KULEANA AND PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN MIDDLE SCHOOLS

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By

Johnette Kealohaokalani Bergau Enos Maielua

This work is dedicated with much love and gratitude to…

God, whose Hand I have recognized in all things, and finally, in myself

My parents, Margaret and William Enos, and the late John Heizer Bergau, for being involved parents back when it wasn't acceptable

My husband, David Benjamin Maielua, whose patience, prodding and love is never ending for which I am very, very thankful!

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Abstract

This study focuses on the beliefs, attitudes and practices of middle school parents and educators regarding parent involvement and the home-school relationship, particularly in a specific indigenous community. Purposeful sampling situated the study at one public middle school in Hawaii and in an area with a high number of Native Hawaiian families and students, as statistics show that Native Hawaiian students are labeled “at-risk” in different educational areas (e.g., large enrollment in special education classes, high numbers of students qualifying for federal lunch program, low graduation rates, low socioeconomic status). Using case study methods for data collection (including interview, site observation, notes and memos) as well as a six-point Likert scale questionnaire, this work explores the beliefs and experiences of parents and teachers, including critical incidents, that either help to build strong home-school relationships, or create barriers to doing so. The perspectives of parents and educators regarding parent involvement showed that, despite feeling it to be an important component to overall student and school support, parent involvement is viewed and implemented in different ways. The findings are significant in that they reveal some disconnects, and possible solutions, between home and school that may indirectly affect student achievement.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements iv
Abstract v
List of Tables viii
List of Figures ix
Chapter 1: Introduction 1
Research Questions 2
Significance of Study 4
Role of Researcher 7
Kuleana as a Framework 7

Chapter 2: Review of Related Research 9
Parent & School Perspectives on Roles & Responsibilities in Education 10
Parental Role Construction 11
Parent Involvement Models 13
The Epstein Model 13
The Hoover-Dempsey, Sandler, & Walker Model 14
National Parent Involvement Research & Policies 15
The NCLB Guidelines 16
Middle School Policies 20
Parent Involvement Research & Policies in Hawai‘i Schools 21
The PCNC Program 23
Major Issues about Home-School Relationships 25
Parent Involvement, Teacher Disposition and Attitudes 25
Cultural and Socioeconomic Differences 27
Home-school Communication 29
Changing Views of Adolescents' and Parents' Roles for Middle School Students 31
Hawaiian Culture & Parent Involvement 33
Culturally Responsive Indigenous Education 34
Summary 37

Chapter 3: Methods 38
Selection of the Case Study School 40
Participants 40
Recruitment of Participants 40
Participant Descriptions 42
Data Collection 45
Survey 46
Interview 47
Data Analysis 51
Qualitative Analysis 52
Indigenous Research Methods 55

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

Chapter 4: Results 57
Survey Results 57
Parents' Surveys 57
Teachers' Surveys 60
Qualitative Results 61
Parents' Interviews 63
Teachers' Interviews 71
Summary 79

Chapter 5: Discussion & Conclusions 83
Discussion of Research Findings 84
Barriers & Supports of PI 87
Kuleana as a Framework 91
Limitations of Study 97
Future Research & Conclusions 97

Appendices 99
References 105

LIST OF TABLES

Table Page

Table 1. Description of Parent Participants…………………………………………...43

Table 2. Description of Teacher Participants...….……………………………………44

Table 3. Initial Codes……………………..…………………………………….53-54

Table 4. Parents' Survey Results…………………………………………………...59

Table 5. Educators' Survey Results………………………………………………...60

Table 6. Focused Codes…………………………………………………………….62

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure Page

Figure 1. Focused Themes of Kuleana……………………………………………………92

Figure 2. Framework of Kuleana……………………...….…………………………….94

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

We have more information now than we can use, and less knowledge and understanding than we need. Indeed, we seem to collect information because we have the ability to do so, but we are so busy collecting it that we haven't devised means of using it. The true measure of any society is not what it knows but what it does with what it knows. —*Warren Bennis*

The above quote was taken from a book about the use of focus groups in applied research (Krueger & Casey, 2000). For me, it seems to fit the field of parent involvement[1] in education as well because while there is much research written about parent involvement, the problem has been how to use the information at the school level, and how to use it *well*. As Hiatt-Michael (2006) states, "…many of [the parent involvement] findings appear to remain in academia or shelved documents, not public places." I have been working in a parent involvement program as a facilitator for 18 years in the Hawaii State Department of Education's (DOE) Parent/Community Networking Center (PCNC) at a different local public school from the research school. However, with this experience, I sense that research about parent involvement in public schools rarely makes it to the local level and if it does, it may not be made widely known to personnel or be fully integrated in curriculum and school practices, much less implemented equally across grade levels and in the classroom. There is frequent acknowledgement that parent/family involvement is important in general; many schools have something about the topic written into their formal action plans. But it is almost as if parents and their involvement are an afterthought or an add-on, a relationship that plays

[1]The term "parent involvement" will be used interchangeably with the terms, "parent/family involvement" and "parent engagement" or "parent/family engagement."

a distant second to that of the primary teacher-student relationship in schools. A factor that may contribute to this disconnect is a definition of who are considered parents by the school as many children are now being raised by adults/caregivers other than their biological parents; for example, caregivers may include grandparents, step- or foster parents and other significant adults. The complexity of identifying what and who constitutes a given student's parents will be discussed briefly in Chapter Two.

Likewise, "school personnel" does not only include classroom teachers, but other teachers (e.g., the technology teacher or reading teacher), support staff members, custodial staff and the principal. All of these various relationships work to contribute to the relationships and school climate that exist on campus. For purposes of this study, the term "educator" may be used to include all of these different roles, except where indicated. Further designations are explained in Chapter Three.

My research, conducted primarily as a case study at Maunakai Middle School[2], examined the attitudes, beliefs and practices of public middle school parents, teachers and other school personnel regarding parent involvement (PI).

Research Questions

This study explored how the Hawaiian concept and practice of kuleana might enable parents, teachers, and other school personnel and the community to better coordinate their voices and practice to support middle school students' academic achievement and development for success. Kuleana is briefly defined as one's responsibilities. A more extensive definition will be given later. Related questions regarding attitudes, beliefs and practices about PI include:

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[2] Pseudonym.

1. How do parents define and implement their involvement in middle school? What are parents' expectations and experiences in home-school relationships? From the parents' perspective, how do parents and educators communicate with each other? Is this communication effective?
2. How do educators (teachers, other significant school staff, and the principal) define and implement parent involvement in the middle school? What are educators' expectations and experiences in home-school relationships? From the educators' perspective, how do educators and parents communicate with each other? Is this communication effective?
3. What are some of the barriers to, and supports for, productive parent involvement in middle school?

Other subjects related to these research questions were discussions of parent involvement outside of the classroom, types of community resources available that support student achievement, and the supports that parents/families in the community offer to each other, if any. These will be discussed further in Chapter Four.

One final aspect related to the study's research questions has to do with the conscious choice of a cultural focus exploring connections of Native Hawaiian ideas and practices, used or not, to parent-school relationships. The scope of the study is broad enough that parents/families and educators of different ethnicities were included; however, the majority of the participants were Hawaiian. This focus of the investigation necessitated that the case study take place in a middle school, with moderate to high Native Hawaiian student enrollment; reasons for this focused exploration are explained later in chapter two. Thus, an additional related question is: "How does the indigenous Hawaiian culture influence parent

involvement for parents and students of Hawaiian ancestry?" Because of this cultural context, Hawaiian terms used throughout the study, especially during the interviews and site visits, are introduced here with definitions taken from a Hawaiian language dictionary (Pukui & Elbert, 1986):

Hānai[3] – foster child, adopted child; to raise, rear, feed, nourish, sustain.

Kaiāulu – community, neighborhood, village.

Kuleana – right, privilege, concern, responsibility.

'Ohana – family, relative, kin group; related.

Pilina – association, relationship, union, connection, meeting, joining, adhering, fitting.

The terms most familiar to the majority of the parents and a few of the educators were hanai, kuleana and 'ohana. However, all of these terms reaffirmed for me the importance of the work and how they can apply to education, as discussed below.

Significance of study

There are several contributions that this study makes to the field of parent involvement (PI) in education in Hawai'i. First, it contributes information about cultural diversity in connection with PI and, more specifically, within an indigenous group/kaiāulu. Second, it extends prior research conducted in a local middle school that had parent research participants only, with the exception of the principal who was interviewed (Yamauchi, Lau-Smith, & Luning, 2008). Teachers and other staff members, with the exception of the

[3] Hānai is the practice of giving one's child to another person, such as a grandparent or other family member, to raise as their own. It is mostly done without legal documents and usually for the benefit of the child and the receiving individual/family (see also Pukui & Elbert, 1983, p. 56). The author has two hanai brothers given to her 'ohana as a result of their parents' deaths.

principal, were not included in that study. Finally, the real value and contribution of the current study is that it examines the attitudes, beliefs, and practices of middle school parents and educators regarding parent involvement and the possible effects these can have on the pilina, or relationships, between parents and teachers. This is achieved by looking at critical incidents, as reported by the participants, which may have helped or hindered the relationship building process. It is possible that positive home-school relationships may indirectly affect student achievement through enhanced support and similar expectations (Meier, 2002).

Grounding the entire study is "kuleana," introduced above. A Hawaiian cultural value, kuleana is significant because of the implied actions behind the meanings of the word (Pukui & Elbert, 1986, p. 179). This basic element of kuleana, as taught to me by my kupuna—grandparents—is extended towards the pilina (mentioned above) that are formed within the ʻohana, or family, and kaiāulu, or community (personal communication, M. Chun, November 1, 2007; Ledward, Takeyama, & Kahumoku, 2008). Thus, learning/teaching in the home and community environment can strengthen familial bonds and the kuleana that one has when living these values (DeBaryshe, Yuen, Nakamura & Stern, 2006). So how can the idea and action of kuleana be carried into the schools? The following quote exemplifies a basic belief of mine and highlights the purpose for doing this particular study; again, the idea of kuleana resonates here because of the implied parental role (Pukui & Elbert, 1983):

"Mai ka pae i ke aʻo a ka makua, aia he ola malaila."
Do not set aside the teachings of one's parents for there is life there.

The above ʻolelo noʻeau (wise saying) describes a main point of learning: that the first teachers/modelers of children are usually parents. In many indigenous communities, learning extends outward to include the larger family group (e.g. grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, etc.), i.e., an extended family, as well as to other community members including

foster parents (Ohmagari & Burkes, 1997; Turner, Richards, & Sanders, 2007). Native Hawaiian families as well as families in other Polynesian groups also include hanai children. Despite these types of family structures as well as changes to the typical nuclear family in recent years, pilina emphasizes the point that learning is a social process (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). I believe that by using kuleana, interactions and relationships between parents and educators may be improved upon and/or sustained.

The current study is a case study using mixed methods with an emphasis on the qualitative interview, and using grounded theory as a means of gathering implicit information and making it explicit. The quantitative portion of the study includes previously developed parent (.80 alpha reliability) and teacher (.65 pre- and .75 post-test alpha reliability) surveys (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005; Maielua, 2008, 2009). This project was also carried out using a strengths-based approach (Kanaiaupuni, 2004; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). That is, appropriate care and respect in my words and actions were used as I conducted my research (via interviews, site observations), being mindful to honestly report the positive and negative aspects of the results, while also recognizing how the research was gathered (at the convenience/choice of the participants, not the researcher), remembering who the research is for (parents and educators), and how it will be used (to benefit students and schools). Using a strengths-based approach constantly reminded me of my kuleana as an indigenous researcher towards the various types of relationships, pilina, which I hoped to find between the educators and parents at the case study site. Finally, using this approach helped me in recognizing my role throughout the whole process of conducting the research study.

Role of the Researcher

I wore several hats as I embarked on this research adventure. My first hat is very large and is always with me, that of a Hawaiian woman, a wife, mother, and grandmother. It is my kuleana which sets the angles and parameters to help the pilina of the hats that come next. The PCNC hat (described earlier) is an important one because it encompasses the work that I do helping families and educators. A new hat that I've acquired is that of an emerging researcher. It is uncomfortable yet exciting at the same time; uncomfortable because I am not quite used to wearing it and exciting because of the lessons I have learned from this work.

The view of others as they see my role: To the educator participant, I may be perceived as an insider because I work for the DOE. I may also be seen as an outsider because I am doing *"Research!"* and in my pilot study, a few teacher participants dropped out because of the stipulation of having to be interviewed. To the parent participant, especially those who self-identify as Native Hawaiian, I am perceived as an insider because I look Hawaiian, have a Hawaiian last name and can speak Hawaiian Creole English (Pidgin), the usual language for most of the parents of the study. A few of the local educators also lapsed into Pidgin when we were speaking, as well. However, I may also be perceived as an outsider, again because of the research that brings me into their school and community. While these boundaries seemed pretty fluid, I crossed them with some trepidation—but still mindful of my kuleana.

Kuleana as a Framework

Throughout all of my readings, the learning and growth of knowledge, I have been trying to see how kuleana can be utilized in the context of a Western school system. I knew how I was taught as a child by my kupuna, grandparents; kuleana was lived. I was also told

that I was taking something that was essentially Hawaiian and turning it into something that it is not. As a result, there is tension and a restiveness that is difficult to pinpoint and, at the same time, ignore. And yet I feel that this study, examining the beliefs and attitudes that affect the relationships of the teachers and parents of our Native Hawaiian children, may be able to help their learning. Kanaiaupuni (2004) writes, “The Hawaiian worldview stresses relationships first. It is spiritual, giving, and intimately bound to the land and genealogy; this worldview is a source of resilience and strength” (p. 30).

Thinking of the pilina that exists in schools today, the questions I must ask myself as an indigenous researcher are: Is it possible to utilize the idea and actions of kuleana as a framework for the application of theory to benefit our keiki, our ‘ohana, our kumu or teachers, and our kaiāulu? Or by doing that very act of "creating" a framework, does it degrade kuleana and therefore, me and my people? And, if it is possible to create a framework following proper protocols, how?

CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH

"There is no more complex and tender geography than the borderlands between families and schools" (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2004). The implied kuleana in the home-school relationship has been the subject of much research regarding parent involvement (PI) in education mostly focused on early and elementary education. However, it is fitting to first briefly discuss family dynamics and, especially, the parent/caregiver role.

In today's schools, all kinds of families exist. No longer is the nuclear family, with mom and dad in their first marriage, as prevalent a fixture as it was 40 or 50 years ago. There are all types of parents, men and women, who are divorced, never married, widowed, present or absent. There are drop-in parents, gay and lesbian parents, and parents who are in their second or third marriages. Challenges of managing households and family schedules thicken with the array of families and child-care situations: blended or adoptive families, foster, part-time or joint-care families, families who hire nannies, families with hānai children, or multigenerational families with daytime grandparents as "baby-sitter," or families headed by grandparents or a grandparent with sole, caregiving responsibilities. Thus, the definition of "parent" has changed so much. Many of these families have parents who are educated in various ways, with multiple college degrees or who possess knowledge that is culturally rich and who regularly utilize other ways of knowing. Varying economic circumstances make family life even more challenging as parents struggle to care for their families while working two or three jobs, sometimes with older siblings caring for younger ones or children in afterschool care. With this many variances, it does not make sense for schools and teachers to subscribe to a "one-size-fits-all" PI program: "If we continue to have the parent stereotype of the accessible stay-at-home mom with dad supporting the family, we will continue to miss

the boat on parent involvement" (H. Slaughter, personal communication, March 25, 2011). Now we can continue. In this literature review, parent involvement is explored in different educational contexts including middle school education.

Parent and School Perspectives on Roles, Responsibilities in Education

There are many definitions of what constitutes parent involvement in education, much with specific responsibilities—kuleana—spelled out. Most researchers and practitioners agree that it is what parents/families do to support their children's education. However, sometimes there are differences in the "how", the "why", the "what", and the "where." For example, some educators may see the "good" parents as only those who are highly visible on campus, e.g. the PTSA president who regularly volunteers or the room mom who does not work outside of the home. Educators may not think of the parents who monitor or check homework, prepare breakfasts, and get their children to school on time but who cannot tutor or help in class as being "good" parents. Also, there may be a narrow expectation of how parents should be involved, namely helping children at home, usually to help with homework, and communicating with the school (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991). This expectation may be difficult for some parents to do, especially working class and/or poor parents, sometimes without knowing how they are supposed to help their children and without the established means to communicate properly with school staff (Bolivar & Chrispeels, 2011; Horvat, Weininger & Lareau, 2003). Other educators, and some parents, too, expect that soliciting involvement is the schools' responsibility and that parents need to be told what to do, though research does point to school-initiated PI practices as being an effective bridge builder between home and school (Epstein, 2001; NMSA, 2003; Pate & Andrews, 2006).

Furthermore, many parents and children may have strong links to home learning/knowledge but low formal educational skills, and may be viewed by the teachers as having deficits.

From the home perspective, many parents/caregivers may feel that educators are the "experts" when it comes to schooling and that schooling is the teachers' responsibility, not theirs. Also contributing to this perception may be the "class-specific differences" (Horvat, Weininger & Lareau, 2003), e.g. parent education levels (which may be less than that of school personnel), economics, or living situations, that enable some parents to navigate the established procedures in the school culture better than others. These class-specific differences may lead to issues where parents perceive educators as holding all the power, an imbalance of social capital (Coleman, 1988), which may then cause some parents to defer to the school because they may fear retaliation if they speak up about their concerns (Crozier, 1999; Meier, 2002; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Other barriers such as language and cultural differences (discussed further below) may contribute to parents/caregivers being uninvolved in their children's education. One such example may be the perception that education is viewed as useful only when it serves the collective group and not just the individual (K. Ratliffe, personal communication, 9/07). And the challenges that many parents/families face economically make being involved academically harder.

Parental Role Construction

Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, and Sandler (2005) examined the process of how parents/caregivers put their definitions of "being involved" into action at home or in school, which the researchers call "parental role construction" (PRC). The researchers state that factors such as parental efficacy, motivation, parents' prior experiences of school and their educational levels can determine how often and what kind of involvement roles parents

choose for themselves. PRC may show their ideas of what parents may consider to be their kuleana regarding educational support for their children. This becomes evident in areas of parent advocacy such as special education (discussed later in relation to NCLB). Also, PRC is affected when teachers' expectations of parent help with homework may be unrealistic if parents are not shown how to assist their children, especially with differences in curriculum that parents may not be familiar with. Hoover-Dempsey, et al. state that as a result of these factors, parent involvement will either be *active*, where parents feel they can make a difference in their children's education and choose to participate, or PI may be *passive* where parents choose not to become involved for such reasons as mentioned above. Either way, the actions and implications of kuleana for parents and schools does not change. Both groups are important components that can have a positive effect on student achievement.

Epstein (2008) writes that "educators are reluctant to share leadership with parents and community members" (p. 268). She cites that the reasons could be due to poor pre-service instruction that does not include training to learn how to collaborate with parents. According to Henderson and Mapp (2002), effective parent/family involvement programs have "a philosophy of partnership" at their core. Collaboration is a key concept which also ensures the building of social capital for the families of a school through community and family engagement and empowerment (Epstein, 2008; Tanabe & Nishimoto, 2011). Why is this important? Clayton (2003) suggests that the role of families is crucial as the "primary socializer" in children's lives. Prior research has shown that children take their home knowledge—vital socio-cultural knowledge—to school with them, an important clue for teachers and other educators when working with non-mainstream ethnic groups such as

Native Hawaiians, Micronesian, or Asian students (Au & Kawakami, 1994; Clayton, 2003; Heath, 1983; Purcell-Gates, 1995; Tepper, 1992; Vygotsky, 1978; Yamauchi, 2005, 2007).

Moll, Amanti, Neff and Gonzalez (2005) support Clayton's idea by suggesting that the home knowledge children take to school offers a "flexible social network" for them outside of the classroom as they interact. A child's social network usually includes family, friends, and cultural identity which can be influenced by demographic factors. Walker and Hoover-Dempsey (2006) state that within the construct of self-regulation, student learning is flexible and can be shaped by the influence of parents and teachers, "in relation to the developmental resources" that a child receives from these important adults. These resources are a part of the social networks of children previously mentioned.

Parent Involvement Models

The Epstein Model

A major contributor to the topic of parent/family involvement in education has come through the work of Epstein (1987, 1994, 1995, & 2001). Epstein's framework of six typologies for parent involvement is based upon her model of three "overlapping spheres" representing the family, the community, and the school arranged like a Venn diagram with the child at its center. The six types of PI in Epstein's framework are: a) parenting (e.g. participation in parenting workshops or getting information that helps parents improve their skills); b) communicating (parent-school, parent-child dyad); c) learning at home (availability/types of educational experiences and materials); d) volunteering (on/off campus school-sponsored, educational or community activities); e) decision making (participation in groups that create policy/support schools); and, f) collaborating with community (providing support and assistance for groups). These components have also been adopted by the

National PTA and the Hawai‘i State Board of Education (2004, Policy #2403). Through Johns Hopkins University, Epstein’s work was developed into a national program called, “The National Network of Partnership Schools” (NNPS), which helps individual schools, districts, states and organizations to create “action team partnerships” that combine the knowledge and resources of parents, schools and communities. The NNPS provides models, evaluations and resources for school communities to create and maintain partnerships with others. They have also created a program for teachers who want to develop interactive homework assignments for students and their families called, “TIPS: Teachers Involving Parents in School.” According to the National Middle School Association (NMSA), students who participated in interactive homework with their parents/families scored higher on assessment tests than their peers who did not participate in this kind of homework (2003).

The Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, & Sandler Model

Hoover-Dempsey, Walker and Sandler have provided a model that has five levels leading to student achievement with items such as parent invitations to involvement and child perceptions of parent involvement. The researchers also looked at the personal motivations that may influence parents’ decisions to become involved in their children’s education or not. These motivating factors are parental efficacy (what a parent thinks about his/her capabilities to be involved) and parental role construction (how parents view their roles) mentioned earlier. In their study (2005), Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler developed different scales in line with their model that measured involvement from a school perspective and a home perspective. “Teacher Beliefs about Parental Involvement” and “Parent Efficacy for Helping Children to Succeed in School” are two scales that I have used in a recent pilot study (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005; Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Jones & Reed, 2002).

National Parent Involvement Research and Policies

Nationally, parent involvement has been examined in different ways and was shown to be one way to ensure high student achievement. Early efforts to look at how this worked began in the early 1960s. The U.S. Department of Education began informing public policy via what is commonly known as "The Coleman Report" (as cited in Hiatt-Michael, 2006). As a result of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the 1966 report focused on children in low socioeconomic situations and who had low academic achievement. Two items of importance showed up on the report: 1) that children with high academic achievement and higher rates of high school graduation and college attainment lived in middle- and upper-class neighborhoods, and 2) that influences outside of school had a greater effect on student achievement than influences inside of school. Changes in policy were inevitable.

As changes unfolded, research continued to shed light on diverse topics in education linking student achievement and parent/family involvement. For example, the role of language socialization in the home and school, and its influence on student achievement, particularly for children in working class families, was highlighted in two seminal qualitative case studies (Heath, 1983; Purcell-Gates, 1995). Studies about student diversity, parent involvement and achievement are also plentiful (Chrispeels & Rivero, 2000; Clark, 2002; Clayton, 2003; CREDE, 2002; Gutman & Midgley, 2000; Kagitcibasi, Sunar, & Bekman, 2001; Lopez, 2001; Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 2005). Another connection to student achievement through parent involvement was observed in studies about the effects of self-efficacy and motivation as they pertain to positive parenting influences (Bandura, 1997; Coleman & Karraker, 2000; Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005; Johnston & Mash, 1989; Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, & Sandler, 2005; Simons, Simons, Burt, Brody & Cutrona, 2005; Swick

& Broadway, 1997; Tollefson, 2000). There have also been studies that investigated the effects of parent and family at-home support, school-family-community partnerships, and school reform (Krieder & Bouffard, 2009; Newman, 1995; Sanders & Harvey, 2000; Shirley, 1997). These studies suggest that the added support of the home is invaluable to the learning process that children engage in when at school.

Finally, there are articles that highlight the effects that occur when children experience the differences between their home culture and the school's hidden culture (Clayton, 2003; Tepper, 1992; Yamauchi, 2005), what McLaren (1989) describes as "the unintended outcomes of the schooling process" (p. 86). Some examples of unintended outcomes, part of a hidden culture, become visible when children who are bullied by other children are not taken seriously by the adults in school or when students feel too intimidated to use the restroom in a certain building on campus. Parents may feel this when their culture is different from the teachers or staff, or when school procedures regarding homework pickup or home-school communication are not clear. These school expectations/views may impact the ways in which parents choose to become involved in their children's formal education when they hear about the things that their children may have to face at school, despite specific invitations from schools and a national mandate for parents to be involved.

The NCLB Guidelines

Section 1118 of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) has many laudable points that can help schools to implement and/or improve existing parent/family involvement programs. For example, the mandate provides specific instructions on how each school should a) "involve parents in the joint development" of a parent involvement policy; b) "provide the coordination, technical assistance, and other support" that is needed to

implement the PI programs and activities; c) "build the schools' and parents' capacity" to strengthen PI; d) "coordinate and integrate parental involvement strategies" with other existing programs such as Head Start, Even Start, and other federally-sponsored agencies; e) "conduct…an annual evaluation of the content and effectiveness of the parental involvement policy." A statement worth noting in Section 1118 is the inclusion of "identifying barriers to greater participation by parents in activities" as a part of the evaluation, barriers such as language, racial or ethnic backgrounds dissimilar from the school, disabilities or economic disadvantage. Schools are mandated to use this information from their evaluations to "design strategies for more effective parental involvement" (Sec. a.2.E.).

One important factor stated in the NCLB legislation is the coordination and integration of PI strategies with other existing agencies, as mentioned above. For example, this factor can help parents to advocate for children with special needs by getting resource information through existing organizations such as the Special Parents Involvement Network of Hawaii (SPIN). Through this agency, parents can learn about upcoming events that offer support and encouragement to their families or receive information about various services in the community, and more. SPIN and other agencies such as Head Start, a pre-school for children of lower income families, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), and even the national and local units of the PTA provide services to parents, but schools have the kuleana to connect these resources with the parents/families that they serve.

Also, listed in the NCLB document are parent involvement practices which school districts and schools can follow to help parents support student achievement. These include

such things as creating opportunities for home-school partnerships and ensuring that information regarding all parent involvement activities is appropriately communicated using language understood by all parents. Building capacity for “maximum parental involvement and participation” (Sec. e.10) is emphasized at the school or “local educational agency” level (i.e. the DOE) in areas such as providing “materials and training” (Sec. e.2.) for parents to help their children (e.g. literacy training and use of technology), funding for transportation and childcare, and arranging school meetings at different times or “conduct[ing] in-home conferences” (Sec. e.10.) if parents are unable to attend meetings at the school.

Problems with the NCLB policy have stirred strong feelings against it in many parts of the country. Many applaud NCLB’s *intent* to support our children, but the burden of the policy to carry out its recommendations is almost impossible. For example, educators point out that non-support from the federal government in the form of necessary funding to help schools implement the policy’s different parts make it difficult for schools to adhere to it, leaving less money for other school programs. Another problem is the effects of the high stakes testing mandates on the curriculum. Changes such as the loss of enrichment classes, fine arts or music education may mean that educators follow a narrowly-focused, “scripted” curriculum with parameters set by a government-backed entity.

Educators in administration and teaching also seem to feel that funding for PI may be non-existent due to lack of federal monies (V. Ing & J. Kawamura, personal communication, 2002; S. Kusunoki, personal communication, 2005). A final example and problem regarding this mandate is that, despite being well-intentioned, the mandates do not give adequate attention to “critically important issues of timing, context, and process” (Crosnoe, 2009). This point is supported by Kreider and Bouffard (2009) who state that “few incentives or

sanctions exist" (p. 179) that help schools, districts and states to follow through on the directives stated in NCLB. Krieder and Bouffard mention that parent/family involvement should be a "part of a continuous and evolving process" (p. 190) included in educational reform as a part of the larger "systemic effort" (p. 190) which NCLB is trying to address.

A big component of NCLB was the idea of school transfers where parents could move their children out of their home school district if that school did not meet adequate yearly progress. Lauen (2008) writes that these transfer provisions are difficult for local schools to implement because schools must 1) notify parents of their eligibility to transfer their children to another school; 2) have space available for incoming student transfers; and, 3) have a process to accommodate the extra students (pp. 209-10). Lauen argues that the transfer provision was set up to serve "disadvantaged families" (p. 210), but most of these parents do not know they can do this or they choose not to do so. The researcher also cites several parent opinion surveys about this topic and found that most parents a) think highly of their own children's school, but not schools, in general; and, b) may resist efforts to "punish" the school by transferring out, which helps schools to retain their monies. Issues of transportation became another concern for both families who need to get children to several schools instead of just one, and for schools who would have to pay for the service.

Epstein (2008) states that school improvements regarding PI should also be focused at the district level leaders whose ratings of various school-level programs range from "irrelevant and inadequate" to "essential guides" (p. 267). Her view is that district leaders are responsible for creating a culture of reform for all schools and cannot allow one school to thrive while others fail (p. 267). While this sentiment of success for all schools is commendable, the reality of school reform happens very slowly: "No quick fixes from

above—the Feds—but the mandates and incentives help prod it along" (H. Slaughter, personal communication, January 26, 2011).

Middle School Policies

The National Middle School Association (NMSA) has provided invaluable direction via their position paper, *This We Believe: Keys to Educating Young Adolescents* (2010) (and in an earlier document, *This We Believe: Successful Schools for Young Adolescents, 2003)*, about the educational needs of middle school students, a.k.a. "young adolescents," ages 10-15 years. In support of the NMSA, Pate and Andrews (2006) provided a research summary outlining the importance of parent involvement for children in this age group, with the key characteristic of "school-initiated family and community partnerships" (p. 1), a characteristic similar to Epstein's research (1995). Pate and Andrews also cite the research of Fan and Chen (2001) who analyzed various research studies and identified three main components of parent involvement for middle school children. They are a) communication (discussions about school and homework), b) supervision (monitoring of time spent on homework, after school activities and hours of television viewed), c) parenting styles and expectations (how and to what extent parents convey their academic aspirations to their children, and provide emotional support). The most critical of these three aspects is parenting styles: Authoritative, permissive or authoritarian (Baumrind, 1991), which Fan and Chen showed to be connected to student performance.

Pate and Andrews' summary present possible outcomes of PI for young adolescents which include "better student classroom behavior" and "improve[ed] student emotional well-being." The summary also suggests recommendations to increase PI in the middle schools by administering a "needs assessment" to discover any issues and/or concerns parents may have

about becoming involved as well as collaborating with parents to develop "shared goals and missions [of] young adolescents' learning and development" (p. 2).

A big part of the discussion of PI in middle schools stems from a shift in that, while it is strongly encouraged at the elementary level, PI is less encouraged at the middle school, which may be due to a question of what is appropriate and helpful parent/family involvement and/or engagement for young adolescents. As shown above, parent involvement for young adolescents is very much needed. The question then is how to move research from theory to application. The findings of this current project will be useful in this area.

Parent Involvement Research and Policies in Hawaii Schools

In Hawaii, educational research regarding parent involvement has a common thread: recognizing and using cultural knowledge and practices, diversity, language socialization and family/community relationships (Au & Kawakami, 1994; Boggs, 1983; Kekahio, 2007; Keliʻipio, 2007; Ledward & Takayama, 2009; Tepper, 1992; Yamauchi, 2005). Two of the studies specifically focus on parent involvement, including a qualitative middle school study of parent perceptions at a charter school (Yamauchi, Lau-Smith & Luning, 2008) and a study of negative parent involvement in public schools (Freehan, 2004).

Hawaiian cultural knowledge and practices are closely examined in the different phases of a local study, "Hawaiian Cultural Influences in Education" (HCIE) (Ledward & Takayama, 2009; Ledward, Takayama, & Elia, 2009; Ledward, Takayama, & Kahumoku, 2008). In one phase of this multi-faceted study, researchers identified several strengths of culture-based educational (CBE) strategies in order to see its effects on student outcomes. Culture-based education is the use of culture as the foundation for learning, for school procedures; it is intentionally set as the basis for the transference of knowledge. In Hawaiʻi,

the Hawaiian culture is the foundation for many of the charter schools. Two of these strengths are the ʻohana (family) and kaiāulu (community), entities that can be useful in the school and classroom. Language, cultural content and context, and assessment are the other components. Over 600 secondary school teachers in charter, public and private schools were surveyed. In the study, the researchers state that teachers "can harness the knowledge, skills, and experience of family and community members for the benefit of their classes" providing "productive streams that allow [for] the flow of information between students, family and community in a way that reinforces meaningful connections" (Ledward, Takayama, & Kahumoku, 2008, p. 1). This research also speaks to culturally responsive teaching in its promotion of parent/family involvement in formal and informal learning (discussed later).

Supporting the previous research is a new report by Tanabe & Nishimoto (2011) on school reform in Hawaiʻi that focuses on forming and supporting pilina, or relationships, for community and family engagement in the schools. The researchers looked at reform efforts nationally to see what kinds of initiatives would fit with educational changes occurring in the state now. They discovered that programs that focused on community and family engagement in education are the ones that "show the most promise" (p. 3). But crucial to these efforts are the perceptions of "trust and power" stemming from "communication based upon mutual respect" (p. 6) that can either facilitate or debilitate "authentic partnerships" (p. 6). This type of approach, a relational one, is also permeated by the concept of kuleana, discussed earlier. Tanabe's and Nishimoto's report includes recommendations such as collaborating with existing community organizations and programs, and establishing an intermediary for community and family engagement. One such program that has similar intent within Hawaii's public school system is described next.

The PCNC Program

The Hawaii State Department of Education (DOE) created the Parent/Community Networking Center (PCNC) program starting with six schools in 1986 with the express purpose of helping schools to implement some type of parent involvement program. Prior to 1986, there was no system-wide program that solely addressed PI.

The PCNC program came under the DOE's Family Support Services section who oversaw the distribution of monies to school districts for disbursement to schools; the program was given a "temporary" status. This meant that funding became available first for two positions at the state level, with the program growing slowly to include funded district and school level positions, as indicated by district superintendents and individual school principals. The growth continued to include the neighbor island schools/districts with funding for facilitators on those islands.

The creation of the PCNC meant that schools were able to hire part-time, non-teacher unlicensed individuals (called "parent facilitators") on a year-to-year basis, with the *intentional role* of providing parental support on school campuses via parent education workshops, parent-child learning activities, and volunteer recruitment for class and school activities. Initially, however, most facilitators spent an inordinate amount of time setting up refreshments for coffee hours, buying or making lei for visiting dignitaries, or helping out in the office making copies. Rarely, did these early efforts include looking at attitudes and beliefs that helped or hindered the home-school relationship building process. But with monthly training, facilitators and principals had the opportunity to learn about the PCNC facilitator's role, with the hopes of meeting the needs of their individual schools. Although there is still a lot that can be done to align the PCNC program with the NCLB guidelines, the

role of the parent facilitator on school campuses has evolved to more fully embrace family and community education in order to better assist schools with their parent involvement efforts.

The PCNC emphasis on research-based parent involvement added new foci to existing school PI programs when Epstein's framework (1995) of the six types of parent/family involvement, as previously mentioned, was incorporated in an educational policy by the Hawaii State Board of Education (#2403) in 2003. The framework was adopted by the state's public school system as a guide for parent involvement practices by administrators, teachers and the PCNC facilitator. No longer were facilitators only responsible for coffee hours, but now they were advised to make certain that parent education was a key ingredient in their schools. The framework was also adapted as guidelines for the National PTA (1997). In 2004, the State of Hawaii Legislature passed the Reinventing Education Act for Children (REACH) or Act 51 in which specified changes were made in order to improve public school education with appropriate funding from the state's general funds for supplies, equipment, a phone line and "a minimum of one part-time parent facilitator in each school" (p. 6). On paper, at least, every school in the state from elementary to high school was equipped to have a PCNC facilitator on campus. The opportunities for parent involvement at the school level seemed "permanent" because it was enacted into a law. However, the PCNC program still retained its temporary funding status.

Funding changes came in 2007 after discussions in the legislature, the DOE and the state Board of Education regarding the use of a "weighted student formula" (WSF) to decide how monies would be appropriated and used by schools. This put the majority of the decision making power over school budgets more firmly in the hands of principals/school staff to

decide how funds would be utilized at the school level, a good thing for schools. There was still funding for the PCNC positions at school, district and state levels, though changes were starting to be felt at the school level as principals/staff in some schools decided not to fund a facilitator, using the money instead for other things. Currently, the number of school level facilitators responsible for parent involvement with varying part-time hours (from six to 17 hours per week) has dropped to about 70%, with facilitators spread out unevenly between elementary, middle and high schools in each district. There are no state level facilitators and only three district facilitators, all on Oʻahu, and none on the neighbor islands.

Unfortunately, responsibilities for parent/family involvement "practices" are now sometimes left to the school counselor or vice principal (who are already pressed for time) or even the PTSA and may not be equitable or functioning in many public schools across the state, leaving much of the intent of the NCLB Act, Section 1118 for parent involvement unmet. Maunakai Middle School, the site of this study, does not have a PCNC facilitator position. Instead, their parent involvement consists mainly of family events such as ʻOhana Math Night and a curriculum fair for families that are planned by the leadership teams (consisting of teachers) for each grade level, 6th – 8th grades.

Major Issues about Home-School Relations

This section features some common problems that children and families may encounter and which can inhibit parent/family involvement and student achievement. Middle school concerns are also highlighted and explored.

Parent Involvement, Teacher Disposition and Attitudes

"The way schools care about children is reflected in the way schools care about the children's families" (Epstein, 1995, p. 701). Research has found that schools may have

narrow definitions of parent and family involvement and may not always recognize other types of parental support (Clayton, 2003; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Lopez, 2001; Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 2005). It has been my experience of working in the PCNC program that educators' ambivalent attitudes towards the 'ohana and their involvement can sometimes undermine the intent and practice of research and policies to promote it. Epstein (1995, 2001), The North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL, 1996) and The Education Alliance at Brown University (1996) suggest that teacher training is needed to promote positive attitudes about parental involvement. School principals, in particular, may be the key to creating an environment where all families are welcome to participate (Epstein, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey, Sanders, & Walker, 2005; NCREL, 1996). I have seen this happen myself working with different principals.

Also in this discussion are "social distance" and "tension" which are the ideas discussed in Hiatt-Michael's work (2006) regarding the attitudes and relationships between teachers and parents that result in "teacher resistance and fear" (Hiatt-Michael, 2006). Baum and McMurray (2004) state that prejudging of parents by pre-service teachers may also be due to the fact that many are in their early twenties, are not parents themselves and thereby have difficulty in relating to what being a parent entails. Unfortunately, Flanigan (2007, p. 96) reports educators being astonished at the fact that many student teachers are into blaming parents, instead of trying to understand them.

Experienced teachers' attitudes sometimes tend to rub off onto student teachers as they work together (Baum & McMurray-Schwarz, 2004). Bell, Washington, Weinstein, and Love (1997/2003) cite the importance for teachers to be aware of their own social identities and confront their own biases. Though the researchers' work is centered in the field of social

justice, the point here is one of continuous improvement and change when working with parents and families from different social groups. They state, “This self-examination is a life-long process. We all have areas of limited vision, particularly where we are members of the dominant group” (p. 468). Villegas and Lucas (2002) write that teacher education programs should help their students to develop sociocultural consciousness in order to gain “awareness that one’s [own] worldview is not universal” (p. 27).

Cultural and Socioeconomic Differences

Cultural patterns, home knowledge, social class and language that differs from school practices can be problematic for minority children and families (Au & Kawakami, 1994; Banks, 1996; Gallimore & Goldenberg, 2001, Meier, 2002). The differing home situations which children have to cope with, as outlined earlier, include children who are being raised by grandparents, foster parents or other adult caregivers who may not be related biologically. There are also children who may not have experienced preschool because of parental unemployment and, therefore, do not have prior knowledge of “schooling” before entering kindergarten. Further, there are children whose home lives have been disrupted through abuse, divorce, deployment of parents in the military or other stressful situations. All of these children bring their families’ lives into the classroom with them. These differences can lead to marginalization of children and families by the school culture (Purcell-Gates, 1995), and what Ogbu (1982) terms, “cultural discontinuities;” that is, schooling practices that are more difficult for children whose cultures and home lives are not aligned with the school’s views and habits (e.g. unfamiliar teaching/learning practices, unexplained terminology familiar only to educators or preferred ways of communicating with the teacher, etc.), suggesting a hidden culture at school. Bartolomé (1994/2003) states that recognizing and accepting students’

language and home knowledge “makes good pedagogical sense” (p. 417) for educators, which also “constitutes a humanizing experience for students traditionally dehumanized and disempowered in the schools” (p. 417).

Adding to the difficulties that minority parents/families may have in negotiating school culture are things like the perceptions of teachers even before they are in a classroom, and mainstream learning expectations via standards-based education. For example, Hiatt-Michael (2006) stated that cultural differences are issues that university programs must address in teacher education programs in order to help new teachers in their relationships with parents and families, especially when those families may be culturally different from the teachers. Hiatt-Michael wrote, “University preparation programs should not expect overburdened schools to handle such an essential teacher education component.” Teacher education programs that include discussions of kuleana to transform individual perceptions of PI in a positive fashion may be more beneficial to children and families in the long run.

Changes from a natural structure of learning to current instruction based on standardized tests and constant assessments erases the natural socialization of the learning process (Deering, Apisa, & Black, 2005; Smith, 1995) leaving minority children and their families stranded at the intersection of home and school, and branded as having deficits (Kim, 2009). For parents and schools, cultural differences are exacerbated further when trying to communicate needs and expectations in the following section.

Home-school Communication

A large part of building bridges between home and school is the *communication* between both groups. Graham-Clay (2005) writes that there are two types of communication. The first type is used to *inform*, while the second form of communication involves "interactive dialogue between teachers and parents" (p. 118). Examples of the first communication type are things like the school newsletter, notices and flyers such as school brochures, reminders about field trips, daily notebooks or planners, report cards, and the school Website. At my school, I maintain a parent email list to send out announcements and notices of events. However, this technology tool becomes a two-way communication device, an 'interactive dialogue', such as when parents email me back to ask specific questions (e.g., "Is there tutoring or after school help for my child?") or ask for help if they have a concern (e.g., "My child told me of an incident that happened at lunch. Who can I speak to about it?"), or to find out more information regarding school programs (e.g. "What kinds of help does the PTSA need?).

I believe that the actions, as well as the intent, implied by the kuleana inherent in positive communication are crucial to establishing strong pilina. Several scholars in parent involvement have indicated the importance of taking a positive approach when trying to establish the lines of open communication (Graham-Clay, 2005; Flanigan, 2007; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2004; Ramirez, 2002; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Lawrence-Lightfoot (2004) cites Waller's 1932 book called, "The Sociology of Teaching," in which he explains that parents' communication is based from their perspective of the individual child while teachers/schools have a more universal perspective, viewing all the children in the class or school, instead of just one. These two differing viewpoints and

positions probably contribute a lot to the tension that is sometimes felt (Flanigan, 2007; Graham-Clay, 2005; Ramirez, 2002).

Communication from teachers to parents is often negative and has consequences for student, parent and teacher, e.g. lowered self-esteem, learning identity and sometimes behavioral problems for the student, and for the parent/teacher, confusion, frustration, growing mistrust or anger (Graham-Clay, 2005; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2004; Osborn, McNess & Pollard, 2006). For minority parents, negative communication is usually unintended but occurs due to misunderstanding of cultural differences (Tharp, Jordan, Speidel, Au, Klein, Calkins, Sloat, & Gallimore, 2007). Having to make negative phone calls or schedule meetings to discuss student concerns with parents can be softened if the foundation for good communication is laid first (P. Laba, personal communication, April 8, 2010; Hiatt-Michael, 2006; Ramirez, 2002). Lawrence-Lightfoot (2004) cited an interview with a teacher who scheduled “listening conferences” with the parents of the children in her class at the beginning of the school year, asking guiding questions about the child’s strengths and possible areas of concern that the parents may have.

Combining parent and teacher voices in this manner may prove more useful and less stressful in the long run, and also takes care of the pilina and kuleana in the classroom. Graham-Clay (2005) compares effective communication skills to the skills teachers need in teaching and says that by acquiring strong communication skills, teachers can “effectively communicate with their parent community” (p. 126). Communication, among other things, in middle school is a bit more challenging, as explained in the next section.

Changing Views of Adolescents' and Parents' Roles in Middle Grades

When I ask the elementary parents at my school if they are ready for their child to go to middle school, I get the usual reaction—fear: Fear that their child will not adjust well, fear that he/she will get in with the wrong crowd or fear that there will be a "junk" teacher (a perception usually as a result of residual memories from their own experiences). These fears are well-founded: Rapid developmental, social, and emotional changes are the hallmark during this period of life. Adolescents may experience greater anxiety (Osborn, McNess & Pollard, 2006), take part in smoking, drug use and other risky behaviors and, as a result, they are at a higher risk for disengagement in school and subsequent drop out (Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005; Harvard University, 2007).

What I have come to realize is that the parents' fear is really a fear of less control on their side and their child's growing autonomy on the other. Research supports this and points to the fact that successful middle school transition is significant, especially for school engagement and future advancement in reaching high school graduation and post-secondary education (Balfanz, Herzog & Mac Iver, 2007; Fulton & Turner, 2008; Harvard University, 2007). Added to this are protective factors that also emerged from the data which are parental attitudes, also referred to as "parental warmth" (Fulton & Turner, 2008) and practices, and supervision or monitoring (Harvard University, 2007).

While parent involvement is still significantly linked to positive outcomes for adolescents, such as "fewer disciplinary problems" and "higher aspirations" (Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005, p. 164), most middle schools notice a decrease in parent participation, sometimes even starting in the upper elementary years. Besides growing autonomy on the child's part, as mentioned earlier, another reason for this decrease may be that parents may

think they are not needed as much during this time, unlike in elementary school (D. Albinio, personal communication, April 2009; Baker, 1997). Other barriers (Gabriel, 2000) to parent involvement in the middle schools are language differences, made more difficult when non-English speaking parents have to contend with six teachers and other school personnel (including negotiating the various personalities in the school office) or barriers such as time factors due to employment and childcare, a difficulty for single parents (Baker, 1997; Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005) and parents working two or more jobs. Negative school experiences that parents might have had themselves may be a barrier to PI (K. Ho-Mook, personal communication, January 6, 2011) as well as "cultural norms that differ from mainstream experiences" (Gabriel, p. 254) that may result in a perceived lack of cultural capital or social capital. And sometimes the barrier is still the attitude that schools may have of "the good parent is the visible parent" (Hoover-Dempsey, Ice, & Whitaker, 2009).

These barriers are the same ones that elementary school parents encounter, but can become exacerbated when children reach the middle school years, as shown at the transition point between elementary and secondary school. The parents of a fraternal twin study (Osborn, McNess & Pollard, 2006) reported a dramatic shift from "their established patterns of strategic actions" (p. 427) during elementary school involvement to dealing with a different set of rules and school structures in middle school. In their case, *assigned parent role construction* (PRC discussed earlier), this time from the school's perspective, created a barrier that seemed to change the family's social/cultural capital because the school offered no collaboration opportunities to the parents (p. 426); there was no acceptance or little value on the school's part to use the home knowledge experiences in education of the parents. Osborn, McNess, and Pollard (2006) write that the "funds of knowledge" (Moll, Amanti,

Neff & Gonzalez, 2005) the parents in their study had about their children were adequately used and supported in primary school, but were very restricted in the secondary school (p. 427). In other words, their involvement was not as valued when their children had transitioned to middle school. Why did such a change occur? And does this happen as well here in Hawaii public middle schools? Finding the answers to these questions is part of the focus of this study.

Hawaiian Culture and Parent Involvement

"‘A ‘ohe pau ka ‘ike i ka halau ho‘okahi."
All knowledge is not taught in one school.
One learns from many sources.[4]

The ‘olelo no‘eau just stated and at the beginning of Chapter One reminds us that knowledge transference may occur in our relationships within our families and homes, within our communities, workplaces and schools. "The contemporary is native," writes Ah Nee-Benham (2008) in reference to teaching and ways of learning that recognize and embrace *us* as indigenous peoples—our language, music, customs and cultural practices (or lack, thereof), our thought processes and resulting habits, our feelings of displacement and actions of recovery, of strife and of striving together for the purpose of (re)connecting our selves to each other and to the land. Again, the possibility of kuleana as a framework for this study and its future application for schools and families means that the weaving of all of the above components is crucial for the sake of our children.

[4] Pukui, M. K. (1983).

Culturally Responsive, Indigenous Education

Culturally responsive education (CRE) is a term/action which encompasses kuleana and focuses on making changes, such as the production and delivery of knowledge for children and their families who have been marginalized in the classroom by traditional schooling. The going has not been easy for this effort and much work still needs to be done, especially in the public schools with large numbers of Native Hawaiian and other indigenous students, such as those attending Maunakai Middle School. Recent research in indigenous education has substantiated the application of "a holistic, academically sound, and culturally based curriculum" (Benham, 2006) that supports educational attainment for us. When discussing educational needs for indigenous peoples, we need to consider the process of how knowledge is transferred from one generation to the next. In what context does the transference of indigenous knowledge take place?

An example of a traditional transference of knowledge, Boggs, Gegeo-Watson and McMillen's (1985) ethnographic report of a study in Nānākuli included observations of the ʻohana and of the relationship between grandparent and grandchild, stating that, "It is of great significance to education to consider that it was in the grandparent-grandchild relationship that intellectual growth was to be nourished" (p. 17). The researchers claimed that the less strict relationship allowed for "'transmission of the most abstract knowledge" (p. 17), something not occurring as frequently in the stricter parent-child relationship; this type of language and learning exchange may have impacted ways of speaking, teaching and learning for Native Hawaiian children (see also Handy, Craighill, & Pukui, 1972). Boggs' point supports Pukui's ʻolelo noʻeau above, a way of learning-knowing that I experienced as a child with my kupuna, grandparents. This five-step teaching process included (a) observation

or nānā, to look at what is happening; (b) listening or hoʻolohe, requiring one to be attentive to what is being taught; (c) inferred reflection by using the senses of sight and hearing to make a deduction (Chun cites the Hawaiian term “paʻa ka waha” or shut the mouth, p. 5); (d) performance of the task or hana ka lima, literally meaning “the hands create or do” (p. 5); and, (e) questioning or nīnau, after having gone through the other steps to find that other important questions may still be unanswered (Chun, 2006).

The most significant aspect of the example above is the relationship, pilina, between the teacher and the learner, be it by kinship or not. The importance of relationships and a sense of belonging still thrive in many Native Hawaiian families, a strength that is untapped in the school (DeBaryshe, Yuen, Nakamura & Stern, 2006; personal communication, M. Chun, November 1, 2007). Semali (1999) uses the term, *indigenous literacy,* to describe the social learning process of how children perform tasks or skills as taught to them by their ʻohana, skills that contributed to the family and community welfare (Schonleber 2007). Schonleber (2007) also points out that the ability for children to learn and perform certain tasks was not based upon predetermined ages, as is the case in Western schools.

Other knowledge transference methods were evident as the Hawaiians of old used many different tools to gain knowledge and to survive in their world, at that time and space. Historically, Native Hawaiians had an extensive oral language base that influenced their daily lives in sharing knowledge as a means to ensure survival (Benham & Heck, 1998; Chun, 2006; Kamakau, 1991). For instance,the use of ʻoli, or chants, recounted stories and events as an aid to group memory, a tradition still practiced today. There were traditional methods of teaching, of using educational tools and of experimentation that enabled Native Hawaiians to access the vast resources that the islands offered. Much of the culture has been

preserved through the writings of early Native Hawaiian scholars such as Malo (1903/1997) and Kamakau (1964/1991) and the ethnographic research of Mary Kawena Pukui who orally recorded many traditions as taught to her by her mother and grandmother. Her compilation of ‘olelo noeau, or wise sayings, are tools that modern Hawaiians can utilize to remember the teachings of those who came before, what Meyer (2004) terms as “functional knowledge.”

Culturally responsive education is attuned to the needs of marginalized students and families. For example, Au and Kawakami (1994) noted that a strengths-based approach for teachers to utilize would be if “classroom instruction is conducted in a manner congruent with the culture of the home” (p. 6), also termed *“culturally compatible”* instruction (as cited in Jordan, 1985). In terms of language use for students who speak varieties of English such as Hawaiian Creole English (HCE) or Pidgin and Black Vernacular English (BVE), Au and Kawakami suggest that teachers can enhance the performance of their students through changing practice in such a way that “recognize and build upon their strengths in language” (p. 8). They state that academic success for these students may be jeopardized when “teachers have the mistaken assumption that students’ [home] language is somehow inferior” (p. 8) or they may be unaware of any language differences at all between home and school.

Strengths-based approaches/practices through culturally responsive education that includes the use of home- and family-based knowledge reflects a positive step toward instruction that can affect changes in school culture and in academic success for all students. This approach also demonstrates the influence and effects of kuleana upon education for all.

Summary

The goal of this study was to examine the attitudes, beliefs and practices of parents/families and educators with the purpose of helping them to combine their voices in support of their middle school children and students, kuleana being the starting point in which to accomplish this task. The combined knowledge and literature, previously noted, highlight the importance of establishing and utilizing home-school relationships for the benefit of children. School-initiated plans that include cultural awareness and opportunity for parent/community input may increase the numbers of individual teachers who make home-school relationships more of a priority in their classrooms and throughout the schools. The NCLB guidelines provide information and direction as to how to collaborate with parents and families, while also providing support to the families whose circumstances and backgrounds may be different from those of school personnel.

Using a strengths-based approach when working with parents and families instead of a deficit one, gives acknowledgement to and values the incorporation of home/family contributions to the classroom and school. For young adolescents, the need for home-school partnerships is just as important as partnerships in elementary schools because of the emotional, physical and social changes that middle school children experience. Parents and educators who can work together to provide age-appropriate guidance will be able to support their children’s academic efforts into their future.

CHAPTER 3. METHODS

This case study research examined parents' and educators' beliefs and attitudes regarding parent/family involvement at Maunakai Middle School in Hawaii. The main method of the study incorporated qualitative methods through interview and grounded theory analysis in order to shed light on how these stakeholders can work together to improve student achievement and engagement. In addition, an applied ethnographic approach was used to facilitate field work. Though there is a quantitative component (a six-point Likert scale questionnaire with questions from both the parent and teacher perspectives), the emphasis of this study focused on the "fine grain detail" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000, p. 183) that emerged from the interviews of parents and teachers. The inclusion of a questionnaire helped to provide some uniformity and opportunity to elicit different responses, but also added a measure of convenience in enlisting participants whose consent was given for both questionnaire and interview automatically (although participants could withdraw from the study at any time). Using the questionnaire provided an extra window into a participant's perception of what PI is. A second benefit is that it may offer indirect solutions to parent involvement programs in those schools without trained staff (see Appendix A and B for parent and educator questionnaires).

However, I believe that the "picture" represented by the survey results is not always clear, may be one-sided, or distorted if participants select responses that they may think are correct, but are not necessarily true. The qualitative interviews helped to diminish this problem while giving a more in-depth look into the existing attitudes and beliefs between home and the case study school, a look that could help the principals and teachers incorporate strategies for positive changes in the pilina, or relationships. While qualitative data usually

cannot be generalized, it is nonetheless valuable and useful because information gathered is unique to a particular school community. Readers of this study may find the results applicable to their own schools, thus making the data important to school leadership and parent groups. Epstein (1995, 2001) writes that schools should be the ones to take the initiative in establishing partnerships with parents. Educators know what the students need to do at school, but may only see the weaknesses, and not the strengths, of some of their students and families. Parents can be the resource to deeper knowledge about their child and community (see also Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 2005), but may need guidance and help in utilizing school knowledge (e.g., how to help with homework, establish family routines to accommodate busy schedules, the best way to communicate with the teacher, who to ask for help with student activities, etc.) in the home. I hoped that with my past experience in working as a PCNC facilitator, my presence in the schools was seen as less intrusive and more collegial than others. However, the school in which the research took place did not have a PCNC position, and while most teachers and staff were familiar with the term, some parents were not.

It was crucial to establish congenial relationships with both teachers and parents rather quickly due to the short time period in which to gather data (about five months). As such, it was also a critical step because of the nature of the study, as it delves into what both groups consider to be "teacher territory", the school classroom and school. Again, words and actions—my kuleana—were important in creating feelings of mutual respect and trust. Selection of the case study school, recruitment and descriptions of participants, procedures (including plans to offset possible relationship issues), and data collection are discussed next.

Selection of the Case Study School

An earlier pilot study identified eight possible middle school sites that expressed interest in being participant schools. Final selection of Maunakai Middle School was based upon several factors. These were my proximity to the school, ease of accessibility to sample population (medium to high number of Native Hawaiian students), and principal permission.

Participants

As previously mentioned, studies of this age group in Hawaiʻi are rare. I used purposeful sampling and criterion sampling for this research which focused on the parents and teachers of a unique age group, the "tweeners," students in grades six through eight (the criterion). They are considered too old to be in elementary and too young for high school (Patton, 2002, p. 243-4). There were no student participants in this project.

Recruitment of participants. My original ideas for recruitment included larger numbers of participants (30-50) and a coffee-hour type meeting at a set time and place on the Maunakai campus. Realities experienced during my pilot study indicated this was not feasible. Again, kuleana and its connection to pilina were in my mind here. A coffee hour, no matter how informal, may still be misconstrued as a "meeting" especially to parents who speak English as a second language or parents who perceive a researcher identified with the school as "the expert", or who find themselves being bombarded with questions by a complete stranger. Parents of Hawaiian or other Pacific Island ancestry may be particularly sensitive to these issues. And interviewing 30-50 participants may mean rushing through the interviews without hearing/observing/feeling what is being said.

Instead of the plan above, I had two different ways offered to me by the principal, Mr. Roberts,[5] to recruit participants. I approached parent/caregivers and teachers as I made prearranged site visits during various activities (e.g. Open House, curriculum fair, ‘ohana math night, etc.). This recruitment process was suggested because the principal felt that I would have a better chance of eliciting parent interest and participation at an event, rather than trying to solicit participants during the morning or afternoon rush when parents are dropping off or picking up children, may have caregiver responsibilities or are rushing off to work. I did try to distribute surveys before school began just to see what would happen. It was not a successful endeavor as far as distribution goes, but it was insightful as an opportunity to observe the interactions between the middle school students and the adults who were dropping them off at school. I ended up assisting several students as parents were late pulling up to the curb to drop off their children.

The other approach to recruitment involved the help of two allies. In recruiting participants from the educators for the case study, the principal had assigned a leadership team teacher, Ms. Kanemura who assisted me in finding teacher participants. The counselor, Ms. Rodrigues, had also volunteered to take part in the study, as well as help recruit other parent and teacher participants. Both of them assisted with the distribution and collection of the questionnaires, with the counselor also allowing me to distribute surveys to parents via the students in her advisory class. After realizing that large numbers of participants were unwieldy, I was able to survey and interview eight teacher/educators; the principal was an interview participant only. I was also able to get incidental interviews with two other staff members at Maunakai School. One was a custodian and a grandmother of several children at the school. The other staff member was the coordinator for the Primary School Adjustment

[5] All names referring to participants or school personnel are pseudonyms.

Program (PSAP) which supports elementary-aged children having difficulty with adjusting to school. Out of the 11 parents surveyed, I was able to interview seven of them. A few from each group were also participants in my pilot study the previous year. Participation for all was strictly voluntary and participants could drop out at any time.

Participant descriptions Tables 1 and 2 show the demographic histories of the parent and educator participants. Recognizing and accepting the variability between participants in each group was helpful during the interviews and provided a lot of reference points to connect to and build our relationships. This was crucial for getting to know the participants quickly. For example, both groups, parents and teachers, were ethnically diverse, and all but two parents were Native Hawaiian. Some diversity was also apparent in the parents' group regarding being caregivers, as not all were the biological parents of the children. The range of education for the parents group was on the high end with a majority of them having some kind of college experience, and one having a master's degree.

A commonality of both parent and educator groups was the high number of female compared with male participants. Noticeable at the school events was that there were more mothers and other adult females (e.g. grandmothers, older siblings) attending than fathers. Fathers and male teachers were asked to participate in the study just as often as mothers and female teachers. Only two fathers completed surveys; another father participated in the interview with his wife who completed the survey forms. Many of the mothers who completed surveys did so because their husbands/partners passed the forms on to them; I saw this happen several times when recruiting participants at the Open House and the curriculum events. Of the teachers/educators, only one male teacher responded, even though I personally hand delivered surveys to teachers in their classrooms after school.

Table 1. *Description of Parent Participants at Maunakai Middle School*

Parent participants *n=12*	Gender	Main caregiver, relationship	Ethnicity	Educational level attained	Multi-generational household	Grade level of child
[a]1	F	Yes, parent	Native/Part Hawaiian	Finished high school	Yes	9th
[a]2	F	Yes, parent	Native/Part Hawaiian	Some college	No	9th
[a]3	F	Yes, parent	Native/Part Hawaiian	Associate's degree	No	9th
[b]4	F	Yes, parent	Samoan	Master's degree	Yes	7th
5	F	Yes, adoptive parent	Native/Part Hawaiian	Finished high school	Yes	7th
6	F	Yes, parent	Native/Part Hawaiian	Bachelor's degree	Yes	8th
7	F	Yes, parent	Native/Part Hawaiian	Some college	No	7th
[c]8	F	No, grandparent	Samoan	Completed diploma program	Yes	7th
9	F	Yes, grandparent	Caucasian, Native/Part Hawaiian, Puerto Rican, Italian	Some college	Yes	8th
10	M	Yes, parent	Caucasian, Native/Part Hawaiian, Filipino, Chinese	Some college	No	7th
11	F	Yes, parent	Native/Part Hawaiian, Filipino	Some high school	No	8th
12	M	Yes, parent	Native/Part Hawaiian	Finished high school	No	7th

Source: Participant-reported data.
Note. Parents 1-8 are survey/interview participants; parents 9-12 are survey participants only.
[a]Parents 1-3 are pilot study participants.
[b]Data reported by one parent who completed survey; two parents participated in interview.
[c]Participant interview only; no survey record, self-reported data.

Table 2. *Description of Teacher & Other School Staff Participants at Maunakai Middle School*

Teacher* Participant	Years of service	Current position	Educational background	Coursework in parent involvement	Ethnicity
1	14	Science teacher, nutrition & gardening	B.A. in economics; MS in Marine Science; Cert. bilingual & cross cultural education	Teacher certification included parent/home visits, parent-adult literacy	Caucasian
2	6	8th grade Special Education (SPED)	B.A. English / American Literature, M. Ed., SPED	Class discussions in relation to cultural awareness	Caucasian
3	22	Art teacher, 6-8 grades	B.A. Education, academic degree	no	Korean / Portuguese
4	6	Math/Science, 6th gr. Hawaiian Lang., 7th gr.	B. Ed.	none	Native/Part Hawaiian
5	4	Counselor (pub. & private sch.)	B.A. Psychology, MSCP, school counseling	Practicum & internship experiences	Caucasian / Native/Part Hawaiian
6	6	7th gr. English/ Language Arts	B.A., English; minor, Community Development; PBSCE, Eng./ Lang. Arts	none	Caucasian
7	4	8th gr. Science	B.S. Marine Biology, M.Ed.	none	Caucasian / Native American
8	4	School-based Behavioral Health (SBBH) Specialist	B.S. Psychology; M.S. Marriage / Family Therapy	Several classes	Caucasian / Chinese

Source: Self-reported data via survey and interview.
Note. Some participants are not regular classroom teachers (counselor, #5 and SBBH, #8). Principal interview data not listed here; did not complete survey.

A final important point to note in the teachers' background is the lack of pre-service coursework and experience that the classroom teachers received in learning about parent/family involvement. Only two out of the six classroom teachers had prior coursework experiences, with one teacher having regular parent contact via home visits as a requirement in her teachers' education program. The other two educators, the counselor and SBBH specifically, had PI courses as a part of their regular training as counselors.

Though I felt that the sample size for the study was still too small, it was comforting when I read the following statement by Patton (2001), "The validity, meaningfulness, and insights generated from qualitative inquiry have more to do with the information richness of the cases selected and the observational/analytical capabilities of the researcher than with sample size" (p. 245). This meant that I had to be sure to find the small detailed stories embedded in the "big stories of local culture" (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009). It also meant that my note taking and memos, part of the ethnographic approach mentioned earlier, had to be precise enough to support the recorded interviews.

As mentioned earlier, kuleana is the reference point from which I conducted my study so *my* kuleana here was to ensure that my communication, verbal and non-verbal, was friendly, respectful, and comfortable with whomever I was speaking to: parent, student or teacher, grandparents, young ones, staff or community member.

Data Collection

Data collection for the study at Maunakai Middle School was done in two parts, one via questionnaire and the other through personal interviews. Maunakai's principal, Mr. Roberts, and counselor, Ms. Rodrigues, were consulted before survey distribution for their input as to the best way to gather the data.

Surveys. Parent/educator questionnaires were offered to the participants in either a hard copy format (see Appendices A and B) or on line. All participants used the hard copy survey. A total of 72 questionnaires for the parents were distributed over a five-month period, mostly during school events such as the annual Open House, student-led conferences as parents waited outside of classrooms for their appointments, and ‘ohana activities such as math night. The counselor and math teacher helped me to distribute approximately 40 teacher/educator surveys to school faculty and staff. In some instances, we delivered surveys twice to the same recipients due to loss or “misplaced” forms. As a result, the counselor decided to go ahead and make sure that everyone got a second survey to complete. Educator participants who had turned in their first forms gave the okay to use those, as the information was relatively the same.

The questionnaires were placed in envelopes labeled with my contact information and an identifying number for ease of tracking as well as a letter from the principal stapled on the outside. Each envelope contained one copy each of a brief introductory note about the research study and instructions on how to fill out the forms (on colored paper), two informed consent forms (one printed on colored paper), a demographic questionnaire and the parent/family involvement questionnaire. Participants were asked to sign both informed consent forms, keep the colored copies for their records, complete the questionnaires and return the papers to me, sealed in the envelope. Though the questionnaire was available on line, the majority of the participants preferred to complete the standard paper form. As I spoke with potential parent participants, I showed them all of the documents and gave them the option of either completing the questionnaire right away or taking it with them and returning it to the counselor or the school secretary, with whom I had made arrangements to

collect any returned forms. Seventeen parents returned the survey forms (though five were unusable) while eight educators returned the forms. Details are explained in Chapter Four.

A six-point Likert scale was used in the questionnaire responses for both groups. The surveys for parents and teachers were essentially the same but differed in the types of questions being asked in order to reflect the home or school perspective (e.g. “This school views parents as important partners” versus “Parent involvement can help teachers be more effective with more students”). These measures were adapted from previous surveys by Epstein (1994) and Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005). While they may not capture the entire picture of what PI looks like at Maunakai Middle School, these scales provided a good starting point for the interviews to follow.

Interviews. Although the processes of pilina and kuleana were important in the recruitment of participants, I felt they were even more essential when conducting the interviews. Successful outcomes were dependent upon my ability to help the interviewees be comfortable and at ease as they shared their moʻolelo, stories, and portions of their family’s lives. Charmaz (2006) writes, “Our respect for our research participants pervades how we collect data . . . We demonstrate our respect by making concerted efforts to learn about their views and actions and to try to understand their lives from their perspective” (p. 19). Questions of validity and reliability may arise but use of narrative analysis helped to present the stories told by the participants (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) state that “interviewers and interviewees alike bring their own, often unconscious, experiential and biographical baggage with them into the interview situations” (p. 121) thus affirming the purpose for ethnographic interview and qualitative study, which is

to present accurate depictions of the storyteller while also acknowledging their real life experiences.

The interviews were semi-structured because guiding questions for both parent and teacher groups (see Appendices C and D) allowed me to direct the interviews better and use the interview time wisely (Patterson, 2002, p. 344). The interview questions focused mainly on the groups' personal beliefs and attitudes about parent involvement, different types of educational practices and strategies used in the home or at school, developmental changes of middle school students and identified focal points in the literature to help meet their needs. Explorations of critical incidents of positive or negative relationships each group may have experienced were addressed. Also, specific questions addressing kuleana, pilina, kaiāulu, and 'ohana and other cultural markers (such as values) were asked with varying frequency, pending whether or not the participants mentioned these first or alluded to them. For example, a question asked of the teachers was, 'What do you think your kuleana is towards your students' families?' Sometimes the question was voiced as, 'Do you think you have a kuleana…?' Parents were asked questions about kuleana regarding the school and the kaiāulu, community and whether there were any shared responsibilities within it.

Interviews in the pilot study I conducted, and in this current study, were set up to employ a "conversational strategy" (Patton, 2002, p. 347) in which I identified certain questions that had to be asked the exact same way in every interview, while giving myself and the person being interviewed flexibility to let the "conversation" go deeper in some areas or lead to "new areas of inquiry" (p. 347). This approach lends itself well to the "talk story" feel that I was aiming for which helped to dissipate some of the nervousness that the participants may have felt while being interviewed (Boggs, Watson-Gegeo, & McMillen,

1985; Yamauchi, 2005). Many times during the conversations, especially with the parents, we lapsed into Hawaiian Creole English (HCE or Pidgin) which cemented our relationships further. The grammar, tone, and voice inflections of Pidgin only added to the comfortableness of our conversations. “Talk story” is the local equivalent of an informal speech event that one uses within familial groups or with friends, usually overlaid with Pidgin instead of standard, formal English. As Boggs, et al point out, it provided an opportunity for both the participants and me to engage in a “rich variety of verbal expressions” (p. 9) which included “alliteration, rhyming, and cospeaking” (p. 9). More importantly, talk story has a more “egalitarian mode” (p. 8) which enabled me to talk with the grandmother and the other parents equally. Likewise, when interviewing the educators, three of them readily used Pidgin as their speech choice, even when using technical terms to describe quarterly assessments, academic progress or other curricular concerns. One teacher who did not grow up in Hawaii used learned voice inflections attributed to HCE while speaking with me in Standard English wording, unaware that she was doing so.

As a researcher, I made the decision to report interview data in Standard English to make the data easily accessible to all readers. This decision was not meant to dismiss nor disrespect Hawaiian Creole English or its speakers. Rather, my intent was to protect the participants from possible negative judgments or misperceptions that may be made about them. HCE is a viable, full and grammatically correct language used by many in Hawaiʻ i, including myself.

Educators were given the option to be interviewed individually as well as in focus groups. All chose to be interviewed separately. Individual interviews gave the teachers opportunities to speak freely as it has been my experience that some educators will not

necessarily reveal certain types of information with others present. This was also a better option for the school principal, the counselor and the school-based behavioral health (SBBH) therapist as their viewpoints differed from those of classroom teachers. Offering to meet the teachers on campus at their convenience or to conduct phone interviews with them to accommodate scheduling was much appreciated.

Parent/caregiver participant interviews were conducted individually due to privacy issues at a place/time of their own choosing. During the pilot study, it seemed that time constraints were just as challenging for parents (I called to set up an interview with one parent who was in the middle of helping her high-school-aged child shop for a prom dress). As a result, the offer of phone interviews for the parents/caregivers was made in that study and this one also.

For all of the participants, the biggest problem in scheduling interviews was time. Most of the participants chose to do phone interviews, which was not a particular problem for those who were previously interviewed for the pilot study because some of those interviews were done face-to-face. However, for the first-time participants, the phone interviews brought particular challenges in that the social aspect of face-to-face conversation was missing, losing the added meaning of non-verbal cues (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2002). Cohen, Manion and Morrison cite Miller and Cannell (1997) in stating that “the absence of essential social elements could undermine the salient conduct of the interview” (p. 124). Cohen, Manion, and Morrison also cite the same researchers who, on the other hand, state that a strength of doing phone interviews is that some participants may willingly disclose information that they ordinarily would not share in a face-to-face interview.

All of the phone and personal interviews were audio recorded. For the parent group, there were four phone and five face-to-face interviews; the numbers were split about the same way for the educators group.

Finally, in conducting phone interviews for this project, I had to take extra care to make sure that my intentions were clearly understood by the participants, that I answered all of their questions, and that I reassured them several times before and after the interview that their privacy would not be compromised. This was a very important step involving trust in our quickly established relationships, especially for some of the parents who were hesitant at first to participate. Some parents seemed to need reassurance more than others while the educators were okay with the basic procedures. All participants were assigned a number for identification purposes.

Data analysis

A triangulation of methods used in the study—the survey, notes and memos, and interviews—are explained here. Though this study can be termed a "mixed method" study due to the inclusion of a survey, its intent was not to provide any inferential quantitative data. The sample size for this study is too small to make any inferences about the attitudes, beliefs and practices of Native Hawaiian parents and the educators regarding parent involvement. Rather the intent of using a quantitative scale was two-fold in that it provided a starting point for the questions that would be featured in the interviews and, more importantly, it gave me another point of triangulation to check and recheck data from the frequency charts that show a range of beliefs as well as some inconsistencies that are contrary to some of the stories shared in the interviews. Patton (2002) writes that "it is in data analysis that the strategy of triangulation really pays off, not only in providing diverse ways of looking at the same

phenomenon but in adding to credibility by strengthening confidence in whatever conclusions are drawn" (p. 556). This statement gave me hope that kuleana may provide a framework for parent-teacher relationships, that both the quantitative and the qualitative data can support the idea, and that there are possibilities for the combined voices of parents and teachers to make a difference in using it.

Qualitative analysis. The major data for the study came from the narratives gathered through the participants' interviews. Field notes and memo writing were invaluable aids to appraising any relationships, patterns and/or processes that emerged through the interviews, questionnaires, and observations at the various Maunakai Middle School activities. The value of using memos during the phone interviews became even more evident as an added measure of analysis. As I listened closely to each participant's audio recording, I started to note and then paid particular attention to three things: a) their voice intonations, b) any hesitancy and pause when answering questions and c) word choice used in their descriptions. I learned to quickly write down a word or phrase that I heard so that I could write a more complete memo about the stories immediately afterwards. After typing the transcripts, I then went back to check the memos and sometimes a survey form again, making additional notes and correcting any misinformation, if needed. This method served to help with triangulation as well.

Coding of the interview material involved being open to and comparing the emerging ideas, meanings, and terminology being used by both participant groups to identify parent/family involvement activities. Charmaz (2006) defines coding as "naming segments of data with a label that simultaneously categorizes, summarizes, and accounts for each piece of data" (p. 43). It is a "first step" in connecting statements found in data to "analytic interpretations." Table 3 depicts the first steps of my coding process.

Table 3. *Initial Coding*

Parent Involvement	Relationships & Partnerships	Parents-Families: What is the kuleana?	Parenting Skills	Schools	Academics (grades, curriculum)
Attitudes & beliefs	Attitudes, beliefs, acceptance, trust	Practices, habits, re education	Expect CHANGE! Transition issues	Definition of "partnership / PI"	Parent & teacher support of learning
Narrowly defined views by parents and teachers	"Triad" of parent, child, teacher	Value, idea(l)s, attitudes towards education	Age-appropriate parenting, discipline	Parameters of roles (assigned or unassigned)	Communication between P/T re help or support
Wide range of beliefs, practices from non-use to awareness to concerted efforts	Definitions of parent-teacher partnerships	Quality of parents' own educational experiences, +/-	Family dynamic changes; harder w/ multi-generational households	Hidden school culture i.e. ways of knowing, non-verbal cues, etc.	Teacher & parent expectations, strategies, practices for PI re curriculum, HW
Limited roles and/or parameters for PI	School initiated or home initiated?	SES factors, multi-generational families	Academics not as important, "not cool"	Interpretation of state/ fed PI policies	Parental expectations for post-secondary ed
State /fed policies	Varied acceptance levels by school	Types of home learning	More communication needed; TIMING is everything!	Open/closed communication	P /T views of student: "wide" vs. "narrow"
Limited funds	Critical incidents, +/-	Availability of role models for children		Invitations to participate	Interactions triggered by +/- grades
Existing DOE program w/set parameters	Cultural differences between parent/teacher	Level of school vs. community involvement		Barriers to involvement by parents	Availability of extra school supports (tutoring, after school programs)
		Types & levels of participation in education; more females		Self-imposed barriers by teachers re PI Teacher education re PI	Growing autonomy & independence of student toward school, family

Table 3. (Continued) Initial Coding

Culture	Community Kaiāulu	Communication	Transition	Middle School Students	Effects of Critical Incidents
Home & school differences, perceptions of value	Community resources (i.e. health center, parks programs, library, community sports, etc.)	"Narrow" vs. "wide" view of child/student	Ease or difficulty of transition from elementary to middle to high school	Formation of self-identity, image as mediated by peers, tech, family, school affecting relationships	Home / School definitions, practices, & strategies of parent involvement
Emic / etic perspectives	Cultural learning (i.e. geographic, ethnic, urban/rural)	Preferred methods of communication: email, snap grades, phone calls, notes & memos in student planner	Change in academic expectations of students by teachers, parents	Changes in social, academic, development, behavior	Communication differences; technology access
Group image / stereotype	Economic dynamics (growing or depressed)	Effective use of communication methods by other caregivers, e.g. grandparents	Varying viewpoints of appropriate transitions for PI in secondary school	Age-appropriate parenting strategies, discipline, academic consequences	Parent-teacher-child relationships, +/-
Cultural capital / social capital: who has it in this community? Who doesn't?	Social issues (e.g. drugs, income loss, homelessness, crime, overcrowding	Limited access to computers for some families enabling 1-way communication only		Student perceptions of PI	"Hidden" school culture effects on PI Cultural differences betw. teacher, student, parent

Later, the initial codes were consolidated into focused themes, presented and discussed more in detail in Chapter Four. According to Charmaz (2006, p. 57), this means using "significant and/or earlier frequent codes" to go through data and make decisions about which of the initial codes "make[s] the most analytic sense" in categorizing data completely and accurately.

One last procedure for the interviews was giving the participants opportunities to review their shared mo'olelo, stories, from their transcripts and make any changes that they wanted to. I was able to clarify certain questions that arose from the transcripts and memos via email with some of the parents and all of the educators, if it was necessary. Two of the parents did not have access to email; therefore, I was able to contact them by phone after mailing a hard copy of their transcripts to them. I used the corrected transcripts again with the memos. One example of this process occurred when I was trying to understand the various ways in which parents and educators defined parent involvement. Member checking with the participants revealed that both groups' ideas of PI were similarly defined. Their help and inclusion in the process added to the strengths-based approach of our researcher-participant pilina.

Indigenous Research Methodology

Including a section that discusses indigenous research is important to this study as well. The main point of indigenous research is to provide a way in which research can be constructed from a strengths-based viewpoint to benefit, and not harm, indigenous people. Historically, Western methods of research have overwhelmed and overused many indigenous peoples, including Native Hawaiians. The "benefits" of such research have been seen to benefit the researchers and not the indigenous participants or their community. As such, I expected and was apprehensive of possible "ambivalence by indigenous communities towards Western educated insiders" (Kaomea, p. 67). This heightened my sense of care towards all the participants of this study as well as my kuleana towards the gifts of their mo'olelo bestowed on me.

Smith's (1999) vision of indigenous theory contends that it "address[es] social issues within the wider framework of self-determination, decolonization, and social justice" (p. 4). The stance of indigenous theory is one that claims there is an "underlying code of imperialism and colonialism" (p. 7) of traditional research methods. This suggests a link between indigenous theory and critical theory's stance of critiquing the status quo that may indicate maintenance of the status quo by faculty/staff members. It is also an undetected part of the hidden curriculum in schools and of teacher practice, a factor that parents are not cognizant of when approaching those intersecting avenues of home-school dialogue. Another Maori indigenous researcher, Bishop (2005), stated that the issues of "power relations, representation, legitimization and accountability" from the researchers' view point can be addressed by indigenous peoples, in particular parents, through "conscious participation." Indigenous researchers are advocates of research that is "conducted reflexively, is respectful and ethical" (Kaomea, p. 70). This is something that I tried to do as I visited within the community, interviewed participants and in my research writing.

Smith maintains, "The challenge is always to demystify, to decolonize" (p. 16) the practices of research(er) on those who are researched. Again, the ideas of kuleana and relationships can be put into practice through dialogue and engagement with parents and school people and university/research educators alike.

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

After the Maunakai Middle School Open House, I told the counselor, rather disappointedly, that I had five parent questionnaires in hand. Ms. Rodrigues remarked, “Wow, five! That’s over the top for us around here, especially at the first crack!” With that sentiment, my doctoral study had begun.

The research questions explored the topics of how parents and teachers defined and implemented parent involvement, their expectations and experiences (critical incidents) in establishing relationships with each other, in what ways and under what circumstances did parents and teachers communicate with each other and what kinds of expectations did each group have regarding the academics of their children/students.

Survey Results

The data was first collected using a survey for both parent and educator groups. Formatting of the surveys for both groups was similar as participants were asked to indicate how much they agreed or disagreed with each statement on a six-point Likert scale. Results for each group are reviewed here.

Parents’ surveys. Seventeen parent surveys were returned, six of which were unusable due to lack of contact information or unsigned consent forms. Two of the eleven surveys were completed by fathers. However the fathers did not return my calls for follow-up interviews. So in the end, I was able to interview seven parents, all female, who had completed the survey. Three of the mothers were also participants in my pilot study. I had specifically contacted them to see if they would participate again as their children had transitioned from middle to high school. In addition to these seven interviews, two more parents were recruited by different means. One was through a personal contact of mine who

knew I was looking for interested participants willing to share their stories. The other was a father whom I had recruited to participate at Maunakai's Open House but who had his wife complete the survey. It was a bonus to interview them both at the same time.

Table 4 represents the survey responses for parents and the number of times parents responded to a particular item. All eleven were in agreement with a number of questions. Parents indicated that the school views them as 'important partners' and they 'feel welcome at the school.' Item eleven shows that all are involved when they discuss the importance of school with their children. Other questions showed a divergence of responses such as item six in which parents could help their children if given ideas from the teachers and item nine regarding more homework for their children in which most parents supported the notion, but with one parent disagreeing. Two questions, items four and eight, stood out because the response range encompassed all six degrees of the Likert scale, from '1-Disagree very strongly' to '6-Agree very strongly.' Item four, a negatively worded item, asked parents if their goals and the school's goals were different. One parent rated this statement a '6' (agree very strongly) but chose not to interview. This same parent gave the same rating to item eight which asked parents to agree or disagree if they are contacted when their children "does something well or improves." A different parent, who gave the score of '1' (disagree very strongly) for item four, is a very involved parent. Her husband is also the school's 'ohana group president who sat in with her during the interview. Their activity in the school corroborates the rating of 'disagree very strongly' in response The same participant also gave a high rating for item five which states, 'Many parents I know help out at school.' Again, her answer is probably based upon her level of involvement *at the school site* where she and her

husband are visible. This point, along with many others, came out during the interviews which are discussed in the interview results section later.

Table 4. *Parents' Survey Results: Beliefs about Parent Involvement*

Statement	)isagree ery trongly	)isagree	Disagree just a little	Agree just a little	\gree	Agree very strongly
n=11						
1. This school views parents as important partners.	0	0	0	4	5	2
2. I feel welcome at this school.	0	0	0	3	5	3
3. My child talks about school at home.	0	0	1	2	5	3
4. The school and I have different goals for my child.	1	4	0	2	3	1
5. Many parents I know help out at the school.	0	5	2	3	0	1
6. I could help my child more if the teachers gave me more ideas.	0	0	1	6	4	0
7. The school invites parents to attend events regularly.	0	0	0	0	7	4
8. I am contacted when my child does something well or improves.	1	2	0	2	5	1
9. My child should get more homework.	0	0	1	4	3	3
10. The teachers care about my child.	0	1	0	3	3	4
11. I tell my child how important school is.	0	0	0	0	2	9
12. The teachers know how to work with my child's strengths and weaknesses.	0	1	1	2	7	0

Source: Adapted from Epstein, J., Salinas, K.C. & Horsey, C. (1994). School and family partnerships: Surveys and summaries. Johns Hopkins University, Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships, Johns Hopkins University.

Table 5. *Teacher Survey Results: Beliefs about Parent Involvement*

Statement	)isagree ery trongly	)isagree	Disagree just a little	Agree just a little	ıgree	Agree very strongly
n=8						
1. Parent [/family] involvement is important to [my] school.	0	1	0	0	5	2
2. Most of [our] parents know how to help their children with [assignments] at home.	0	4	3	1	0	0
3. Every family has some strength that can be tapped to increase student success in school.	0	0	1	1	5	1
4. [The parents at my school] could learn ways to help their children with [assignments] at home, if shown how.	0	0	0	2	6	0
5. Parent involvement can help teachers be more effective with more students.	0	0	0	0	3	5
6. Parents [/families] at this school want to be more involved than they are.	0	0	2	5	1	0
7. Parent [/family] involvement is important for student success in school.	0	0	0	0	1	7
8. This school views parents [/families] as important partners.	0	1	0	0	4	3

Source: Adapted from Epstein, J., Salinas, K.C. & Horsey, C. (1994). Reliabilities and summaries of scale: School and family partnership surveys of teachers and parents in the elementary middle grades. Baltimore, MD: Center of Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning and Center for Research on Effective Schooling for Disadvantaged Students, Johns Hopkins University.

Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., Walker, J. M. T., Jones, K. P., & Reed, R. P. (2002). Teachers Involving Parents (TIP): An in-service teacher education program for enhancing parental involvement. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 18*(7), 443-467.

Teachers' surveys. As shown in Table 5, there were a total of eight survey participants and nine for the interview; Mr. Roberts, the principal, did not complete a survey. Also, three teachers were participants in the pilot study as well. The teachers, for the most part, responded positively as expected on some of the items. However, teachers disagreed on item two regarding parents knowing how to help with assignments. Items five and seven showed

that the majority of the teachers were in agreement with the statement that PI could ‘help teachers be more effective with more students’ and that PI was ‘important for student success in school. Lone responses showing one teacher disagreeing with the others appeared in items one and eight regarding PI being important to the school and the school viewing parents as ‘important partners.’ The teachers’ survey responses show awareness of the importance of parent involvement but several indicated during the interviews that implementation was a problem, with one teacher stating outright, “I don’t do parent involvement in my class.” The interview results are presented next.

Qualitative Results

Gubrium and Holstein (2009) discuss the importance of status, location, jobs, local culture, relationships and organizations in connection to narrative analysis—analyzing *mo‘olelo, stories.* The guided interview helped to focus discussion on the research questions regarding attitudes and beliefs, definitions and practices as participants and I talked story about parent involvement (PI).

Middle school transitions, parenting skills, academic monitoring, and communication are the themes important to young adolescent development and are discussed below after the general topic of parent and family involvement. Table 6 on the next page shows the focused codes that emerged from the study. I asked the parents and teachers to think about these ideas in terms of critical incidents that supported or negated PI relationships as well as to look at the strengths or weaknesses of the families, community, and school. Their mo‘olelo yielded rich descriptions of the ease and unease of the home-school interactions that were experienced. As a result, many of the codes used to situate and understand the mo‘olelo were intertwined and spilled over into other areas, such as transitions having effects on parenting

skills and academic concerns, or communication styles influencing home-school relationships. These focused codes are shown below in Table 6, followed by the parent group results and then the educators' group. For easier reading of these findings, subheadings are used in an attempt to disentangle the stories and experiences that were reported and shared.

Table 6. *Focused Codes about Parent/Family Involvement in Education*

Attitudes, Beliefs & Definitions	Communication	Academic Goals & Views	Transitions	Cultural Diversity
Positive & negative critical incidents Home & school practices of involvement and relationship building	Communication issues between P/T re help or support; purposes for positive & negative communication	"Value of education": whose values? Stereotypes; emic or etic perspectives re teachers "who are not like us" and "uneducated parents"	Changes in social, academic, emotional, developmental realms for students What is considered appropriate transitions for PI in secondary ed	Stereotypes; emic or etic perspectives re teachers "who are not like us" and "uneducated parents" Acceptance of home culture, school culture
Types of partnerships, relationships; set roles & parameters; barriers	Parents' view thru "narrow lens" vs. teachers' view thru "wide lens"	Other types of knowledge as valued, e.g. home learning and teaching	Formation of self-identity, image as mediated by peers, tech, family, & school that affects relationships	Community problems, social issues in the community affecting "value of education" (e.g. drug culture, loss of income, crime, homelessness, overcrowding, etc.
Acceptance, trust of different families; "teachers are afraid of parents"	Preferred methods of communication, home vs. school	Communication issues between P/T re help or support	"Shame factor, being embarrassed"	"Shame factor, being embarrassed" Stability or instability of family life
Issues of empowerment; cultural capital, social capital; who has it? Who doesn't?	Access and empowerment issues for other caregivers, e.g. grandparents, foster parents, etc.	Independence, autonomy of student, "Shame factor, being embarrassed"	Age-appropriate parenting skills & strategies, discipline w/ academic consequences	Issues of empowerment; cultural capital, social capital; who has it? Who doesn't?
"Triad" of parent, child, teacher	Acceptance, trust; fear, mistrust	Hidden school culture		

Parents' Interviews

Attitudes, Beliefs and Definitions about PI. Overall, the parents who were interviewed want to be involved; some find more ways than others to do so. Parent participants believe that PI and home-school relationships are important but their attitudes are mixed when it comes to putting them into practice. They also seem to have long memories. Positive and negative home-school incidents were shared from elementary school as well as experiences from middle school. There were positive statements to support the overall attitude of involvement such as, "the teacher said to call if I had a concern so I did and it was a big help!" and "The counselor seemed to care about what I had to say."

There were also negative comments regarding involvement such as, "I don't do that. I'm active in the community and stuff, my kids play ball, but do stuff at the school? Nah, middle school is different from elementary…it's like, what can you do as a parent? They don't want us in the class." By using the word 'they', the parent meant both teacher and child. This particular parent also had the attitude of "school as the expert."

Parents were asked to give their definition of what PI looked like in the home and at school and how they put it into action. For most of the parents, PI meant "parents who helped out at school, volunteering" and "the parents who are always there," which some said was difficult due to work or family obligations. Several households were also multi-generational which added another dimension of responsibility—and less time for on-campus involvement. When of I told them that PI also meant other things, too, such as learning opportunities in the home or in the community, communicating regularly with teachers or participating in events, or even talking about education and setting future goals, they all said they were doing those things but at varying levels and in different ways (from going to the library every week to

being involved with the community activities such as beach clean ups and fundraisers). The school's ‘ohana president answered emphatically when interviewing with his wife, “Church, sports, school—but not necessarily in that order!”

One parent's definition of what PI looked like in action entailed staying informed about school events (“hanging up the school calendar on the fridge”), monitoring homework and after school activities, being invited to participate in class or grade level events. She said, “It's not just going to school for behavior things, you know.” When asked if she thought that PI only took place at school, she exclaimed, “Oh no! It's the whole community, but it starts from home. It goes to school and then comes back home here!” I asked her to clarify her statement via email and she wrote back saying that being involved for her meant “knowing what's going on so that [she] can stay on top of things. I'm the parent, that's part of my kuleana.” As she said, it starts from home.

That same parent also addressed a need in providing help to the other caregivers of her daughter's friends so that those caregivers could be involved, too. “Some of the kids are being raised by grandparents, you know? Out here there's all kinds of stuff going on [in the community] so…when a child doesn't have involved parents or missing parents, I feel sorry for them. And then grandma or aunty or uncle gotta step in and cover.” She chooses through PRC (discussed in chapter two) to be an involved parent by alerting the grandmas of activities at school, events in the community or even potential behavioral concerns, “We check in with each other to find out what's going on with our kids.”

Cultural Diversity in the School Community. In looking at this focused theme, the majority of the parents made little reference to any differences among themselves. Rather, they discussed differences that they perceived between home and school, mainly in the areas

of academics and behavior. One parent noted that there was a particular problem with an assignment that her child had brought home regarding the paying of allowances for chores, something not done in many non-Western families, mine included. The parent said, “I was rather offended because in my culture, you don’t pay children for doing something that supports the family and is a part of their kuleana.” When asked how she dealt with this issue, the parent said that she went to talk with the teacher who was unaware of the offense but very glad that the parent had taken the time to talk, instead of getting upset. The parent also reported that the teacher stated that she would be more aware of issues like this in the future.

Another parent reported on how the thinking of the educators was different, “they’re not like us.” When pressed to clarify the statement, she said that things she did or talked about at home were different from how things are said or done at school and that she felt “those things don’t matter to the school. I’m not that smart but I do try to teach my kids right and…seems like…what we do at home is seen as wrong by the school.” This parent provided a vivid example of the home-school disconnect.

In asking the parents what they thought their kuleana was towards their children’s education, several gave similar responses to one parent who stated, “You know, we don’t grow kalo in the backyard or pound poi. This Hawaiian family is into technology. But we still talk about our responsibilities; we show through our actions our kuleana in taking care of ourselves, in doing our best…my children hear this not only from me, but from their grandparents, too.”

Transitions. Throughout the literature, transition points were discussed in detail at various stages throughout a child’s educational life. The middle school transitions, both entering and exiting, are considered crucial for early success in high school and post-

secondary plans beyond but the preparation for it comes way before (Balfanz, Herzog & Mac Iver, 2007). The transitions are behavioral, developmental, academic and social, with each of these areas sometimes overlapping. That's a whole lot of change in such a short period of life, almost a similar rate to that of changing from infancy to toddlerhood. Parents and teachers described some incidents that made transitions challenging.

Out of all the parents interviewed, only one had children who were students at Maunakai from kindergarten to middle school, since it is a K-8 school. For the other parents, transition into middle school was "a little harder." All of their children had come from the other public elementary school in the area which went to sixth grade; therefore, their children are at Maunakai for only two years in middle school, instead of three (6th – 8th) as other middle school students are.

Regarding changes that her child had to make, one mother said that the change was "harder for me than for my child." She said that she wasn't prepared for the teen years "even though I knew it was coming" and found that her child had "seemed to change overnight. He doesn't talk about school as much like before." When asked what kinds of things he would say now, she reported, "Nothing positive. He doesn't like it that much, so it's hard getting him to go to stay afterschool for tutoring or the other activities." Another mother noted that school expectations for academics "were way higher" than her child was used to and mentioned a similar experience with her child who seemed to do well in school before in elementary school but was too embarrassed to get help: "He's too shame, you know?"

Because most of the children had come from a different elementary school, I had asked parents about how their children had fit in socially with the children who were already there at Maunakai. One mother responded that her daughter was fitting in only too well; she

said, “I have to remind her that school is for learning, too, and not just socializing.” Most of the other parents, including the mother and father interviewed together, said that their children knew many of the families from the community due to sports or other cultural events and community activities, and that there did not seem to be any problems.

Transition from middle to high school means more change for parents and their children to navigate, especially as the ideas of preparing for graduation, college or work after high school becomes a more immediate fixture on the horizon. One of my pilot study parents mentioned that her child, now in high school in the ninth grade, had switched to a different school from where the neighborhood children normally attend. Her child is in a program with courses that are college prep and therefore, more rigorous than he had first thought and was thinking of changing his class schedule. She had a meeting scheduled with the counselor to discuss the problem when the son admitted that the work was hard because he wasn’t “doing all of it. I told him…if you can’t do it ‘cause you don’t understand, that’s one thing, but if it’s hard because you have to play catch up for not doing it in the first place, then that’s different.” The mom wasn’t going to let him off the hook that easily.

Another mother related how she had to make some changes, too, regarding parenting. Her child was in a situation with a teacher who she said was “targeting [her] child and friends” by marking her child late to class or absent. “Because I check on line, I was aware something was going on, but I didn’t think much about it at first.” The problem with the teacher worsened, even after the mom noticed discrepancies regarding grades and tardiness on the day of a family funeral when her child was not even in class. After her “initial freak out,” the mother told her child that she would be willing to talk with the teacher or counselor, though the child was unwilling fearing retaliation from the teacher. “My usual

reaction was to go in there and fix it. I had to realize that this was high school and that I had to change and ease up to let my child do for herself first." That was a hard thing for her to do but the mother realized that she needed to trust her child to solve her own problems, knowing that mom was there, just in case.

Another parent of a ninth grader who was also a pilot study participant reported that the transition to high school changed the way she communicates with teachers now, compared to elementary and middle school. She said, "You know, I rather meet the teachers face to face but they don't do that now unless there's some kind of problem…I guess teachers are too busy…" This parent feels disconnected from the school and the teachers after being told several times to "just leave a message," and admits that she's "kind of giving up" on parent involvement in education. Instead, she tries harder to stay connected with her children at home and in their activities. I wondered if other parents felt that way, too.

Academic Goals. A big concern for the parents and teachers were the grades of their children/students. And tied into this is the communication and behavioral aspects, as well. Maunakai has the *option* for teachers to post grades on line using software called "Snap Grades" and parents are encouraged to check grades in this manner. However, not all teachers use it, a frustrating point for a few of the parents. One parent related how she was trying to do as the school suggested and check grades on line but it wasn't working because of "teacher delay" in the inputting of the on line grades. The mother was "scolding [her] kid for a bad grade that was from September and here it was October already!"

Two parents told of differences in viewpoint between them and the teachers about what was considered a passing grade. After checking Snap Grades, one mom relayed how her child was getting a 'D' and how the teacher had said that it was still a passing grade. But the

mom's concern was that the teacher "didn't know *my standards* in our home. A 'C' grade was a yellow light and a 'D' was a red light. By then it's too late!" Another parent likened her child's math teacher to "a life guard who's supposed to be watching the swimmers in his area so they don't drown, but my child was already drowning!"

Parents have stated that they want to help with homework in middle school as they did in elementary, *but don't know how*. A grandparent said that she is embarrassed when "my grandchildren ask me how to do this or that and I can't." Other parents have also mentioned the same problem of not knowing how to help, but wanting to do so. When asked if they had approached teachers about how to help with homework, reactions of the parents were varied as a few reported that they did not get adequate feedback from the teachers.

Added to the transition mix were the different behavioral and educational needs of special education (SPED) students. Communication and behavioral concerns were tangled with academics even more for this group. An adoptive mother related how she had tried several times to resolve problems with her child's SPED teacher, wanting to tell the teacher of the kinds of triggers which would exacerbate the child's unwanted behaviors in class. The teacher refused to take her phone calls and in follow up meetings, the parent felt that her home knowledge of her child was devalued when the teacher made comments like, "Oh, that's not the way I deal with things." It took a major behavioral problem in class as the situation worsened and administration stepped in, before the problem was "somewhat resolved."

For this particular mother and her child, the transition to middle school from elementary seemed to be the hardest compared to other participants. What were the

circumstances from the teacher's viewpoint? That is unknown, but the end result was a strained relationship between home and school.

Parenting Young Adolescents. Prevalent in the middle school literature is evidence that parenting styles, another transition marker, can make a difference in future success for children in this age group. Mentioned earlier was the high school mom who realized that changes in her "mommy" style were needed due to the recognition of her child's growing autonomy. But answers responding to questions about changing rules and expectations for the parents were not as concrete as in the other topic areas.

When I asked parents whether or not rules or expectations changed when their children moved to middle school, one parent laughingly replied, "Oh they know what makes mom go off!" Another mother specifically stated that she was "learning how to deal all over again, but this time it's from the parent end. The last time I was the child!" Most of the parents mentioned that there were still house rules that covered behaviors but this was not always clear cut in this topic area. The problem seemed to be that many family rules were "expected but unspoken," and this seemed to be especially so for the grandmother and adoptive mom participants.

Communication. Finding out about the frequent methods of communication between home and school was the easy part of this topic on the surface. As previously stated, Maunakai encourages parents to access the on line Snap Grades software, but it is not always accessible or the information it contains is not updated. Other methods of contact included phone calls and notes in the students' planners due to inaccessibility of computers and the Internet. For those parents who do have access, they prefer emailing the teachers—and that

has worked for some. However, finding out about what actually occurs in this topic touched many sensitive points especially relating to behavioral problems or negative grades.

Out of the nine parents interviewed, two thirds of them reported receiving negative phone calls more than positive ones from the school. A few parents felt that teachers cannot get past their children's negative behaviors. Comments such as, "You know, I feel like my child was labeled early on for something he did, and it's like…stuck," and "If the teachers saw my kid like how I do, maybe they wouldn't be so harsh 'cause he's not that bad a kid." The grandparent participant relayed how a problem with stereotyping became a huge incident when teachers and administration were blaming her grandson, a big Samoan boy who is tall for his age, for starting horrible rumors about another student, a girl; each child did not know the other. The grandparent said, "I don't know…I'm not trying to blame them or anything but…maybe teachers are so used to hearing lies, they don't know when they hear the truth."

As mentioned earlier, positive communication between parents and teachers regarding grades was stymied when there were differences in what was considered passing. The parent, who compared the teacher to a lifeguard, said that "it was so difficult getting in touch with the teacher about the missing assignments and everything…so that by the time we finally did get to talk, the quarter was almost over!" As I spoke with this parent, I could hear the frustration in her tone. She was also one of the parents who said that she wants to help academically but does not know how.

A final result in the area of communication has to do with viewpoints: parents have the viewpoint of one child—theirs—compared with the teachers' viewpoint regarding many children particularly in middle school where the teaching load may be 80-100 students. This may mean more frustration for parents who are waiting for teachers to return calls or

messages without understanding the narrow slivers of time teachers are left with after a day of teaching. Finding common ground for positive communication is crucial for positive home-school relationships.

Communication and other topics will be discussed from the teachers' perspective in the next section.

Teachers' Interviews

Attitudes, Beliefs and Definitions about PI. Teacher attitudes and beliefs about PI were a mixed bag of comments from the interviews. There were positive comments such as, "It was great to have the mom help me to understand her child; the child and I worked together better in class after that," and "You know it helps the relationship when I can find something positive to say to a parent about their child." There were also negative statements as well as outright dismissal from teachers like, "Yeah…[PI] is pretty time consuming having to make phone calls to parents and stuff so…[PI] is not much of an option sometimes," and "I don't do any type of parent involvement…I don't need another body in the classroom." As previously indicated from the educators' background in the survey section, relatively few of them had experienced pre-service coursework about PI, which may be a reason for the types of negative comments documented above.

When asked about a definition of PI most of the classroom teachers agreed that PI meant "helping with homework," "following through with [assignments]," and "showing up at student-led conferences." One teacher was positively adamant about involving parents and families in her science classes, issuing invitations for the parents to come and visit. She said, "You know, it's a triad—the student, the parent and the teacher. I think we all work so much better together." This veteran teacher readily noted that a strength of the parents at the school

was that, for the most part, the parents were “hard working and try their best to do good by their kids.” She was also the classroom teacher with the most pre-service training experiences regarding parent involvement.

Another perspective about PI was when the counselor (T4) and the school-based behavioral health (SBBH) specialist (T8) weighed in with their statements about parent involvement. These included, “having positive things to say about [the parents’] children” and “giving concrete suggestions families can do at home with little money or time.” Both of these educators reported that “going out of your way to see a strength” was an effort that paid off in relationship building with the families. Noting strengths of children and families “is something that’s so dang hard, but so very much needed because parents get tired of hearing the negatives all the time.” The counselor said that this action was something that they explicitly try to model for the classroom teachers. It is important to recognize that these two educators have a different role on campus from classroom teachers and are constantly in communication with parents, usually on the negative end. So trying to see parents and their involvement in a strengths-based way helps these educators to help the families.

Mr. Roberts, the principal added that PI also meant “that families need to value education.” When asked to clarify that statement, he said it meant to value the academics of education and “not just the social aspects…where [parents have] the idea that what’s most important is, ‘as long as my [child] is safe.’” Additional comments by the principal led me to believe that his views seemed mostly one-sided and from the school perspective about actions that parents need to take to improve their children’s education such as attending events and “working with us to resolve issues.”

Having made those statements, the principal also told of his vision for the students, which was not just focused on the here and now, but on the future. After congratulating him for his school making “adequate yearly progress” (AYP) under the NCLB Act, he said “AYP is great but that’s not my most important priority. My most important priority is to make sure that the opportunities for work or for school are available…Who’s to say that that student didn’t have a bad test day? I want them to have the skills to be successful in high school after they leave here and beyond…Real learning is useful knowledge…we need the parents’ help for that.”

Cultural Diversity in the School Community. In the discussions above about the attitudes and definitions of PI, there were a few remarks regarding cultural differences in and out of the classroom as well as within the community. For the most part, the veteran educators had accepted the community in which they taught. In asking the teachers whether they would consider moving to another school, the SBBH remarked, “I’ve been to several schools and by far, this is my absolute favorite. Many of our families have challenges, but I’ve seen how some of the families try so hard to overcome those…that makes it all worthwhile.” Another teacher who grew up in Hawaii said that even though she has a long commute, she would not change schools either. She said, “The kids in my class are like my nieces and nephews almost. I see their faces in my own community so I try to do what I can to remind them …of how to act, how to be proud of who they are…without being obnoxious about it!”

One teacher has been trying to discover culturally appropriate ways in which to address student needs without offending parents by asking the students if they can “coach” her. That is, they do role play where a few of her students pretend they’re the parents so that she can practice what to say. The teacher stated, “It doesn’t work with all of the parents…I’ve tried to

be aware of what I say to the student so that he or she feels empowered by helping me, and then I try to carry that [appropriate attitude] over…when I talk to the parent. It's hard to do."

Transitions. As reported earlier, parents had challenges when their children transitioned into and out of middle school. One tip for parents was extended by a 7th grade teacher who said that many new impressions associated with middle school are connected to "firsts," as in the first orientation, the first day of school, the first Open House, the first conference or meeting. She said, "If parents don't show up for those, it kind of sets a pattern for what's to come and then the child may pick up on the idea that education's not important." The teacher stated that it becomes a "catch up game" because sometimes missing parents may also mean absent students.

I had also asked the counselor about some concerns in transitioning that she may know of. Because Maunakai is a K-8 school, I had wrongly assumed that the transition is slightly easier for the students who are already there. However, the counselor explained, "Academics becomes a challenge as they go from one teacher to six and dealing with homework from all of those classes so it really doesn't matter if the child was here from elementary or came in from another school." She also said that they will sometimes see a "dip to a drop" in grades depending on what kind of student the child was in elementary (i.e. organized, responsible, etc.), and that students going from middle to high school may also see another dip. When I asked her if most parents knew about the possibility of dipping grades prior to their children starting middle and high school, the counselor said she didn't think so.

Academic Goals. Results for parent and teacher expectations regarding the academic area was the same in that both groups want the children to do well. The difference lies in how to go about it. Several teachers stated that they "want parents to help with homework," and

“parents need to support their kids’ work by checking on them, checking the planners or Snap Grades.”

When the teachers were asked to clarify, to explain what was meant by the term, “help with homework,” their specific answers were “homework monitoring” and “follow through.” To the teachers, the action of monitoring homework meant that parents would check to make sure it was done and turned in (although one teacher and a few parents did say that with some children it is also a matter of trust that they do it). The action of “follow through” had very definite comments. Several teachers mentioned how it was upsetting for them to give suggestions when asked by parents and then “not have them follow through with the thing that was suggested.” The 7th grade English teacher said that parent involvement in things like academics “shouldn’t be put all on the teacher or the school to do everything. Parents should contribute, too.” In this instance, the teacher felt that if parents did their part at home to monitor homework and grades, and then to follow through, there would be fewer problems down the road. Teachers also want to support the growing autonomy of young adolescents but then get frustrated when doing so and there’s no follow through or monitoring. A few stated that “the students *should* be responsible for their work.” Key word: should. One teacher was realistic enough to know that “just because they should, doesn’t mean they can or will!” She routinely provides added supports for her students to make up their work, or come in for extra tutoring during recesses and after school. This is also the teacher whose class is usually full of parents and students on ‘ohana night.

I had also questioned the teachers about their practices for those students whose parents/grandparents do not have access to a computer which would enable them to “follow through” and check on line grades. Some of the teachers have added a “work wall” at the

back of their classrooms with a student number (no names) and a list of missing assignments for each week. They let parents know that they can come in to check the wall, while it is expected for the students to do so, as well. Unfortunately, none of the teachers doing this could tell me for sure whether or not parents and other caregivers were checking the work wall. They did say that most of the students would check the wall throughout the day, sometimes before and after school and during lunch. Most of the teachers offered afterschool tutoring enabling students to check assignments.

Parenting Young Adolescents. Teachers and schools assume that behavior and academic expectations at home are extended to school, impacting behavior and achievement there. While they also recognize the hardships that many of their students' families face (e.g. low SES, homelessness, etc.), they are not quite sure how to go about helping parents to help their children during this period of rapid development. The teachers shared stories of critical incidents that "weren't supportive of what we're trying to teach." One teacher shared a critical incident (the only one in 16 years of teaching) about a parent who threatened her when he found out that his child would not be allowed to go on a field trip. Though the child had been allowed to go on several before without payment, the teacher was "fed up with letting the child slide all the time." She felt it unfair to the other children and denied the child the opportunity to go which resulted in the parent coming to the school and threatening her with physical harm. The teacher said, "My idea to help this student learn responsibility backfired because the dad hadn't seemed to learn it himself!"

Important to the discussion of parenting middle school students is the idea of what is appropriate parent involvement. Teachers reported wanting their students to be independent and responsible learners, as mentioned earlier. But there were conflicting ideas of what that

looked like in middle school from the standpoint of parent involvement. The comments ranged from no PI to limited roles and parameters, as in “helping in certain areas like with the ‘ohana group.” Parents who are used to supporting their children in elementary school do not always know of the teachers’ expectations; sometimes this is the case for the teachers, who may not “want another body in the classroom,” but who may want “parent support and follow through.” Hence this discussion of appropriate PI in middle schools needs to address quality home-school communication.

Communication. All of the educator participants at Maunakai Middle School felt that this area was a key factor in building up or tearing down home-school relationships. However with some participants, it was evident via negative remarks that in their view the problem lies with the parents more than the teachers. For example, the principal mentioned how effective communication was something that the parents needed to practice when problems arise, hoping that they would “realize that we’re here to help, not just here to catch a student doing something wrong.” Sometimes the problem lies in the interpretation of what is meant. As mentioned above, three classroom teachers identified “follow through” as an area where PI was needed. Yet there was no indication of whether or not their idea of follow through was effectively conveyed to parents, as one frustrated teacher remarked, “There’s no follow through with assignments.”

Relationships were important as a teacher related how she made it a point to find out who were the main adults/caregivers in the homes of her students. This was so that she could direct any communications regarding behavior or grades to the appropriate person involved. She told of how a student got into trouble every time she left a message with the wrong person in the home, definitely not her intent; she wanted help. “Finding out who is the

important adult in my students' lives was crucial for me as it impacted them directly." This teacher was "not put off" by the incident because "it helped me to see my communication style" from the parent's viewpoint. She realized that it was important to be clear about what was said, what was heard, and what is meant between her and the parents. Pilina was strengthened as a result.

I shared a positive example of home-school communication learned from another teacher at a different middle school with the 8th grade special education (SPED) teacher at Maunakai. The first teacher mentioned that she and a partner begin each school year by making phone calls home to every child's family so that "the relationship bridge building was started" by the time Open House rolled around (P. Laba, personal communication, April 8, 2010). Their proactive efforts turned negative situations into positive ones when they noticed that "the parents are more interested in resolving the problems and helping their children, rather than grumbling at us."

After Maunakai's 8th grade SPED teacher made her phone calls home at the beginning of this school year, she was happy to report that the results had been positive and the parents with whom she had built relationships "are enjoying seeing the successes of their kids because we're working together. There are the [families] I'm still having some difficulty with but overall, the positives definitely outweigh the negatives." For teachers who do not always have the time to call back when parents expect it, the examples above of proactive behavior for them may be a key to establishing *positive* communication.

Summary

The results from this study exploring home-school relationships have raised topics of concern similar to those found in the national literature regarding the education of young adolescents, our middle school children. The areas of communication, parenting, academics and transitions at Maunakai Middle School are impacted by the attitudes, beliefs and practices of parents and educators in regards to parent involvement (PI), which then affects the significance and actions of kuleana and pilina. While this study did not specifically address adolescent development, interview questions did ask about possible changes/transitions (behavioral, social, emotional, and academic) that occur with children in this age group. Both groups of participants felt that PI is important, with teachers reporting that parents are considered important partners in children's education. Yet some statements garnered from the interviews contradict the best practices of PI at home and at school. Specific examples of each area are discussed below to close this chapter.

The findings of this study showed that both parents and teachers want effective communication, but what it actually meant to them was two different things. The picture of an elevator stuck between two floors entered my mind! It seems that parents and teachers have two different visions, two different purposes which affect how they communicate with each other and whether or not they do so effectively. Parents had the unvoiced expectation / vision that "behavior" also meant "doing" homework; these were almost always tied together in parent comments, as in "Be good, do your homework." This entangled communication perspective of parents regarding academics and behavior took a while to come to the surface in the interviews. However, academics and behavior almost seemed to be separate issues for some of the teachers who had various ways/degrees of how they practiced PI via effective (or

ineffective) communication. Because of entanglements such as these, communication was an area loaded most frequently with negative critical incidents from both parents and educators. However, in a few instances, the negative incidents turned into positives when the participants were willing to problem solve and keep the communication lines open.

Parents' voiced different concerns about their parenting skills of young adolescents, skills that were connected mainly to the home. Two parents identified the need for change of their parenting practices in acceptance of their growing children. While they spoke of future expectations and their desires for their children to be successful, their concerns were mostly in the here and now, except for the 8th grade parents who were thinking of high school in the near future. Expectations to "do good in school" were high for all of the parents. Mixed messages (and miscommunication) from the teachers' interviews arose as their definitions of appropriate parenting skills / PI meant autonomy and independence for their students. Yet they also wanted PI via "help with homework" and "follow through." As a result, parents were not sure if they should help or have a "hands off" approach when it came to supporting academics, the next area discussed.

Communication and appropriate parenting skills affect the area of academics. This area seemed to be fraught with tension, as well. Young adolescents who are seeking to be independent, teachers who are expecting responsibility from them, and parents who get calls concerning their children's failing grades all add up to a lot of pressures for middle school students who still need strong support at this age to be successful—now and in high school. Most of the parents expressed that they "want to help but don't know how." A few mentioned that they sometimes would ask the teachers how to do so, but received various responses. And most of the teachers as mentioned earlier, also wanted parent help but did not

always get adequate follow through. The principal felt that there was too much negativity and not enough understanding by the general public towards the school, while also recognizing the family difficulties that many of his students are challenged with. His academic goal for the Maunakai students was to get away from "the performance aspect of education" when he stated, "I want the kids to be able to learn real knowledge, useful knowledge for their futures."

The final area that the results touched upon was that of transitions to and from middle school, and the ease or unease of doing so. Different levels of concerns, such as those pertaining to academics, arose when students transitioned from elementary to middle school for the majority of the parents. A few reported on difficulties in the high school transition, and especially of being less involved in education as a parent at that level. Concerns about transition from the teachers were mostly discussed in terms of the 8th grade students who would be leaving and how they would fare when in high school. One teacher reported that she would teach her class in terms of what they had to learn now in preparation for high school.

The results of this study identified potential areas in which kuleana may be applied as a framework for parent involvement in public middle schools. The work will be difficult as it will involve willing parents and teachers to work together to help our children in their education. As the Maunakai principal stated, "It is hard to transfer knowledge."

We have got to start somehow, some way—our children need us.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION and CONCLUSIONS

> We cannot keep writing about schools as some idyllic, romantic place where a few students are failing. The work we have to do must be done in the public interest. We cannot hide behind notions of neutrality or objectivity…if education research is going to matter, then we have to make it matter in the lives of real people around real issues. —*G. Ladson-Billings*

The stories shared by the parents and teachers in this case study have supported similar research regarding the schooling of middle school students, young adolescents. Maunakai Middle School is a public middle school in Hawaii. Though it is a K-8 school, this case study focused only on parents and educators in the middle school that has 300 students; there were no student participants. Attitudes, beliefs, definitions and practices about parent involvement (PI) and the types of factors affecting it were explored using two separate quantitative surveys for parents and teachers and then interviewing participants individually, either face-to-face or over the phone. There were eleven parent participants who were surveyed, of which seven were interviewed; eight teachers were surveyed and interviewed. The principal was also interviewed.

Maunakai has its own unique characteristics and concerns within a larger community that, to unfamiliar eyes, may be considered dismal, at best. A "depressed economy" has many parents in the area working two or more jobs or having families on welfare. Other social ills have served to deplete family resources resulting in multi-generational households or children being raised by grandparents or other adults instead of their biological parents. This case study is definitely not representative of all the Hawai'i public middle schools. Yet it

does open the door wider for earnest and collaborative discussion on how our schools can improve pilina with and kuleana towards the parents and families of our children, our keiki.

While using the Hawaiian value of kuleana as a framework for the entire study and making it visible in my actions as researcher, the results of the study addressed the research question, “How can middle school parents, educators and other school personnel *combine their voices effectively* to benefit children and support academic success?” To help answer this major question, the related sub-questions addressing parents’ and educators’ attitudes, beliefs, definitions and practices are discussed below. Focused themes were utilized to organize the data as perceived and reported by the study participants. These themes are communication, academic goals, transitions, parenting skills, and cultural diversity, with an overlay of how home-school relationships, pilina, are affected as a result.

Discussion of Research Findings

Strong comparisons regarding each of the themes as they pertained to the research questions are briefly described here.

Parent participants conveyed definitions and practices of PI as those parents who are visible at the school site, who are available to help in the classroom; these ideas were encapsulated in the term/action of “volunteering,” as parents related some of their previous volunteer experiences when their children were in elementary school. Many stated that those kinds of experiences occur less in middle school as their involvement-actions consisted more of communication with teachers and keeping abreast of academic and behavioral concerns. These two concerns were inexplicably bound together as parent perceptions of “good behavior” also meant “doing homework” or “doing good in school.”

It was pointed out that PI also happened in the home in the form of support for education and learning as parents related ways in which they did this by talking about school goals with their children, staying informed of what was happening in the school, visiting the library, participating in community events, and trying to help with homework. Examples of changing parenting skills were also reported as children transitioned to and from middle school; these are related to home learning, as well.

Critical incidents about parental expectations and experiences of home-school relationships were mixed with both positive and negative stories. Parents who reported positive ones were also more involved as traditionally defined above, i.e. attending school events, staying in touch with the teachers, one being involved in a visible leadership position. The negative incidents of pilina, relationships, had occurred more in the realm of misunderstandings such as the experience related that involved children's allowances. Another example was relayed by two parents who felt that their home knowledge was devalued and not acceptable to teachers/schools. These examples were perceived by the parents as differences in culture—home culture and school culture.

Fueling these pilina experiences are the ways in which parents were encouraged to communicate with teachers but were not always effective, as well. On-line grades, the use of notes in student planners, and phone calls are all extensions of the home-school relationship and as such, must be used carefully and reevaluated as a communication strategy.

Positive and negative examples of communication also affected how each group perceived the other. For example, parents reported feeling frustrated when they could not make contact with teachers, while teachers reported the same feeling when parents called at

the end of the quarter asking for help for their children who needed to pass the class. Communication is a pivotal point in the kuleana framework discussed later.

For the educator participants, PI was almost exclusively tied to academics and behavior, the idea being that success in academics is dependent upon successful behaviors. Their definitions and practices of PI also were a reflection of their attitudes regarding PI as educators overwhelmingly agreed that involving parents was an important component. However, this was in contradiction to direct practice as two teachers mentioned that they did not use it particularly well in the classroom, with one teacher not finding PI useful at all. Time constraints to engage parents were mentioned as one reason why there was no implementation of PI strategies in the class for a particular teacher. Of the classroom teachers interviewed, only one had extensive pre-service coursework regarding how to involve parents in the classroom. Two other educators had counseling backgrounds which necessitated their learning about families and relationships with them. Prior knowledge and experience seemed to help these educators more; teacher education is another key point in the kuleana framework.

In terms of critical incidents, a slightly different definition range of PI by the educators also included parents who "followed through" on suggestions given them to help their children, calling the teachers when needed, and attending school events and activities; this last being more from the perspective of the principal and those who plan the events and activities. Teachers who had experiences with parents who did not follow through seemed to report more negative critical incidents in terms of miscommunication and disconnections that affected students' behavior as well as their academics. And reports of positive

communication incidents were again driven by the veteran teachers who had more experience with PI than the newer teachers in the field.

Cultural diversity seemed to almost be a non-issue for the majority of the educators, two of whom grew up in the community and now work there. While the educators recognized the myriad challenges facing the community, they were concerned with how to help their students see the connections between their choices made now in middle school and "having lots of choices later on in life." The principal also interpreted the idea/action of kuleana in the Native Hawaiian neighborhood as "what you do for your family and what you can do for your community." The final sub-question asked about barriers to, and support for productive involvement in middle school. Because of its slightly different focus, these are discussed separately in the next section.

Barriers and Supports of PI in Middle Schools

A veteran teacher remarked, "So many teachers are scared of the parents, they don't want parent involvement in the classroom, they don't want to call parents and they try to teach without parent involvement." This section will address some of the barriers and supports of PI in middle schools.

One barrier to parent involvement was discovered as a contradiction in practices compared to the mostly positive beliefs and attitudes towards PI that were reported. This contradiction was connected to communication in three ways, as stated earlier: 1) what was said, 2) what was heard, and 3) what was meant. All three of these areas were twisted together in the reported perceptions and responses of the parents and educators. If parents were told by teachers to "help with homework," teachers meant that they should "follow through" on suggestions given to them or "monitor the homework" to make sure it gets done.

These are two different practices that were understood by the teachers and linked to the single phrase of “help with homework” but clearly were not conveyed well to some of the parents.

A productive PI strategy to support better communication was suggested by one of the veteran teachers who stated that it was important for teachers to adopt an attitude of openness and caring versus denigration or judging. She also remarked that “Parents can tell if you’re sincere and are concerned about their child.” As cited in the findings, the counselors regularly tried to model these types of parent engagement behaviors for the teachers, pointing to the benefits of better communication with parents. Related to this may also be an issue of inadequate training or neglected continuous professional development on how to work with parents and families. As mentioned in the literature review, many new teachers are young, do not have families of their own and therefore, have only a teacher-student focus (Hiatt-Michael, 2006). Remarks made by a young teacher in the current study seemed to substantiate these data. Perhaps providing supports to middle school educators by way of professional development that particularly focuses on communication skills may enhance the parent-teacher relationship and reduce undue pressures (Graham-Clay, 2005).

Parents also need opportunities to learn about appropriate ways to communicate with educators and support student learning. These can be done through parent workshops or meetings specifically set in the elementary schools as part of the orientation process for the families of children transitioning to middle school. For Maunakai, community resources can be tapped to assist with this parent education component.

Maintaining the excitement of learning throughout the entire school year is important for students, teachers and parents. Efforts to explicitly educate parents regarding how the

business of “learning” takes place (e.g. individual classroom practices, grade level and school-wide goals) seem to be announced more heavily at the beginning of the year rather than throughout the year as reminders at regular school events where parents are in attendance. By the time second semester rolls around, all of the excitement of a new school year has dwindled, and families and teachers forget how that feels and are less vigilant in keeping relationships open.

Good supporting efforts would be to provide reminders that are explicit and connected to whatever the goals are for students, i.e. “This is what we’re trying to do as a school this quarter compared to last quarter,” or “Remember at Open House we were starting to work on these types of problems? Well, now we’re moving up to focus on these others.” We say that learning needs to be explicit for children to understand concepts and ideas better; the same goes for parents and teachers in learning how to work together better.

Currently, Maunakai Middle School does not have a school-wide plan to promote and utilize PI in the classrooms, another barrier for the school. Pate and Andrews (2010) stated that having a plan to implement middle school parent involvement is a crucial step in supporting individual teachers and empowering parents. Maunakai’s principal said that “they have not yet defined what parent involvement means for their school ‘ohana.” A teacher who used to be a member of the leadership team said, “We’ve talked about it…and discussed it…and…talked some more and that was it.” Most schools talk about PI or have a PCNC who is doing the work for them, sometimes with very little buy in from the rest of the faculty and staff. They also have written plans that explain what their PI goals are for their individual schools. However, many times “the plan” is buried under other goals and therefore is not always clearly implemented; this is also another contradiction of terms.

A huge support stemming from the findings of this case study seem to highlight the need for a larger discussion on different levels, not just in a specific class or grade level, but a discussion that *includes parents*. Work on collaborative parent leadership and empowerment is another concern that has to have buy-in as well. A perception by some of the educators at Maunakai is that community support is low and that many students and families are "without sufficient motivation to succeed." This outlook has been negated by individual parents' efforts who noted that they try to help their community through their school involvement efforts, but as reported, sometimes they give up. The school's principal reported that parent participation in their ʻohana group (similar to a PTA) was "very low to almost nonexistent." School and district leadership can tap into several nation-wide programs to assist the dialogue efforts at these levels (see also www.nnps.org, Johns Hopkins University). Coordinated and sustained efforts by the school to truly promote PI can be started by recognizing and building empowerment skills in parents while providing leadership opportunities that can help the school community to better serve their students (Bolivar & Chrispeels, 2011).

Other recommendations that can take away barriers and offer supports for middle school families include the following:

1. Promoting middle school campus tours for incoming students and their parents, or plan a potluck dinner for families to meet team teachers (J. Imada, personal communication, November 4, 2009);
2. Cultivating an attitude of caring in schools, as suggested by Epstein (2001) and demonstrated by the types of words we use and actions we choose on campus, as exhibited by Na Lei Naʻauao (Na Lau Lama Initiative, n.d.);

3. Planning professional development days by principals/leadership teams about the topic that include all stake holders (Gabriel, 2000);
4. Provide meaningful, two-way communication with parents (Baker, 1997; Epstein 1997, 2001). Teachers can create daily or weekly voicemail messages for students and parents (Gabriel, 2000) for homework assignments, class announcements, etc.;
5. Teachers can write a list of all they do and solicit parents for help (Gabriel, 2000);
6. Schools can utilize community resources as speakers, activity presenters and sponsors, making parents/community members the experts by giving them opportunities to share their home/cultural knowledge (Gabriel, 2000; Ledward & Takayama, 2008);
7. Plan developmentally appropriate workshops that support curriculum, parent-youth relationships (Harvard University, 2007) and create parent-teacher partnerships (D. Albinio, personal communication, April 2009).

Finally, it will take dedicated, hardworking teachers and administrators who are willing to engage and serve the families who come to school with the children.

As shown by the above examples, communication styles that affect relationships, attitudes and practices are all entwined. The next section discusses how kuleana may be used as an approach or framework to look at these different components.

Kuleana as a Framework for Parent Involvement

In Figure 1, the focused themes of academic goals, parenting skills, cultural diversity, transitions (including adolescent development and the social/emotional changes that ensue), and communication are shown in relationship to each other, and to the attitudes, beliefs,

definitions and practices of the educational phenomenon we know as "parent/family involvement."

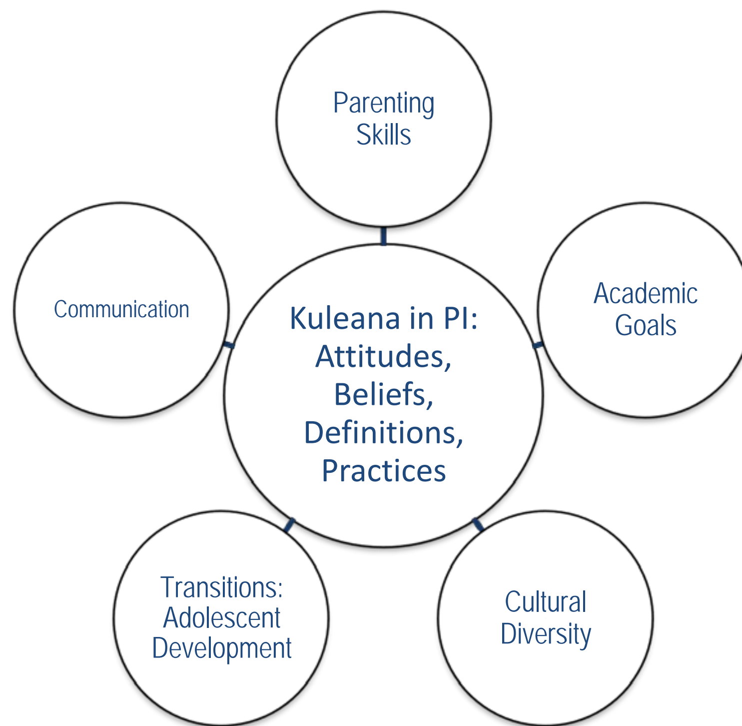

Figure 1. *Focused Themes of Kuleana*

In Chapter One, I had mentioned my doubts about using kuleana as a *conceptual framework* in which to view parent involvement. But perhaps it is more of an *approach* in how to address and utilize PI. For me, kuleana is functional; it is lived and visible because of the intertwined aspects of daily life and the implied actions, responsibilities and privileges that go with it. There is also an undertone of respect and care in our kuleana. Throughout this study kuleana has been the connecting factor, providing the action implied within the focused themes. And because kuleana is functional, I believe that it is possible to find appropriate solutions to supporting student achievement utilizing PI.

According to Epstein (1995, 2001) the onus of parent involvement falls to the schools to involve, invite and *partner with* parents. She said it best with the terms "family-like"

schools and “school-like” families. Yet teachers and principals still prefer that parents “defer to their professional expertise” (Lareau, 1987); home views are not valued in the school. However, looking at Figure 1, new questions come to mind:

- How can kuleana address the different educational concerns that affect relationships and communication?
- What can be changed or improved?
- What (or who) is missing from this picture?

Embedded within this new set of questions regarding the use of kuleana as a framework, or an approach, are several other ideas/actions. These are a) the valuing of all home-school perspectives linked with the redefinition of parent/caregiver roles, b) an emphasis on continued parent involvement from elementary through high school, and c) the use of kuleana as a foundation for the planning and implementation of parent involvement. These points are included in the following discussion.

From the case study, I realized that kuleana, along with pilina or relationships and ‘olelo—talk (or in this case, communication)—were the three common links that served as the *foundation* for all the other interactions that transpire in the home-school relationship which are influenced by the attitudes, beliefs, definitions, and actions/inactions of parents and educators together. Also important in this effort is the *valuing* of these different perspectives and roles, crucial to establishing strong pilina. One teacher mentioned the “triad” of the parent-teacher-child relationship. One parent reported how she solved a problem by talking with the teacher. But that is only one teacher and one parent. How can their attitudes/actions be transferred to other teachers and parents? We know that many students and their families feel disengaged from schools, as pointed out by a few parents in

this study. We also know of the pressures that schools face to make sure that students perform well on assessments as a measure of "learning." And we know that for students, not all learning takes place in the classroom. Graham-Clay (2005) states, "Every communication exchange, regardless of format, should reflect a thoughtful, planned approach and should be viewed as an opportunity for teachers to promote partnerships and, ultimately, to support student learning" (pp. 126-7). That is our goal. Figure 2 may provide a new way of looking at kuleana to answer these concerns. Note that these links are trans-directional and are a constant in the kuleana framework/approach.

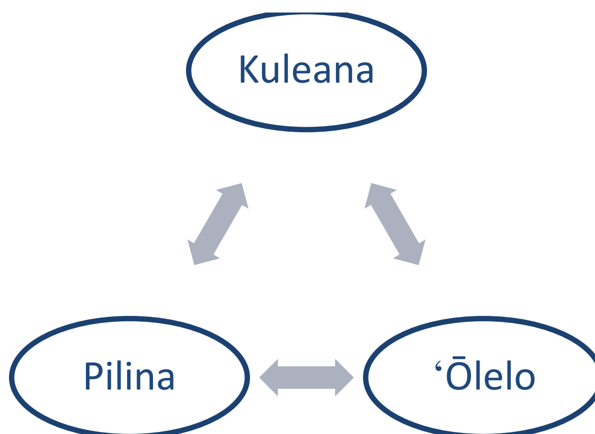

Figure 2. *Kuleana as a Framework / Approach*

Removing communication from the focused themes (shown in Figure 1) and placing it along with kuleana and pilina (Figure 2) incorporates again the strengths-based emphasis I have used throughout the study. And while this framework/approach may seem so simple, I am intentionally making it explicit. *Assumptions* do not work in the home-school pilina.

Question two addresses changes and improvements…*transformation*. Key here is the idea of *continued* parent involvement by schools through middle school and beyond. With all the transitions that young adolescents are going through, they still need to know that parents

and teachers are holding steady to the same expectations that were evident in elementary school. The "tweeners" may be unfocused and out of sorts in trying to navigate the various changes; the *partnership* and *support* of parents/families and educators should not be. Meier (2002) equates teaching to parenting and suggests three things to help teachers initiate reform, *starting with themselves*. These are a) changing how they view learning and cognition, b) developing new "habits of mind" to go with their views, and c) "simultaneously developing new habits of work—habits that are collegial and public in nature, not solo and private" (p. 140). Epstein says that when educators involve parents more, they are less likely to stereotype them, and "gain a greater understanding of parents' interests and potential for assisting their children" (2001, p. 265) and rate them higher. Teachers who involve parents less in their classrooms, often stereotype parents more and are less positive about them, placing an undue burden and shame on their students, our children.

The implied actions of the kuleana framework are important because of issues that may stem from misunderstandings and judgments of family situations. One teacher shared that even though it may be difficult, "sometimes you have to pry just a little so that you can help the child better." This teacher was developing a relationship that encompassed improved communication skills and enabled her to fulfill her responsibilities. I believe kuleana can address unrealistic expectations by teachers on parents who are not trained to teach school, offer better opportunities to assist parents in assisting their children, and create school wide policies that provide occasions for true partnering via leadership.

Going back to Figure 2, the third question of what or who is missing from the picture can be answered in different ways. Right away, a missing piece evident from this study was the "hit-or-miss" approach to PI used by most of the teachers due to unplanned, unfocused

efforts at the classroom level. Meier (2002) writes that this type of failed effort fails our children and their families, making it harder to create partnerships and enlist parental support for academic progress. Further discussion about PI planning/implementation is discussed in the limitations section.

Finally, in looking at what is missing, a phrase comes to mind by Kahakalau (2003), “Education with Aloha.” While she was referring to the mission of Na Lei Naʻa uao, the culture-based charter school association in Hawaii, I think it can also be applied here. *Aloha*. That is a missing element in many of our public schools, both primary and secondary, as we go about the business of “education” and the transference of knowledge. So now we move into the gray area of “values.” It gets messy and restive because of the “imposition” of placing the actions embedded in the framework, in this kuleana approach upon others.

Our public schools in Hawaii are filled with children and families of many different cultures and ethnicities. When discussing how the kuleana framework/approach can help parents, I also look at how it can help reconnect Native Hawaiian families to what we already know—but have lost. Many families have strengths that teachers can only guess at or make judgments about. How can we help families and their children see these strengths for themselves?

There is more to explore, more to think about, and more to work on. Perhaps using kuleana as a framework or an approach, and being *explicit* about our actions can help.

Limitations of Study

The foremost limitation of this study was its size. With only eleven parent participants and nine educators, their responses are not necessarily representative of the case study school or the public middle schools in Hawaii. Several teacher participants had dropped out of the study upon hearing that there would also be an interview as a part of it.

Another limitation was the timing of data collection and scheduling of interviews. The window for data collection was short in accordance with the instructions of the DOE Compliance office with whom I had to gain permissions to do the study. Interview scheduling, even though many were over the phone, was still a time-consuming effort though very worthwhile. Time was a huge factor for both parent and teacher participants. While I tried to schedule interviews with teachers during school breaks, those did not always work out.

The last limitation was me. As a researcher, I understood the "process" but did not have enough experience in the field to balance and plan out observations, notes and memos, and interviews smoothly and in an organized manner. It was probably obvious at the case study site as well. I also brought my own "biographical baggage" (Patton, 2002) to the interviews which helped me in some ways to relate to the parent participants totally, but not always with the teachers. This was possibly due to age, experiences and, in one case, gender because a few of the teachers were younger and did not have children of their own. So it seemed that conversation was stilted in some places.

Future Research & Conclusions

More research is needed in the field of parent/family involvement. There is a lot of research out there, mostly of a quantitative nature. Future case studies of families would

serve to strengthen the existing literature. One such study about transition points of children entering and exiting primary, secondary, and post-secondary schooling would be helpful. Another wonderful project would be a case study of grandparents as caregivers, a comparison between those who do part-time caregiving while parents are working and those who are sole caregivers, with full responsibility. And in-depth studies of multi-generational and multi-cultural families would certainly yield rich data…only so long as these studies are approached carefully and with the kuleana that has permeated this study.

The approach for this study has been the idea/action of kuleana, supported by pilina, relationships. It was a privilege to make site visits, meet and talk with parents and teachers, and observe family and school interactions at the "tender borderlands." All of these actions have made me more keenly aware than ever why it is necessary to have parents involved in the education of their children. Educators need them; no matter what, they are the experts of their children.

Parents and families are needed in schools. Not just as enforcers of student behavior or even as active volunteers, but *appreciated* for investing their time and effort, being *recognized* for what they can do and being *supported* for what they can't, being *heard* by school leadership, faculty and staff…and being *welcomed* for it.

Kuleana, ʻohana, pilina, kaiāulu, *aloha*. These cultural ideas/actions/ways of knowing may be able to provide an educational approach or framework that is more meaningful to students and their families as well as being more effective for educators' practice.

Appendix A. Parent Survey—Beliefs about Parent Involvement

Instructions: Think of the school that your child attends. Please indicate HOW MUCH YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE with each of the statements below by circling the appropriate number. There are no right or wrong answers.

1. This school views parents as important partners.

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
Disagree very strongly	Disagree	Disagree just a little	Agree just a little	Agree	Agree very strongly

2. I feel welcome at the school.

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
Disagree very strongly	Disagree	Disagree just a little	Agree just a little	Agree	Agree very strongly

3. My child talks about school at home.

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
Disagree very strongly	Disagree	Disagree just a little	Agree just a little	Agree	Agree very strongly

4. The school and I have different goals for my child.

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
Disagree very strongly	Disagree	Disagree just a little	Agree just a little	Agree	Agree very strongly

5. Many parents I know help out at the school.

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
Disagree very strongly	Disagree	Disagree just a little	Agree just a little	Agree	Agree very strongly

6. I could help my child more if the teachers gave me more ideas.

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
Disagree very strongly	Disagree	Disagree just a little	Agree just a little	Agree	Agree very strongly

7. The school invites parents to attend events regularly.

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
Disagree very strongly	Disagree	Disagree just a little	Agree just a little	Agree	Agree very strongly

8. I am contacted when my child does something well or improves.

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
Disagree very strongly	Disagree	Disagree just a little	Agree just a little	Agree	Agree very strongly

Appendix A. *(CONTINUED) Parent Survey—Beliefs About Parent Involvement*

9. My child should get more homework.

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
Disagree very strongly	Disagree	Disagree just a little	Agree just a little	Agree	Agree very strongly

10. The teachers care about my child.

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
Disagree very strongly	Disagree	Disagree just a little	Agree just a little	Agree	Agree very strongly

11. I tell my child how important school is.

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
Disagree very strongly	Disagree	Disagree just a little	Agree just a little	Agree	Agree very strongly

12. The teachers know how to work with my child's strengths and weaknesses.

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
Disagree very strongly	Disagree	Disagree just a little	Agree just a little	Agree	Agree very strongly

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Reference: adapted from Epstein, J., Salinas, K.C. & Horsey, C. (1994). School and family partnerships: Surveys and summaries. Johns Hopkins University, Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships, Johns Hopkins University.

Appendix B. Teacher/Educator Survey about Parent Involvement

This scale is reported in Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Jones and Reed (2002). It was adapted from Epstein, Salinas & Horsey (1994). It assesses teacher/educator beliefs about parental involvement. The scale is being adapted here by including the word, "educator," with the word, "teacher" in order to reflect participant views with various school perspectives. Some of the questions below have also been adapted to reflect specificity to the school site. Word changes are designated with [ ].

Instructions: Think of the school site at which you are currently employed. Please indicate HOW MUCH YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE with each of the statements below by circling the appropriate number.

1. Parent [/family] involvement is important to [my] school.

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
Disagree very strongly	Disagree	Disagree just a little	Agree just a little	Agree	Agree very strongly

2. Most of [our] parents know how to help their children with [assignments] at home.

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
Disagree very strongly	Disagree	Disagree just a little	Agree just a little	Agree	Agree very strongly

3. Every family has some strength that can be tapped to increase student success in school.

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
Disagree very strongly	Disagree	Disagree just a little	Agree just a little	Agree	Agree very strongly

4. [The parents at my school] could learn ways to help their children with [assignments] at home, if shown how.

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
Disagree very strongly	Disagree	Disagree just a little	Agree just a little	Agree	Agree very strongly

5. Parent involvement can help teachers be more effective with more students.

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
Disagree very strongly	Disagree	Disagree just a little	Agree just a little	Agree	Agree very strongly

6. Parents [/families] at this school want to be more involved than they are.

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
Disagree very strongly	Disagree	Disagree just a little	Agree just a little	Agree	Agree very strongly

Appendix B. (CONTINUED) Teacher/Educator Survey about Parent Involvement

7. Parent [/family] involvement is important for student success in school.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Disagree very strongly	Disagree	Disagree just a little	Agree just a little	Agree	Agree very strongly

8. This school views parents [/families] as important partners.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Disagree very strongly	Disagree	Disagree just a little	Agree just a little	Agree	Agree very strongly

Epstein, J. L., Salinas, K.C., & Horsey, C.S. (1994). *Reliabilities and summaries of scales: School and family partnership surveys of teachers and parents in the elementary middle grades.* Baltimore, MD: Center of Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning and Center for Research on Effective Schooling for Disadvantaged Students, Johns Hopkins University.

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Appendix C. Parent Interview Questions

The questions will focus on beliefs and attitudes of participants. These questions are guides to help bring out responses. Actual data will depend on types of responses to the questions.

1. Personal beliefs and experiences regarding PI:
    a. Do you think that PI in education is important? Why or why not?
    b. What has influenced your opinion about PI?
    c. What kinds of involvement experiences did you have at your child's elementary school?
    d. Were those experiences positive or negative? In what ways?
    e. What kinds of involvement experiences are you having now in middle school?
    f. Are these experiences positive or negative? In what ways?
    g. Which experiences were/are easy/hard to do and why?

2. Family-school partnership experiences:
    a. You mentioned earlier about some of your own experiences and beliefs regarding PI. Do you think that your child's school generally promotes PI, and if so, how? If not, why do you think not?
    b. How do you learn about the school culture (e.g. rules, habits, practices, etc.) and your child's teachers?
    c. What are some things that you think teachers/schools should or should not do and why?
    d. How do you feel about forming partnerships with your child's teachers? What do you think that would look or feel like?
    e. What about your child's teachers: how do you think they feel about PI, and why do you think that?
    f. Do you think that most parents at the middle school feel that PI is important? Why or why not?
3. Critical Incidents in home-school relationships:
    a. On a scale of 1 – 5, with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest, how would you rate your child's school in regards to PI and why?
    b. How would you rate your relationship with your child's teachers and why?
    c. How would you rate your child's relationships with his/her teachers, positive or negative and why?
    d. What has made it easy or hard for you and the teachers to establish a relationship with each other? Why?
    e. Have you ever experienced incidents where you felt that the teachers were unfair to you and/or child?
    f. Can you think of an incident where you felt that you may have been mistreated by a teacher or other school staff member? Was the problem ever resolved?

Appendix D—Interview Questions for Teachers/Educators

The questions will focus on beliefs and attitudes of participants. These questions are guides to help bring out responses. Actual data will depend on types of responses to the questions.

1. Background info on pre-service training:
   - b. Could you tell me a little about your teaching background, for example, where did you go to school for training?
   - c. What was your pre-service program like?
   - d. Did it include any coursework about developing relationships with parents or any other type of parent involvement strategies?

2. Personal beliefs regarding parent/family involvement:
   - a. What does it look like to you?
   - b. What possible strengths and weaknesses do you see in your students' families? Can you give me an example of each?
   - c. What has been the most challenging problem or situation for you regarding parent involvement in your classroom and why?
   - d. What do you see as your kuleana regarding PI?
   - e. Should schools continue to include parents/families in children's learning and why? If not, why not?

3. Classroom practices:
   - a. What are some specific practices or strategies that you have used to involve parents/families in your class or curriculum? What were the outcomes of these practices/strategies?
   - b. How do you learn about your students' cultures?
   - c. What kinds of cultural practices, if any, do you use in the classroom?
   - d. Aside from Open House, how do you communicate with parents? What seems to be the most effective?
   - e. In what ways do you currently see the parents/families of your students being involved in their learning?
   - f. In what ways would you like to see the parents/families become more involved?

4. Critical incidents:
   - a. Can you share any examples of incidents with parents/families in which relationships did or did not work well?
   - b. How would you define your relationship with the student before the incident?
   - c. If the incident resulted in, or is a result of, a positive relationship with the parent/family, what do you think contributed to that type of relationship?
   - d. If the incident resulted in, or is a result of, a negative relationship with the parent/family, what do you think you could do to change the situation or what would you do differently?
   - e. Has these incidents changed your outlook on parent/family involvement in your class? What do you do differently now compared to before?

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