decision to conform to society's norms or to defy them. According to Erikson's theory on Social Development (1950), adolescence ranges from ages 13- 19 and brings identity vs. role confusion to the equation (Gross, 1987). This stage

brings concerns about the roles adolescents will play as adults, which may evoke mixed feelings and ideas. Experimenting becomes a part of the process of discovering one's identity (Gross, 1987). For example, an adolescent may attempt various jobs or hobbies, perhaps even experiment with different peer groups. Theory states that if all goes smoothly an adolescent should achieve a sense of identity (Gross, 1987).

Conversely, if all does not go smoothly, theory suggests identity crisis can occur, often halting an adolescent's development and leading to moratorium. This crisis is often a result of the difficulty between the person the adolescent feels they have become and the person society expects them to be (Wright, 1982). This period in development can become difficult because of all the different forces affecting the adolescent. This stage is considered a bridge between childhood and adulthood and factors such as puberty and increased cognitive ability make decisions about the future uncertain (Gross, 1987).

Erikson (1950) describes this problem as role confusion and suggests it can include a resistance to commitment for an adolescent. However, Erikson also suggested that if adolescents were given enough space and time to explore and experiment then they could successfully achieve a firm sense of identity (Stevens, 1983). When an adolescent is given the time and space that allow for experimentation it is called a moratorium or a psychosocial moratorium. According to Erikson's theory, an adolescent struggles with commitments because identity roles may not have been formed yet and so this moratorium becomes necessary in order to solidify roles and then progress towards concrete behaviors (Stevens, 1983).

Based on this theory and the research completed on dropout and its risk factors, the battle between identity and role confusion offers ideas about why certain risk factors are prevalent.

Truancy from school may be considered a type of experimentation, along with negative ideas and attitudes about school. A lack of social support also could mean that an adolescent has fewer resources when struggling with an identity crisis. Furthermore, a student labeled as at risk is less likely to be granted a moratorium. In summation, this theory can be used as a framework for understanding and identifying forces that affect adolescents.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Risk Factors

Absenteeism

According to Prevatt and Kelly (2003) absenteeism is one of the most visible factors that can precipitate school dropout. According to Florida law, truancy is an absence from school that has not been excused by a parent or guardian. Under this same law, a child would be considered "habitually truant" if he or she has 15 or more unexcused absences within 90 days with or without consent of a parent or guardian (Florida Department of Education, 2013). Part of the reason why absenteeism is difficult to address is because of a lack of uniformity regarding its measurement and definition. For example, states such as Georgia do not collect statistics for truancy; rather the individual counties collect the information and are not required to report it (Williams, 2001). Even if statewide data were to be collected, there is little consistency from state to state and the definitions are not easily accessible (Williams, 2001). For the purposes of this thesis, the terms truancy and absenteeism will be considered synonymous in relation to this issue, both referring to the chronic absence of a student from school (Williams, 2001).

The consequences of chronic truancy or absenteeism include lower academic achievement, particularly on test scores (Baker & Jansen, 2000). Baker and Jansen (2000) have also found that persistent truancy can lead to retention (being held back). Students who are frequently absent from school receive lower grades and are at greater risk for dropping out. Lotz and Lee (1999) suggest that acts of delinquency and crime are committed more frequently by

students who are habitually absent from school and who receive low grades. Walsh (1993) found that 82% of inmates in Georgia are high school dropouts, giving credence to the claim that truancy can lead to delinquency.

<div align="center">Negative Attitudes</div>

Adolescence is a critical time when many students may develop negative and oppositional attitudes towards school and authority figures. This can lead to a peer group formation that exerts negative influence (White & Kelly, 2010). The importance of peer group influence has been documented within the literature, suggesting that students identify and mimic attitudes and behaviors of their peer groups (Bishop, Bishop, Gelbwasser, Green, & Peterson, 2004). Manski (1993) has determined specific reasons as to why peer influence can be so strong and highlights the increased likelihood of dropout when negative attitudes are present. Students may develop the same negative views as their peer group because they have similar background characteristics (correlated effects), which are a natural reaction to housing costs, school zoning, and other demographic patterns (Manski, 1993). Another reason influence of peers is so strong is because students are exposed to the same school climate or factors that influence their behavior such as teachers, parents, school policy, and other potentially impacting factors (Manski, 1993). Mora and Oreopoulos (2011) conclude that both reasons could explain the correlation between schoolmate outcomes or in other words, why the negative view on school affects the views of another student and their likelihood of dropping out.

Negative attitudes can also develop from a perceived sense of alienation, which limits a students' academic productivity (Kagan, 1990). Lee and Breen (2007) support this posit through

research suggesting at risk students experience exclusion from both teachers and students at school. These students' perceptions about their surrounding school environment were described as "prison-like" (Lee & Breen, 2007). Kim, Gendron, Toro, and Fairborn (2011) concluded that all research both current and foundational support the idea that negative attitudes have harmful effects on a student's academic performance and their decision to remain in school.

Protective Factors

<u>Social Support</u>

Social support is defined as a protective factor that decreases the likelihood of school dropout (Stearns & Glennie, 2006). Multiple studies have found that a supportive family, positive school experiences, and religious involvement can provide a student with the influence needed to stay in school (Doll & Lyon, 1998; Dubow, Edwards, & Ippolito, 1997; Jackson & Frick, 1998). According to Blum and Jones (1993) increased social support could improve academic achievement if an intervention was based on peer groups and adult mentors. More recent research indicates that students drop out of school because of inadequate coping skills, and a lack of motivation and aspiration (Gall, 2008). The fewer support systems students have, the more likely fear, anxiety, and depression are to inhibit the student academically (Gall, 2008). Studies have shown that if a student feels important and that they matter to others then they may report lower rates of anxiety and depression (Dixon, Scheidegger, & McWhirter, 2009), increased academic motivation, and a greater sense of engagement in the school environment (Dixon & Tucker, 2008).

<u>School Engagement</u>

School engagement is considered a strong predictor of graduation from high school (Fall & Roberts, 2011). Definitions may vary depending on the researcher, but a common theme in the research states that when the school engagement of a student is poor, academic achievement suffers (Caraway, Tucker, Reinke, & Hall, 2003; DiPerna, Volpe, & Elliot, 2005; Finn & Rock, 1997; Wu, Hughes, & Kwok, 2010). School engagement is so critical to address because academic achievement is also a predictor of school dropout and has been shown to increase the likelihood of high school dropout (Alexander, Entwisle, & Horsey, 1997; Sinclair, Christenson, Lehr, & Anderson, 2003).

The Self- System Model of Motivational Development (SSMMD) is a model that provides a framework for understanding how student engagement affects a student (Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Skinner, Furrer, Marchand, & Kindermann, 2008; Skinner, Kindermann, Connell, & Wellborn, 2009; Skinner &Wellborn, 1994). This model suggests that individuals need to connect with others in order to be successful in their environment. Within this model there are social contexts and self- system processes. The social contexts can be described as family, teacher, or other peer support. The processes included perceived identification with school and perceived control (Fall & Roberts, 2011).

Fall and Roberts (2011) explain that a student's self-processes are either fulfilled or ignored by the student's social context. This model is valuable because it describes the correlation between a student's performance and engagement and what kinds of support have a positive or negative influence. Research performed utilizing the SSMMD model indicates that

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school engagement predicts educational outcomes and establishes the value of the model (Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Skinner et al., 2008; Skinner et al., 2009; Skinner & Wellborn, 1994). The outcomes show the risk for school dropout based on test scores, attendance, suspension, retention, and grade- point average (Connell, Spencer, & Aber, 1994). Skinner et al. (2008) supports the model by describing teacher support as a significant factor in school engagement. Wang and Holcombe (2010) further support this concept with research indicating that a student's perception of school environment, including support and encouragement affected their school engagement and also their academic achievement.

<center>Monitoring and Mentoring</center>

Since absenteeism is so strongly linked with school dropout (Oakland, 1992), monitoring a students' progress becomes a necessary and valuable tool for intervention (White & Kelly, 2010). According to Prevatt and Kelly (2003) a systematic review of the literature revealed that assigning adult mentors to students who are at risk for school dropout allows for the student's progress to be tracked and reported on. These mentors may also be considered advocates that bridge the gap between the school and parents/guardians. The ideal mentor/ monitor for the student would be his or her parent. However, as White and Kelly (2010) suggest, single- parent families, divorced, and dual- career families find the "ideal" of parent/guardian as students' primary mentor/monitor not always realistic due to increased responsibilities and time constraints.

Many times a child's academic progress is not called into question until the school notifies the parent/guaridan of a problem (White & Kelly, 2010). To ensure a student is

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monitored despite family challenges and difficulties in providing support to their children, graduate students, adult community volunteers, and resource teachers can perform this role and communicate with the student's family (Sinclair, Christenson, Evelo, & Hurley, 1998). The monitors in Sinclair, Christenson, Evelo, & Hurley's (1998) study provided the students feedback on their performance, routinely spoke with parents, and arranged for tutoring or other needed interventions. White and Kelly (2010) suggest that with any kind of mentoring program, a school counselor be the designated recruiter, trainer, and supervisor to these mentors.

<div align="center">Personal and Social Skill Development</div>

Developing certain skills is a benefit to students because the research shows that a lack of skills in key areas could lead to dropout (Prevatt & Kelly, 2003). Disruptive or aggressive behaviors (Ensminger & Slusarcick, 1992; Vitaro, Larocque, Janosz, & Tremblay, 1997), early substance abuse (Bohon, Garber, & Horowitz, 2007), and poor academic performance (Ensminger & Slusarcick, 1992; Simner & Barnes, 1991) are examples of risk factors that can be identified and then addressed through the development of skills. Prevatt and Kelly's (2003) systematic review of intervention programs highlights the importance of students developing personal and social coping skills. Of the many useful skills that will aid a student, successful programs have utilized problem- solving, responsibility, listening, and cooperation (Gerler, Drew, & Mohr, 1990; Ruben, 1989).

Specific Strategies for Intervention

In order to develop a program of intervention, the variables associated with dropout need to be comprehensively identified and addressed. Variables that influence student success, personal factors that interfere with academic success, and other personal variables must be taken into consideration (Mbuva, 2011). According to Seidman (2005) and Kim, Newton, Downey, & Benton (2010) an early assessment is a necessary step to identify all of these variables and makes it possible to form a plan of action. Kim et al. (2010) have identified academic achievement, including standardized test scores and grade point average as variables affecting student success. Socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and geographic area must also be taken into account (Kim et al., 2010). Kim et al. (2010) further goes on to explain that other personal variables that need to be considered when making a plan for action include a students' motivation, confidence and self perception, behaviors, thinking process, and values.

In a study focused on concrete steps for dropout intervention Mbuva (2011) outlined specific methods for helping students stay in school. They are broken down into 5 steps:

1. Help students graduate on time. A student should not be held back except when absolutely necessary. According to Mbuva (2011) the lower the grade level the student is in when they turn 18 the more likely they are to dropout.

2. Provide positive experiences for students. Monitors and teachers should highlight positive experiences and avoid focusing too much on failure.

3. Focus on early intervention.

4. Students need to have a goal to work toward. Their goals should include plans for after high school, making completion of high school necessary for their future.

5. Extracurricular activities should be used as motivators. Monitors and teachers should encourage activities and do all they can to ensure the students are not prohibited from them.

Furthermore, Christenson, Reschly, Appleton, Berman, Spanjers, and Varro (2008) emphasize that school engagement has become a key component of dropout prevention programs in the United States. According to the National Research Council (2004) student engagement involves academics, behavior, cognition and affect, meaning that programs should emphasize a sense of connection for the student and a motivation to learn. This supports the earlier research of Finn (1989) that states that behavior relating to engagement involves classroom and extracurricular activities, while identification with school (the psychological aspect) revolves around a student's sense of belonging to school.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to identify parental perceptions about school dropout. The participants for this study are parents/legal guardians of students in grades 9-12 who are members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The research questions include parent's perceptions of and understanding about:

1. What dropout prevention strategies are used to intervene for high school students (grades 9-12)?

2. What are prominent risk factors for dropping out of school?

3. What are factors that reduce the risk of dropping out of school?

4. Are dropout prevention strategies generalizable to the whole school student population?

This study aims to discover parental perceptions about school dropout and to identify through the literature what is being done to address the issue of school dropout. Since the problem is affected by parental involvement it is important to learn about the perceptions of the parents and how they relate to the known literature. After describing what is being done and what potential programs could be put in place, the researcher identifies ways that these programs could benefit all students. The researcher suggests that parental perceptions are important to discern in order to utilize them in combination with known, empirically based principles about this issue. This information could then be utilized to create empirically based programs addressing school drop-out, potentially applying these programs to the entire student body, and potentially improving the overall school climate.

Participants

The study used a convenience sample of 19 parents/guardians who had a student(s) currently enrolled in school, focusing on grades 9-12. After gaining approval from the Institutional Review Board at the university, surveys were distributed in person at a local chapel of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints during the spring 2013 semester.

Measures

Data was gathered using a survey created by the researcher that included a demographics questionnaire and one scale. The demographics questionnaire had 9 questions (age, gender identity, ethnicity, education level, age of student, parents in household, number of employed parents, time when parents are available to student, and income). The second portion was a mixture of a Likert scale survey created by the researcher, consisting of 8 questions, 1 multiple choice question, and 4 free response questions identifying parent's perceptions of the issue of school dropout and the education system overall.

The reliability of the scale was calculated through a Cronbach's Alpha analysis for internal consistency. The Cronbach's Alpha was .277 which does not meet criteria for good internal consistency of a scale.

RESULTS

The sample consisted of 10 females (52.6%) and 9 males (47.4%). The distribution of race/ethnicity is as follows: 57.9% White/Caucasian, 10.5% Hispanic/Latino, 10.5% African-American/Black, 10.5% Asian, 10.5% Other. The distribution of education is as follows: 15.7% of participants had earned a doctorate degree, 21.0% had earned a masters degree, 36.8% had earned a bachelors degree, and 26.3% indicated some college/high school/or vocational training.

Table 1: Demographics of the Sample

Characteristic	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Biological Sex	Female	10	52.6%
	Male	9	47.4%
Race/Ethnicity	White/Caucasian	11	57.9%
	Hispanic/Latino	2	10.5%
	Af-American/Black	2	10.5%
	Asian	2	10.5%
	Other	2	10.5%
Education	Doctorate	3	15.7%
	Masters	4	21.0%
	Bachelors	7	36.8%
	Some College	2	10.5%
	High School/Other	3	15.7%

All 19 participants responded to all questions included in the demographic questionnaire Likert-scale questions, and open-ended questions. There was no missing information.

Research Questions

The first research question was looking to identify parent's perceptions of the current dropout prevention strategies for high school students grades 9-12. A majority of the participants 10 (52.6%) reported they agreed or strongly agreed that drop-out prevention strategies would not help their student. This finding may suggest the need for increased parental input and involvement in the development and retention of drop-out prevention programs. It may also suggest the need for parental education around the issue of drop-out in general; specifically, the literature suggesting that high rates of drop-out may negatively impact school climate overall thus potentially impacting their student.

The second research question was looking to identify parent's perceptions of prominent risk factors for dropping out of school. A majority of the participants 13 (68.4%) reported they disagreed or strongly disagreed that their student's behavior impacts school drop-out. This finding may indicate again the need to educate parents about stages of adolescent develop and the impact of social learning, specifically how reciprocal behaviors can impact individual students and school climate overall, even those who may not be at a high risk for drop-out.

The third and fourth research questions were looking to identify parental perceptions of factors that reduce risk for dropping out of school and to identify parental perceptions of whether or not drop-out strategies are generalizable to the whole student population, respectively. A

majority of the participants 11 (57.8%) reported they did not believe drop-out was even a problem at their student's school, and 12 (63%) reported they disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that all children are at risk for dropping out of school. This finding may indicate, similar to the above findings for research questions 1 and 2, that there is a tremendous need for parental education around school drop-out risk and factors impacting drop-out as indicated in the literature.

Research question three was also addressed in the open-ended section of the questionnaire. Specifically, when asked to identify areas for improvement in drop-out prevention and education in general, responses included suggestions for improved academics, opportunities to integrate critical thinking skills, preparedness for the future, and self-sufficiency. Again, while these responses do not provide exact answers as to what factors reduce the risk of dropout they can be used in conjunction with the research to provide answers as to what ideas/themes should be focused on the most when addressing the issue of dropout. One theme mentioned was the dissatisfaction of parents with the quality of education their students were receiving. This theme can be linked with the research question that inquires about risk factors that impede a students' ability to graduate. With more information to support this parental concern, it could become another proven risk factor for dropping out of school.

Overall, parental responses were similar when asked whether or not dropout prevention strategies were useful to all students (generalizable). Based on the information gathered from the surveys alone it is difficult to determine if these dropout strategies are worth implementing throughout the entire school. It is important to note that each research question would have been

addressed in greater detail had there been participants in the focus group. The lack of participants

for the focus group left gaps in knowledge that could be followed up in future research

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to identify parental perceptions of the issue of school dropout and to identify the literature addressing this issue, in order to increase understanding around the issue of school dropout and successful dropout interventions. In order to fully address the issue of dropout, it is vital that primary caretakers, parents/guardians, of students be involved in the conversation. If parental perceptions are similar to existing evidence, it may provide more support for existing interventions. If parental perceptions are different, it may provide evidence for the creation of new interventions. The statistical analysis of the data in this study did not yield significant results, due in part to the small sample size. Thus the results of this study are not generalizable to the larger population. However, several themes found from the open-ended responses may be valuable for future research in this area.

According to parent responses, academics are an area where improvement is needed most. Parents identified academics as a main purpose of education and part of the fundamentals that lead to future success with education and career choice. These findings echo the research, which states that academic achievement is a predictor of school dropout (Alexander et al., 1997; Sinclair et al., 2003). Thus the literature gives credence to the concern of parents who feel that the education system needs a higher quality of service delivery in the realm of academics. Taking the subject a step farther, the research also states that school engagement is a way to improve academic success (Caraway et al., 2003; DiPerna et al., 2005; Finn & Rock, 1997; Wu et al., 2010). Linking these themes from the research with the perceptions of parents' around academics creates a possible framework for future research/implementation that can be utilized.

Another common response was the desire of parents' to have the curriculum revolve around critical thinking, which parents elaborated upon to mean decision-making skills, life skills or practical things such as writing a check, discipline, survival skills, abilities to adapt and invent, and self-sufficiency. Again, these ideas are consistent with the research that suggests that developing any number of skills such as those mentioned by parents greatly reduce the risk of drop out (Prevatt & Kelly, 2003). Furthermore, problem solving, responsibility, listening, and cooperation are specific skills that have been taught to students through intervention programs as a successful means of reducing the risk of drop out (Gerler, Drew, Mohr, 1990; Ruben, 1989).

A third theme found among the responses of parents indicated that preparedness relating to continuing education and career choice should be a focus of the high school system. It is worth noting that while many parents advocated for the aforementioned themes, many also felt that the actual product (their children's education) was less than optimal. These ideas speak to the quality of education and intervention programs and while there are related themes in the research, these concerns are not explicitly addressed. These findings suggest the need for future research in the form of program evaluations and longitudinal studies that are able to track the students for a significant amount of time after high school graduation.

Limitations

The most notable limitations of this study include: small sample size, the use of a convenience sample, a survey created by the researcher that had low internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha of .277), and a lack of participants for the intended focus group. The sample size was affected by the limited time allotted to gain participants. The researcher's original plan

was to use a sample made up of parents/guardians from three different high schools in Orange County, Florida. The three different high schools each had different socioeconomic backgrounds that would have yielded a more reflective sample. The researcher was approved by Orange County to conduct the research in their schools but time constraints forced the researcher to use a homogenous convenience sample comprised of a small group of people with very similar interests and background leading to a potential sampling bias. The survey and focus group questions were created based on the researcher's review of the literature, as opposed to a valid and reliable measure, possibly contributing to the lack of statistically significant findings. The small sample size also affected the focus group participation and any generalizability to the larger population. All the parents/guardians included in the sample declined to participate in the focus group. The review of literature also included only a few risk factors and prevention strategies that the researcher deemed relevant.

Future Research

There are several ways the findings of this study can be added upon to benefit the issue of high school drop-out. Conducting a focus group allowing parents/guardians to expand upon their perceptions and attitudes about drop-out would complete this study and provide more qualitative data. Another study could be done to include a greater number of Black and Hispanic participants, specifically because they are disproportionately affected by the issue of drop-out (NCES, 2002). Studies could be done that focus on the perceptions of teachers, administrators, and students respectively. Then, research could be done that compares the perceptions of various groups interviewed and compare and contrast the data and use it for future intervention strategies.

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to identify parental perceptions of school dropout. Although the results are limited, the information garnered is beneficial in that it provides further support for existing school dropout prevention strategies. The results are also beneficial in that they identify some of the gaps in the literature and in existing programs around incorporating parents/guardians in addressing the issue of school dropout, potentially leading to a more collaborative approach in the future. This research also reveals a potential gap in the area of parental knowledge of drop-out as an issue that not only impacts individual students in a vacuum, but rather potentially impacts school climate overall.

APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL LETTER

University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board
Office of Research & Commercialization
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276
www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html

Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1**
FWA00000351, IRB00001138

To: **Mary Margaret Mann** and Co-PI: **Daniel C. Garcia**

Date: **March 11, 2013**

Dear Researcher:

On 3/11/2013, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review:	Exempt Determination
Project Title:	High School Dropout: Attitudes and Applicability of Dropout Prevention Strategies to the General Student Body
Investigator:	Mary Margaret Mann
IRB Number:	SBE-13-09172
Funding Agency:	
Grant Title:	
Research ID:	N/A

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual.

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Patria Davis on 03/11/2013 03:01:18 PM EST

IRB Coordinator

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APPENDIX B: DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONAIRE AND SURVEY

High School Dropout: A Mixed Methods Study of Parental Perceptions about School Drop-Out and Applicability of Prevention Strategies to General Student Body

This purpose of this survey is to determine the perceptions of parents/guardians of students in ages 9-12 about the issue of dropout and current prevention strategies. Information will be applied to strategies that will possibly reduce the risk of dropout.

Demographics

Age_____

How do you identify:

___Female

____Male

____Transgender

____Other

How do you describe yourself (ethnicity)?

____African-American

____Black

____Asian

____Native American/Indigenous

____Hispanic

____Bi-racial/Multi-racial

____Other (please specify)_____

Highest education completed:

____Doctorate

____Master's Degree

____Bachelor's Degree

____Associate's Degree

____Technical or Vocational School

____Some College

____High School

____Other (please specify)_____

What age is your student(s)? _____

How many parents/ guardians are in your household? _____

How many parents/ guardians in your household are employed outside the home? _____

What time of day are the parents/ guardians available as a resource to their student?

____Nights only

____Daytime only

____Both night and day times

____Schedule fluctuates

____Other (please specify)_____

Please indicate your income range:

____$100,000 a year and over

____$50,000-$100,000 a year

____$40,000-$50,000 a year

____$25,000-$40,000 a year

____Under $25,000 a year

High School Dropout: A Mixed Methods Study of Attitudes and Applicability of

Prevention Strategies to General Student Body

Survey

Please circle the number that represents how you feel about the following attitudes. A value of 1 represents a strong disagreement with the statement, a value of 5 represents a strong agreement and 3 represents a neutral feeling toward the statement.

I believe dropout is a problem at my child's school
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

School dropout impacts my child's learning
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

My child's behavior impacts the issue of school dropout
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

My child's academic performance impacts the issue of school dropout
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

Strategies used to combat dropout would help my child
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

I believe all children are at risk for dropping out of school
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

Programs that focus on at risk students would not help my child
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

I feel the education system should be improved
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

Please select the choice that best describes your opinion.

Regarding the education system, I think improvement is needed most in:

  A) Academics   C) Critical Thinking
  B) Social Skills   D) Other_____

Please answer each question according to your thoughts and experience. You may use any available space to answer the question.

I think the purpose of education is to:

_____

_____

I think the purpose of high school is to:

_____

_____

What education actually provides:

_____

_____

What high school actually provides:

_____

_____

Focus Group Questions

1. Please elaborate as to why or why not dropout is a problem at your student's school.
2. In what ways does dropout impact your student's learning? Are these impacts direct or indirect? By whom (school, family, student, etc.) are they dealt with?
3. Do you feel all students are at risk for dropping out? If not, explain.
4. What could be done to reduce the risk of dropout for all students?
5. Do you believe students identified as at risk should be separated from the general population? Why or why not?
6. How can the education system be improved? Locally? Nationally?
7. Do you have any additional thoughts, feelings, or suggestions regarding the topic?

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